

July 6, 2010

Dear Phase One Principals,

As this school year ends and summer begins, I want to thank you for taking a leadership role by participating in the first phase of our system-wide initiative to advance learning and achievement for students with disabilities. I met many of you during our individual network sessions this past April, and gained important insights from those discussions.

In our effort to move away from placing students in “seats” in special education classrooms and focus instead on meeting the needs of individual students with disabilities, we are committed to providing the support you need. Our team will continue to work collaboratively with your cluster and network leaders, who have been instrumental in our successful launch. Here is what we’ve accomplished so far:

- Convened Phase One cluster and network leaders, teams, and principals to explore topics to support our work, including:
  - Flexibility and variety in the existing [Continuum of Services](#).
  - Development of IEPs more closely tailored to the needs of individual students as explained in [Creating a Quality IEP](#).
  - The practical implications of more flexible, individualized programming.
- Created a Principal Advisory Group, comprised of your colleagues in both Phase One and non-Phase One schools. This group provides guidance on policies and practices that need to be developed and/or reinforced as well as insight into flexible instructional models.
- Initiated professional development forums for Parent Coordinators of Phase One Schools.
- Aligned Phase One Support Specialists from our Division to each Phase One network.
- Designated a special education attorney to support each network.
- Developed a funding model to maximize stability and flexibility for Phase One schools.
- Established the framework for an online toolkit of resources and guidance for networks and schools.

- Engaged with many constituents including:
  - The State Education Department
  - Citywide Council on Special Education
  - ARISE Coalition
  - Parents for Inclusive Education
  - Advocates for Children
  - United Federation of Teachers
  - The Council for Supervisors and Administrators

In order to strengthen our system-wide efforts to support teachers, build instructional capacity, and better communicate our goals moving forward, we will be engaged in the following activities during the summer of 2010 and beyond.

1. Hosting several professional development events for Phase One participants as part of a strategic partnership with the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project (TCICP), led by Dr. Celia Oyler:

**Spotlight Instructional Practices, Inquiry to Action**—320 teachers, from 20 schools, will participate in eight sessions of guided inquiry into topics such as maximizing positive student behavior, creating flexible service models, and using new technologies to foster literacy. The long-range goal of these workshops is to build a community of individuals in each school and network who can serve as professional developers. The short-term goal is to create a rich bank of resources for teachers in each of the Spotlight areas.

**Summer Network Days** —Each network has signed up for an individually tailored day of planning and practice to help guide and focus their work for Phase One. Networks will also identify future areas for support from the TCICP.

**Fall Conference Days**—We have reserved seats for 600 teachers (60 from each network) to attend a series of one- and two-day workshops designed for newer practitioners and those whose roles or responsibilities will be changing. Workshops will offer hands-on instruction in co-teaching, co-planning, positive behavior management, and creating curriculum and instruction for a wide range of learners.

2. Partnering with the CSA's Executive Leadership Institute to offer a **Principals' Institute** for on July 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. The second session, which is for Phase One Principals only, provides an opportunity to discuss best practices and implementation plans with your colleagues.
3. Partnering with the Division of School Support and Instruction, to provide **Network Team Training** for Phase One network team members to further develop their capacity to assist schools. Subject matter will include: IEP Development and Service Models; Intervention and Differentiation; and Graduation, Transitions and Community Building.

Laura Rodriguez to Phase One Principals, July 6, 2010

4. Providing a series of borough-based information sessions for parents in early fall, featuring screenings and conversations with filmmaker Dan Habib. Habib is a parent of a child with cerebral palsy and director of the award-winning documentary, *Including Samuel*, which chronicles the efforts of Habib and four other parents to provide educational and social equity for their children with disabilities.

We feel confident in Phase One, thanks in large part to the leadership you have and will continue to exhibit in the implementation of these important initiatives. I deeply appreciate your continuing efforts to communicate the goals and intent of our systemic reform to your entire school community. Communication with parents about what Phase One means for their children and school is vital. We hope that teachers and staff will also be able to share a consistent message with parents, children, and all who will benefit from our ongoing work. Have a wonderful summer.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Rodriguez".

Laura Rodriguez