



Hidden Sparks Program Description 2010-2011

Mission

Hidden Sparks is a nonprofit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

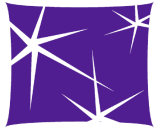
Founded in February 2005, Hidden Sparks' goal is to increase the capacity of Jewish day schools to address the varied needs of children with learning difficulties, particularly children whose struggles might otherwise elude identification. Its inaugural program, a school-based teacher-training and coaching initiative, was launched as a pilot in seven yeshivot and day schools in the New York area in February 2006. It is now being offered in 28 day schools and yeshivas in New York, New Jersey and Boston.

The Hidden Sparks Curriculum and Approach

The Hidden Sparks curriculum and approach was founded on the basis of these five beliefs:

- The most effective way to help those with learning or behavioral difficulties is to increase the tools and understanding of *classroom* teachers to help *all* children in a school;
- Teachers who have the skills for understanding the underpinnings of learning and behavior will be more adept at helping students who are encountering difficulties;
- The most effective programs are school-based and include coaching and mentoring to meet the diverse needs of teachers;
- To achieve long-term sustainability, effective programs should cultivate internal school capacity and expertise to enable continuity of the program beyond the term of funding;
- To bolster long-term program impact, the program must have a plan for system-wide change which includes a collaborative approach and leadership involvement and support.

Central to the Hidden Sparks approach is the commitment to using multiple lenses to understand children. These include, but are not limited to, a neuro-developmental understanding of learning, behavior, and a familiarity with social, emotional and normative child development.



Hidden Sparks Principles and Framework for Mentoring

Hidden Sparks is guided by the following four principles. These principles constitute the framework for Hidden Sparks mentoring, and the rubric for professional development with teachers, and school-wide support for Hidden Spark participating schools.

I. Search for Hidden Sparks

Every child is unique, with individual talents, strengths, affinities and challenges. Hidden Sparks believes in the importance of nurturing the “hidden spark” within each child and celebrating their uniqueness. Collaborating with students in the process of uncovering and addressing their learning and behavior styles and needs fosters a sense of optimism about his or her future learning and growth.

II. Support Utilizing Observing/Describing/Reflecting

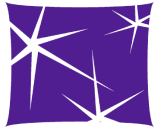
Supporting learners involves a process of observation, description and reflection. Using language that is descriptive and specific, learners are carefully observed through the multiple lenses of cognition, development, temperament, and behavior. Reflection allows deeper understanding of ourselves and our students. Teacher and student awareness of individual learning and behavior strengths and challenges will empower schools to create solutions and meet the needs of diverse students.

III. Commitment to Collaboration

“Two are better than one; for if they fall the one will lift up the other” (Ecclesiasties 4:9) A commitment to the spirit of collaboration at all levels, begins with teacher-student collaboration, and teachers’ belief in their responsibility to help every student succeed. Collaboration includes teamwork among professionals, and within and across schools. Collaboration increases our ability to help students succeed and underscores the critical importance of involving all who have a view of a child’s strengths and challenges in conversations aimed at understanding and addressing the child’s needs.

IV. Professional Development

Everyone is capable of change and growth. A powerful way to help students grow is to develop communities of life-long learners. The professional growth of educators and the development of school-based resources are best facilitated through a multilayered process.



The Hidden Sparks Curriculum includes these Components:

- **Collaborative monthly ‘Hidden Sparks meetings’** facilitated by Hidden Sparks trained coaches for teams of Judaic and general studies teachers by class or grade level.

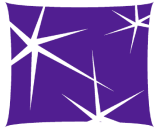
These meetings enable teachers to learn a shared language for discussing all students in the class and foster a collaborative approach to each student and a holistic understanding of learning. Facilitated by the coach, teachers explore students learning and behavior through a neuro-developmental, behavioral and social emotional lens. Topics covered throughout a two-year period include memory, language, temperament, social cognition, sequencing, spatial understanding, and collaborative problem solving. *All* students learning profiles in the class are reviewed during the year.

- **Weekly classroom observation, consultation and coaching** between the Hidden Sparks coach and participating teachers around the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. Classroom observations are paired with follow-up meetings, coaching and consultation to assist teachers with understanding and implementing the material covered in the workshops and monthly meetings and improve student success. The focus varies depending on the needs and interest of the teacher and often includes observing a student’s behavior, understanding a student’s work, or debriefing on a particular lesson.

The Internal Coach Program

Designed to support a school’s long term ability to understand and teach to struggling learners, the Internal Coach Program provides training to a member/s of the school faculty to be resident Hidden Sparks coaches—trained in understanding and teaching to diverse learning styles and behaviors, providing classroom centered coaching and strategies for children, and guiding teachers to be reflective educators.

The goal of the Hidden Sparks Internal Coach Program is to deepen and sustain the capacity of schools to understand and teach to diverse learners by training at least one, but ideally several, resident experts in diverse learning styles within the school faculty. Faculty members who are selected to be Internal Coaches receive training in a neuro-developmental understanding of learning, behavior management, collaborative problem solving and the art of coaching. Internal Coaches shadow and work cooperatively with a Hidden Sparks coach in their school before, and in preparation for, assuming coaching responsibilities.



Elements of the Internal Coach Program include:

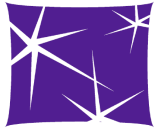
- The Internal Coach Program models the External Coach Program described in detail above however, rather than working with three grades in a school, Internal Coaches begin with one.
- Internal Coaches facilitate monthly ‘Hidden Sparks’ meetings which consist of presentations on aspects of learning and behavior discussed at each meeting with specific application to children in the class and learning strategies for the struggling learner. These meetings take place with the teachers from the classes in one grade.
- These workshops are conducted over a two-year period at a pace determined by the Internal Coach, participating teachers and your school. Specific workshops include understanding Language, Attention, Memory, Temporal-Sequential Organization, children with Social Cognition challenges, Higher-Order Cognition, Ordering Systems, Understanding Behavior, Positive Behavioral Support, and Collaborative Problem Solving.
- Internal Coaches also conduct weekly classroom observation and one-to-one teacher coaching with participating teachers. Depending and number of classes per grade, Hidden Sparks expects that the role of an Internal Coach adds an average of 1-2 hours per week.
- Internal Coaches receive ongoing group mentoring by Hidden Sparks senior educational leadership mentoring in their Hidden Sparks roles and a stipend for attendance at these monthly meetings.
- Internal Coaches also participate in skill building regional group meetings held in participating schools. Regional meetings provide ‘hands on’ support in enhancing skills in classroom observation, mentoring teachers and facilitating workshops.
- Internal Coaches and participating schools are eligible to receive up to three visits per year by ICP Senior Mentors. These mentors visit the ICP Coaches in their Hidden Sparks role, and plan and conduct joint training programs for the school community. ICP mentors are also available to provide administrative training during one of these visits.

What to Expect from Participation in the Internal Coach Program:

As a participant in this program, participating teachers can expect to increase their knowledge, skill and confidence in teaching a wide range of learners in their classrooms.

Specifically, teachers will gain knowledge of the neuro-developmental constructs and behavior and will begin to apply this knowledge to classroom planning and practice.

- Teachers can expect to begin using reflective and descriptive language in discussing and supporting students.



- Teachers will expand their understanding of typical social, cognitive and physical developmental milestones.
- Teachers will enhance their understanding of different types of learners and will strengthen their repertoire of teaching strategies that will be beneficial to struggling students.
- Using the systematic process of monthly Hidden Sparks meetings, teachers will work on observing and recording student learning and behavior in objective and explicit ways, connecting this information to the constructs, looking for patterns and developing a student profile that includes student strengths, weaknesses and affinities.
- Teachers will begin to look at the neuro-developmental demands of their lessons and their subject areas.
- Using the systematic process of monthly Hidden Sparks meetings, teachers will regularly consult with each other on the learning profiles of students in their class.
- Teachers will continue to practice skills for participation in Hidden Sparks monthly class meetings including how to discuss a student, identify strengths, weaknesses and learning styles, and choose strategies relevant to specific students and subjects.
- Teachers will work on differentiating their lessons based on student learning style.
- Teachers can expect to explore their own learning and teaching style, and look at the impact this has on their classroom practice.
- Teachers will learn to talk with, and about, students learning strengths and struggles incorporating strengths and affinities in discussion.
- Teachers will gain increased appreciation and skills to apply collaborative problem solving with students.

Time Allocation for the Internal Coach Program:

Participating teachers participate in one monthly meeting for an hour per month and meet with their coach weekly. Depending on number of classes per grade, Hidden Sparks expects that the role of an Internal Coach adds an average of 1-2 hours per week. A member of the administration must attend at least one Hidden Sparks meeting a marking period. Failure to do this will result in discontinuing the program in the school.



Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations of the School and School Leadership towards the Coach, Internal Coach and to Hidden Sparks:

Hidden Sparks views this program as a partnership between Hidden Sparks and your school.

Hidden Sparks will:

provide mentoring and professional development for the Internal Coach in order to increase their understanding and skill in understanding and teaching to children with learning and behavioral differences; and mentoring other faculty members in this specialty. As a participating school, Hidden Sparks also provides access to the Program's senior mentors for ongoing consultation and program guidance beneficial to the participant and the school.

Participating schools agree to

provide the necessary support for the Internal Coach and for the program implementation in the school, the details of which are listed in the Terms of Agreement. The school also agrees to provide administrative oversight and support, assist in data collection for program evaluation purposes, and to acknowledge the program support in school publications. The Internal Coach commits to attending the training program, monthly coach meetings and serving as an Internal Coach in their school, which consists of facilitating monthly Hidden Sparks meetings for the participating teachers and mentoring those teachers in their classrooms in understanding and teaching to diverse learners.

Evaluation

Hidden Sparks is committed to contributing to the knowledge in the field by carefully evaluating its program and disseminating important findings. To that end, participating schools, teachers and coaches are periodically asked to complete surveys and questionnaires assessing their practices and exploring the benefits of Hidden Sparks coaching. All evaluation materials are coded to protect the privacy of respondents, and all reports of the findings are in summary form, without information identifying individual schools or participants.