



## Hidden Sparks Professional Development Program Descriptions 2016-17

### 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. To date, **Hidden Sparks has trained 190 coaches in 65 Jewish day schools** in New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Boca Raton and five cities in Israel. Our trainings have reached more than **1,600 teachers**, impacting **thousands of students annually**.

### 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, a familiarity with social, emotional and normative child development, and an awareness of how students' families, schools and communities can affect students' learning.

### The Hidden Sparks Curriculum includes these components for *all* programs:

- **Weekly classroom observation, consultation and coaching** between the Hidden Sparks coach and participating teachers around the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. To improve student learning, classroom observations of students 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. The focus varies depending on the needs and interest of the



teacher and includes observing a student's behavior, understanding a student's work, and developing strategies that use students' strengths to address their challenges.

- **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 neuro-developmental, ecological and temperamental lenses. Topics covered include memory, language, temperament, social cognition, sequencing, spatial understanding, and collaborative problem solving. *All* students learning profiles in the class(es) are reviewed during the year.

### **The External Coach Program (ECP)**

The Hidden Sparks External Coach Program is Hidden Sparks' most comprehensive model for professional development. This program is operating in eight Jewish day schools/yeshivas in the tri-state New York area, and through partnerships with Shemesh, Reach, and Society for the Advancement of Education, in an additional nine schools in Baltimore, Chicago and Israel. It is geared to educators in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The ECP program is designed to help schools incorporate the Hidden Sparks language and approach into the fabric of the school. Through the expertise and training of an "external coach" who spends a day a week working with teams of Judaic and general studies teachers, the coach conducts classroom and student observations, provides on-going mentoring for teachers, and facilitates monthly collaborative Hidden Sparks meetings to review learning profiles and teaching strategies for struggling learners. Throughout the year, in workshops, monthly meetings, guided classroom work, and across disciplines, teachers learn about neurodevelopment, temperament and ecology in order to deepen their understanding of students. Specifically, they explore topics such as attention, memory, language, sequencing, social cognition and higher order thinking, and temperament and strategies for working with students who struggle in one of these areas.

Over the course of the program, a school's entire staff learns a common vocabulary that enables educators to replace unhelpful labels with robust descriptions of students that lend themselves to specific strategies and ideas, making it possible for *all* students to learn.

The coach also prepares teacher teams with the skills to manage their own meetings so that they can continue to productively discuss students even when the Hidden Spark coach moves on to work with other grades.

Schools contribute to the cost of the program and are expected to select faculty member(s) to participate in the Internal Coach Program (described below).

### **The Internal Coach Program (ICP)**

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. This program is a



requirement of the External Coach Program, and a stand-alone program for schools that are not ECP participants.

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 participate in six-day Hidden Sparks training and receive ongoing mentoring and professional development during their tenure.

Following training, and with continued mentoring, Internal Coaches facilitate the coaching program described above including collaborative monthly workshops and discussions of students, strategies to enhance their learning, guided classroom observations with teachers, and peer support. The Hidden Sparks curriculum and strength-based way of talking about students, combining neurodevelopment, temperament, and ecology, described above, frames the work with teachers concerning students.

### **Teachers being coached by a Hidden Sparks Trained Coach can expect:**

1. To increase their knowledge, skill and confidence in teaching a wide range of learners in their classrooms, and to strengthen their repertoire of strategies for teaching to struggling learners.
2. To gain knowledge of the neuro-developmental constructs and behavior as well as social and cognitive milestones and to begin to apply this knowledge to classroom planning and practice.
3. To practice using reflective and descriptive language in discussing and supporting students.
4. To experience the power of talking to colleagues about puzzling students and effective teaching strategies
5. To begin to understand the neuro-developmental demands of their lessons and their subject areas and to use their knowledge of their students to differentiate their lessons.
6. To explore their own learning and teaching style, and look at the impact this has on their classroom practice.
7. To gain increased appreciation and skills to apply collaborative problem solving with students.

### **Participating schools should expect to:**

1. Provide the necessary support for the Hidden Sparks Trained Coach and for the program implementation in the school. Further details are available. Provide administrative oversight and support, assist in data collection for program evaluation purposes, such as the completion of surveys and questionnaires and to acknowledge the program support in school publications.
2. Support Internal Coaches as they attend the Hidden Sparks training program, receive continued professional development, and serve as an Internal Coach in their school (consisting of facilitating monthly Hidden Sparks meetings for the participating teachers and mentoring those teachers in their classrooms concerning diverse learners).



## **Addendum 1**

### **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” (Ecclesiastes 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.*



## Addendum 2

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations of the School and School Leadership towards the Hidden Sparks Coach and to Hidden Sparks in the External Coach Program (ECP):**

Hidden Sparks views the ECP a partnership between Hidden Sparks and the school.

What Hidden Sparks Offers	What Hidden Sparks Expects of the School
<p><b>1. Expert Coaching</b></p> <p>A “coach” with extensive experience in learning strategies (e.g. <i>Schools Attuned</i><sup>®</sup> and behavior management) for the equivalent of one day per week, to provide school based training, guidance with struggling students and classroom centered coaching.</p> <p>The target audience of children is not necessarily those children who have already been identified for help and are being served through school or state services, but struggling learners whose challenges and needs have not yet been identified.</p>	<p>Select three grades for the first year.</p> <p>Be sure to include the teachers who teach the same students (e.g. Judaic and secular studies teachers).</p> <p>Provide coverage (15 – 20 min.) for teachers to meet with the coach after she has observed students in their classes.</p>
<p><b>2. Monthly Grade-Level Meetings</b></p> <p>The coach acts as a facilitator during monthly discussion groups with the educators in each class, in order to help them identify and understand students’ learning differences and develop strategies that will help their students achieve greater success.</p> <p>One of the goals of these monthly meetings is to review the performance of all of the children in the participating grades on a regular basis, in order to identify children whose struggles might have gone unidentified, and to provide further, coordinated assistance for all children.</p> <p>A second goal is to help participating schools to institutionalize an approach for early identification and responsiveness to struggling learners.</p>	<p>Schedule monthly meetings with teachers on each grade level. (If starting with three grades, there will be three monthly meetings).</p> <p>Provide a space where the coach and staff can discuss student observations privately.</p> <p>Make information about IEPs available to teachers.</p> <p>Make whatever arrangements are necessary to ensure educators (Judaic studies, general studies, resource room staff representative, specialties instructors, school psychologist) will participate in a facilitated, professional discussion regarding the learning profile of each student in the class and other relevant educational and behavioral issues.</p> <p>Schedule a member of the administration to attend these meetings at least once a marking period.</p>



What Hidden Sparks Offers	What Hidden Sparks Expects of the School
<p><b>3. Faculty Workshops</b></p> <p>Hidden Sparks offers school-based faculty workshops to develop a common vocabulary for describing and thinking about students.</p> <p>The school will receive a reduced rate for staff to attend our Learning Lenses course — a blend of 2 days of in-person training and online coursework.</p>	<p><b>3. Faculty Workshops</b></p> <p>Allocate some of the school’s professional development time for Hidden Sparks workshops on our lenses — temperament, ecology and neurodevelopmental constructs.</p>
<p><b>4. Building Capacity</b></p> <p>The program aims to train a cadre of educators in each school who are attuned to the needs of struggling learners and can work effectively in this area with students and other educators.</p> <p>Designed to support a school’s long term ability to address the needs of struggling learners, the <b>HIDDEN SPARKS Internal Coach program (ICP)</b> provides training to selected faculty members to be resident <b>HIDDEN SPARKS coaches</b> - trained in understanding and teaching to diverse learning styles, behavior management, assessment of children with learning differences, and classroom centered coaching.</p> <p>To build the school’s internal capacity, Hidden Sparks offers an extensive 6-day course, and two years of support (mentoring, regional meetings, workshops, an annual retreat) to support “internal coaches and school leaders.</p> <p>These Internal Coaches will develop the expertise to become the resident experts on diverse learners and will facilitate scheduled monthly group discussions, offer workshops on diverse learning styles, and will work with individual faculty members to identify specific learning strategies for students struggling in school.</p>	<p><b>4. Building Capacity</b></p> <p>Commit to participation in the <b>HIDDEN SPARKS Internal Coach program (ICP)</b>.</p> <p>Over time, sending staff to function as internal coaches in each grade.</p> <p>Over time, sending at least two administrators to the school leader training.</p> <p>Releasing teachers and/or administrators to attend the course and providing coverage for their initial training, mentoring, regional meetings and the annual Hidden Sparks retreat.</p> <p>Support internal coaches by scheduling time for them to work with teacher teams and to visit classrooms to conduct classroom student observations.</p> <p>Build capacity by scheduling time for the internal coach’s monthly grade meetings, and making arrangements for teachers to attend these meetings.</p>



What Hidden Sparks Offers	What Hidden Sparks Expects of the School
<p><b>5. Evaluation</b></p> <p>In order to learn from this stage of the program, and to strengthen and optimize the program, Hidden Sparks evaluates its programs.</p>	<p>ECP schools will be required to help with the evaluation effort by working with the evaluator to gather appropriate data (e.g., teacher surveys, confidential pre-post student data, and descriptive data about the school). School observations and teacher focus groups sessions will also be part of the evaluation effort.</p>
<p><b>6. Cost</b></p>	
<p>The full cost of the ECP program is approximately \$25,000 per year. Hidden Sparks has secured a grant which supports about 80% of the total cost of the program to qualified schools.</p>	<p>The school contributes \$5,000 per year towards the total cost of the program.</p>