

**CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP**  
**HOW IN-HOUSE STAFF DEVELOPMENT BEGETS STRONG COLLABORATION**  
By Sara E. Nixon

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Since 1959, the Vanguard School has maintained a long-standing commitment to providing comprehensive Special Education services for children and adolescents in a highly individualized setting. Through caring approaches and detailed curriculum planning, the teachers and staff of the school address the needs of the whole child. Each student is valued for his/her uniqueness and their personal contributions on a daily basis.

Remaining loyal to the guiding principals, Vanguard professionals have implanted multi-modal strategies to accommodate the specific and genuine needs of each student in the classroom. These strategies often, but not always, incorporate behavioral support systems with therapists and specialists to assist students in learning, internalizing and exhibiting socially appropriate behaviors. The utilization of a strengths-based approach has led to the accomplishments of many productive graduates.

More than a school, Vanguard is a rich learning community of faculty, staff, parents and children who contribute to each success that is achieved, each hurdle overcome. It proves a powerful alternative to environments where children might not be appreciated for what they can offer, or in which their needs go unrecognized and therefore unmet.

The Faculty and Staff at The Vanguard School have a deep and comprehensive knowledge base of sound educational practice and possess impressive leadership qualifications. What marks the difference between Vanguard and other schools is a strong network and communicative structure among teachers, administrators and staff. Through the focused use of communication strategies and forward thinking, operations at the Corporate and Scholastic levels are engineered to sustain high performance. All procedures are visualized through a diplomatic and student-centered lens; even staff members who are not educators receive professional development relative to the promotion of highly qualified, in-depth and advanced academic provisions for students with special needs.

Further discerning Vanguard from typical institutions is that at the core of its infrastructure are field experts who present staff development programs including Team Leader Training, Coaching and Mentoring, Assessment Methods, Educational Technology, Differentiated Instruction and Career and Community-Based Vocational Training. Staff Development is a considerable aspect of the professional lives of all teachers. At Vanguard, it is with tremendous diligence and out-of-the-box thinking that new ground is covered in Special Education.

Significant use and consult of professional analysis is stressed. The details of staff development evaluations are organized and presented in a timely manner so that all topics broached are succinctly rectified. From these evaluations, a logical 'next step' is established and new development opportunities sought. The Director of Staff Development and other

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administrators maintain consistent correspondence with one another and appropriately consider faculty and staff opinions and suggestions.

Such ideology of data-driven progress represents the needle sewing the proverbial thread from administration to faculty to students. As part of a Vanguard Education, individual supports are instituted and each child receives a customized plan for achievement and personal growth. Progress monitoring is staunchly referenced during IEP meetings to gauge achievements made and create new goals. Teachers as reflective practitioners similarly use information they glean from their own evaluations to structure academic environments conducive to productive, enriched learning. In the classroom, this translates to a whole-child approach to teaching and scholarship, promoting the Vanguard mission:

*"The Vanguard School is committed to providing comprehensive special education services for children and adolescents in a highly individualized setting. The school's integrated academic, social and life skills approach creates an environment in which students grow to become productive and self-sufficient adults. The ultimate purpose is to have each student become an independent, functional, and happy member of society."*