



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Dale Hoyt, Ed.D., Chief Administrator  
Ädelbrook-The Learning Center–Cromwell

**FROM:** Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant *DP*  
Bureau of Special Education

**DATE:** May 25, 2021

**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY EVALUATION REPORT  
Approval Review for a Private Special Education Program

**Please note:** This Approved Private Special Education Program approval review was conducted remotely due to the current public health and safety requirements resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. All required activities and components, as defined in the *Principles, Procedures and Standards for the Approval of Private Special Education Programs*, were conducted remotely and in accordance with the approval process.

On March 18, 2021, an evaluation team conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of Ädelbrook-The Learning Center–Cromwell (Ädelbrook-TLC–Cromwell) special education program. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Beth Giller, Director of Pupil and Staff Support Services, Coventry Public Schools; and
- Ed Orszulak, Ph.D., Education Director, Futures, Inc.

During a previous virtual site visit on March 16, 2021, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa reviewed application materials submitted to the BSE by your staff.

At the exit conference on March 18, 2021, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The following areas of the special education program have been reviewed:

- Governance;
- Administration;
- Fiscal management;
- Admissions;
- Individual student records;
- Program requirements;
- Evaluation of student progress and reporting responsibilities;
- Student management techniques;
- Qualifications and requirements for instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
- Health and safety; and
- Termination of enrollment.

**1. Commendations:**

- The leadership, specifically the chief administrator, demonstrates a high level of support and appreciation of staff’s investment and commitment to the program. Teachers interviewed described administration as “very hands-on” and integrally involved in the individualized educational and behavioral programming of all students.
- The overall climate and culture of the program is inviting, positive, and reinforcing. Staff interviewed reported they “really love working at the program” and referred to it as having a “dream team atmosphere.”
- The program provides highly individualized programming characterized as therapeutic education provided within small, supported, and safe learning environments. Under the direction of the program directors, the learning center provides strong collaboration, consistency, and carryover to the residential component of the agency.
- Students and staff benefit from the support of a registered nurse, licensed practitioner nurse, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, school psychologist, board certified behavior analyst (BCBA), and social workers.
- The teacher student ratio and small class sizes of four to six students promotes a personalized culture of academic learning and a safe environment for students to build self-confidence and competence, as well as, emotional well-being and close monitoring of each student’s developmental and behavioral needs.
- Teacher and staff interactions with the students are very positive as evidenced by the high level of coaching support and provision of positive reinforcement specific to the student behaviors exhibited. The program utilizes a schoolwide positive behavior plan(s) that celebrates students and their exemplary behaviors with emphasis on the values of being safe, respectful, responsible, and kind.
- Students are provided with opportunities to practice social skills throughout the school day, both within the school and in the community. The work study program allows for students to achieve skills for working in the community.
- A related service provider interviewed shared that there is “good communication” between the program and families and referred to the high level of communication and collaboration with families as a “silver lining of the pandemic.” Families are provided with daily generated reports regarding the student’s accomplishments and challenges.
- The program has recently hired an admission and program development director, which has allowed for additional partnerships with local education agencies (LEAs) and families. The admission process is well-developed and comprehensive.

- Staff share an appreciation for teamwork. A first year teacher interviewed shared that he “loves the frequent collaboration with colleagues and appreciates being surrounded by all good, knowledgeable people willing to help out.” The program directors provide daily morning rounds with certified staff in addressing student’s behavioral, emotional, and developmental needs.
- The program site is bright, spacious, clean and organized. Classrooms are large and colorful and each student has his/her own individual work bins, resources, and materials.
- Staff interviewed reported that they are provided with a “great deal” of professional development and support. A variety of professional development topics are provided every Wednesday afternoon to support staff in professional growth. External professional development activities are also supported for all levels of staff who are then given the opportunity to present the information learned to the learning center team.
- Teacher and related service provider interview responses evidenced their solid understanding of the individualized education program (IEP) process, and appreciation of the need for collaboration and teamwork. Lessons observed evidenced well-planned instruction with IEP goals and objectives aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards. Workspaces are well equipped to meet the requirements of the subjects taught with a nice blend of technology. There was a high level of teacher-student discourse during lessons. Students were given opportunities for purposeful talk during the lessons through questioning and reflecting.

## 2. **Standard Deficiencies:**

The following standard deficiencies must be rectified:

### **Standard F: Program Requirements**

The local school district is responsible for the development and appropriateness of a student’s IEP and any changes made in that IEP. Each private facility shall request an IEP from the placing LEA prior to student enrollment. The IEP shall serve as the basis for instruction for each student. The IEP presented by the LEA serves as the basis for admission and should identify the current performance levels of the student, the appropriate specialized instruction, and required related services. Each private facility should participate in the planning and placement (PPT) meeting that discusses and determines placement in the facility prior to placement.

**Issue:** In five (5) of five (5) IEPs reviewed, related services indicated on the IEP were not separated/broken out to specify if the delivery of service is provided on a 1:1, small group basis.

**Corrective Action:** Submit to the BSE copies of the next three (3) IEPs developed by the LEA’s PPT for students enrolled, demonstrating careful review for accuracy and completeness, and if needed, illustrating the implementation of written notification to the district to request necessary changes.

### **Standard H: Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative, and Support Personnel**

The private facility shall maintain a permanent individual personnel file for each employee and shall ensure said file is held confidential. The private facility shall require that prior work references be

on record for all applicants and that the applicant submit to a Connecticut Department of Children and Families Child Abuse and Neglect Registry records check before hiring staff who will work directly with students. The private facility shall obtain the information listed on the *State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification* form from ALL current or former employer(s) of the applicant if such employer was a local or regional board of education, an approved private special education program, a governing council of a state or local charter school, an interdistrict magnet school operator, or if the employment caused the applicant to have contact with children. In addition, state and national criminal history records check (fingerprinting) of staff who work directly with students, shall be submitted within 30 days of hire and on file within 60 days from the date of employment. (C.G.S. Section 10-221d)

**Issue:** A review of staff files indicated that while the documentation of some required elements of the staff file was verified, in five (5) of five (5) personnel files reviewed, there was no documentation evidencing that fingerprinting was submitted within 30 days of hire.

**Corrective Action:** Develop and implement a process for maintaining the necessary documentation within the staff file that includes the verification that fingerprinting was conducted within 30 days of hire. On or before June 30, 2021, submit to the BSE a checklist to be used (which includes all required/recommended items) to ensure appropriate documentation and verification within each personnel file and consistency across personnel files.

### **Standard J: Health and Safety**

A private facility shall conduct monthly emergency drills that shall include one crisis response drill other than a fire drill once every third drill.

**Issue:** In reviewing emergency drill records, fire drills were not documented to occur monthly and there was no evidence that every third drill was a crisis drill.

**Corrective Action:** On or before June 30, 2021, submit to BSE attestation that the program will maintain emergency drill documentation evidencing that every third drill will be a crisis drill. Also provide documentation that emergency drills were conducted monthly evidencing that the practice is in place to conduct monthly drills.

### **3. Recommendations:**

It is recommended that your program consider taking the following action:

- Consider increasing opportunities for paraprofessionals to participate in professional development activities with teachers, particularly, those focused on the topic of the role of paraprofessionals in the PPT process. In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act, parents may request paraprofessionals to attend their child’s PPT meeting.
- Maintain documentation in individual personnel files in addition to maintaining documentation of professional development and trainings activities in an administrative file.

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- Move forth with the plan for increasing behavioral support personnel to monitor behavior intervention plans.
- Move forth with the plan for increasing behavioral support personnel, including a part-time BCBA and two full-time behaviorists, to monitor behavior intervention plants.
- Move forth with the plan for the program to “build upon the vocational program” to accommodate the increased population of individuals Grade 12 and above in preparation for becoming competitive wage earners.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with the report and accepts the delineated corrective action plan. Upon receipt of your written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, a recommendation for program approval through June 30, 2026, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Ädelbrook-TLC–Cromwell:

**Approved Ages to Serve:** 5–21 years old (Grades K–12)  
**Approved Student Capacity:** 95 students  
**Approval Expiration Date:** June 30, 2026

cc: Jocelyn Poglitsch, Education Director  
Catherine Riker, Education Director