



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sabrina Trocchi, Chief Administrator
Northwest Village School

FROM: Dori Papa, Ed. D., Education Consultant ^{DP}
Bureau of Special Education

DATE: December 16, 2020

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

Please note: This Approved Private Special Education Program (APSEP) 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 *Policies, Procedures and Standards for Approved Private Special Education Programs*, were conducted remotely and in accordance with the approval process.

On November 3, 2020, an evaluation conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of the Northwest Village School special education program. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Elizabeth Battaglia, Ed.D., Director of Special Education, Madison Public Schools; and
- Katie Cyr, Education Director, Aspire Living and Learning Academy.

During a previous virtual site visit on October 19, 2020, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your administration.

At the exit conference on October 28, 2020, 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:

- Teacher and related service provider interview respondents reported that “the administrator is very supportive of staff, is tireless, is a strong advocate for students, and ensures students “have a voice.”
- A positive culture and climate has been established and is evidenced by mutually respectful relationships among students and between staff and students.
- The school provides highly individualized programming characterized as therapeutic education within an environment specifically designed to address each student’s needs for the provision of a calming and comforting learning environment.
- An outstanding level of collaboration, communication, and consistency relative to the development and implementation of appropriate social, emotional, behavioral, and academic programming for each student enrolled was noted by all staff interviewed.
- The program has robust agency and clinical team support for students and families in crisis both in school and at home. The program also has a strong interdisciplinary approach delivered by an array of educational and related service staff including special education and subject area teachers, school social workers, licensed clinical social workers, school psychologists, occupational therapists, and speech and language pathologists.
- The program has invested in strengthening the home-school partnership through the acquisition of new technology advances to enhance synchronous learning including Tango Smart Boards, Phase I Chromebooks, Google Classroom, and G-Suite Platforms, and staff professional development (PD) and training.
- Staff share an appreciation of the need for collaboration and teamwork. Teachers and related service providers that were interviewed described the level of collaboration as “excellent across the board and love that we have an expectation of strong collaboration.”
- The team reported evidence of well-planned instruction that appeared to be appropriate to the current level of performance for each student and aligned with individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives.

2. Standard Deficiencies:

The following standard deficiencies must be rectified:

Standard B: Administration

A private facility shall have a written policy to assure that it complies with the provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Public Law 108-446; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 20 United States Code Section 1232g; 34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 99, Sections 10-76a to 10-76q, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) and the regulations adopted thereunder; Public Act No. 96-246 (reporting of child abuse); Public Act No. 11-232 – An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws; Public Act No. 12-99 – An Act Concerning the Reporting of Children Placed in Seclusion; and all other relevant federal and state laws and regulations and local requirements.

Issue: As required by the CGS Section 10-222c, as amended by Public Act No. 16-67, each APSEP is required to obtain the information listed on the State of Connecticut Educational Employment Verification form from all current or former employer(s) of the applicants hired on or after July 1, 2016, if such employer was a local regional board of education, 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. Applicants are required under the law to provide a prospective employer with the name, address, and telephone number of all current or former employers that meet the above criteria. Information may be collected either through a written communication or telephonically.

Of five (5) personnel files reviewed, there was no evidence that an educational employment verification form was completed for two (2) employees hired after July 1, 2016.

Corrective Action: On or before December 30, 2020, provide an attestation to BSE that the State of Connecticut Educational Employer Verification form will be obtained for each new employee, and that upon obtaining completed forms, the program’s chief administrator or education director will make appropriate contact with previous or current employers.

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 from the placing local education agency (LEA) an IEP prior to the enrollment of the student in the private facility. 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 team (PPT) meeting that discusses and determines placement in the facility prior to placement.

Issue(s): In four (4) 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, or other basis.

Corrective Action: Submit to 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 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 three (3) months.

Issue: In reviewing emergency drill records, fire drills were documented to occur monthly. However, there was no evidence that every third drill was a crisis drill.

Corrective Action: On or before December 30, 2020, submit to BSE attestation that the program will maintain emergency drill documentation evidencing that every third drill will be a crisis drill.

3. Recommendations:

The following recommendations are offered to Northwest Village School:

- Continue maintaining the process of reviewing IEPs for appropriateness and accuracy. For example, ensure that related services provided on an individual and small group basis are broken out/separated.
- Move forth with the plan for expanding upon the development of community partnerships to broaden field vocational experiences.
- Continue moving forth with the plan to provide staff with PD focused on de-escalation skills and therapeutic approaches toward addressing student and family trauma.
- Consider the provision of selected PD aligned with outcomes of individual teacher *System for Educator Evaluation and Development* evaluations.
- Continue exploring further expansion of technology resources and the tools and skills necessary for staff to enhance instruction through the use of technology.

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, 2025 will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Northwest Village School:

Approved Ages to Serve:	5–22 years old (Grades PK–12)
Approved Student Capacity:	175 students
Approval Expiration Date:	June 30, 2025

cc: Jon Oddo, Education Director