




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Kikke Levin-Gerdner, Ed.D., Chief Administrator
The Webb School at Cheshire and the Webb School in the Valley

FROM: Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant 
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 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 December 3, 2020, an evaluation team conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of The Webb School at Cheshire and The Webb School in the Valley (The Webb at Cheshire and The Webb in the Valley) special education program. The team consisted of:

- Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Catherine Riker, Education Director, Ädelbrook-The Learning Center of Cromwell; and
- Judy Benson-Clark, Director of Pupil Services, Scotland Public School District.

During a previous visit on November 23, 2020, Ms. Colleen Hayles reviewed the education files of five (5) students as well as personnel files. In addition, Ms. Hayles has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your administration.

At the exit conference on December 3, 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:

- The program provides a therapeutic program through an integrated approach addressing specialized education and related services to meet the needs of students in Grades K–12, who are experiencing social emotional, behavioral, or mental health issues. The program provides a model of integrated supports, which includes, but is not limited to the availability of support from a licensed social worker, a school psychologist and psychiatrist in addition to staff trained in trauma-informed care to students in addressing social emotional learning.
- The program implements a strengths-based model of trauma-informed care and restorative practices within a framework of positive behavioral supports.
- A high level of collaboration between staff was noted in the development of proposed individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives as well as in the implementation of a student’s individual program.
- Students benefit from restorative practices in place, which focus on the processing of issues, identifying the impact of an individual’s behavior, encouraging reflection and determining natural consequences, and teaching appropriate coping strategies.
- Staff reports a high level of administrative, clinical, and peer support as well as the “coaching” provided by the education director.
- The program supports a unique hybrid model of support when appropriate, where students are able to attend their public school programs part time while receiving additional therapeutic supports and services through the Webb School’s program. The program supports a flexible model unique to the individual student.
- In addition to mental health supports available to students throughout their day, the program provides for the services of a guidance counselor at each site.
- Staff is characterized as highly invested, dedicated, and caring.
- Throughout the observations, students were characterized as engaged, active learners. A trusting supportive relationship between students and staff was clearly apparent in the interactions between teachers and students.
- In addition to the onsite supports available to students and staff, the program is affiliated with the Institute of Living and Hartford Hospital—providing expanded resources as needed and broader professional development (PD) opportunities.
- The program conducts benchmark assessments and employs data-driven decision making that informs the report of progress towards the achievement of goals and objectives and contributes to IEP development and differentiated instruction.

- The program reports a high level of collaboration between a student’s home district and the staff within the program. The curriculum implemented is based on the Connecticut State Standards and closely considers the instruction provided in a student’s home district, to ensure alignment of instruction and foster a student’s ability to return to a less restrictive setting.
- The program shares PD activities with public school, district personnel, and makes activities provided through a public school’s PD agenda available to its staff.
- Administrators and staff indicated a commitment to address continuous improvement for their individual professional growth as well as the growth of each student.
- The program provides outreach to parents and families through consultation, and where appropriate, home visits.
- Both sites (Cheshire and Avon) provide classroom /instructional spaces that are spacious and designed to accommodate the needs of students. The recently opened Avon site is warm and welcoming and designed to meet staff and student needs. Each site supports appropriately maintained locations available for use in response to student emergencies as well as sensory rooms to address the individual needs of students.

2. Standard Deficiencies:

There are no standard deficiencies identified at this time.

3. Recommendations:

The following recommendations are offered to The Webb at Cheshire and The Webb in the Valley:

- Consider increasing collaboration between the education directors at each site to ensure alignment of policies, procedures and practices, and the supports and resources provided to staff and students in each setting.
- Consider surveying staff at each site to clarify technology needs and supportive strategies for the effective use of available technology resources.
- Review PD needs and resources available to support the continuing education unit requirements for licensed and clinical staff.
- Explore additional community connections to increase the utilization of the resources available to enhance student programming for all students.
- Ensure opportunities to increase collaboration between the staff from the Cheshire and Avon sites.
- Continue to pursue hiring a music teacher in order to reinstitute the provision of that program.

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- Investigate opportunities to assist staff in developing measurable social emotional and behavioral goals.
- Consider a review and revision of the program description to include the mental health supports available to students throughout their day when needed, in addition to, the related services such as individual and small group support by mental health professionals indicated on the IEP. Consider recommending inclusion of these supports in the IEP when discussing special factors and considerations.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program accepts and agrees with the report. Upon receipt of your acceptance and agreement, a recommendation for approval through June 30, 2025, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Webb at Cheshire and Webb in the Valley:

The Webb School at Cheshire

Approved Ages to Serve: 4–22 years old (Grades K–12)

Approved Student Capacity: 34 Students

The Webb School in the Valley

Approved Ages to Serve: 4–22 years old (Grades K–12)

Approved Student Capacity: 38 students

Approval Expiration Dates (both sites): June 30, 2025

cc: Jill Devane, Education Director
Thomas Laudadio, Education Director