



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Mary C. Gunsalus, Chief Administrator
Yale Child Study Center School

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

DATE: June 15, 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 May 13, 2021, an evaluation team conducted a virtual site visit review for re-approval of Yale Child Study Center School special education program. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE); and
- Gwen Killheffer, Ed.D., Education Director, Solterra Academy.

During previous virtual site visit on May 11, 2021, Dr. Papa reviewed the education files of students, as well as personnel files. In addition, Dr. Papa reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by your staff.

At the exit conference on May 13, 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 Yale Child Study Center School is a shared Yale University, child study center/Yale-New Haven Hospital program, which offers educational services within a clinical setting. The

multidisciplinary approach is the major strength of the program. The education staff work in conjunction and close collaboration with the clinical treatment team, to provide services based on the child's placement in the residential psychiatric unit.

- Staff interviewed described the program administration as very supportive, collaborative, and integrally involved in the individualized educational and behavioral programming of all students. A related service provider stated that the education director is an “absolutely gifted educator, principal, teacher, and colleague.” The longevity of staff employment evidences high-quality leadership.
- The overall climate and culture of the program is inviting, positive, and reinforcing. There is a strong, unified culture between education and clinical staff.
- The program has a strong mental health component, which provides the ability to integrate social-emotional learning into daily teaching and instruction. Medical consultation services, including child psychiatric and pediatric evaluation, are available to children enrolled in the school. Individual counseling is provided to all children by their assigned therapist who is a psychiatry or psychology fellow of the Yale Child Study Center. The counseling provides support for the child throughout enrollment and hospitalization. Additional treatment team members include a family social worker, clinical nursing milieu.
- The Yale Child Study Center School subscribes to the Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) approach developed by Dr. Ross Greene. The CPS model is a cognitive behavioral program with the goal of fostering a collaborative partnership between adults and children to engage students in solving the problems that affect their lives. The CPS model is a non-punitive and non-adversarial, decreases the likelihood of conflict, enhances relationships, and improves communication. This model has proven to be effective at the Yale Child Study Center School as evidenced by zero seclusions/restraints for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic year.
- The Yale Child Study Center School utilizes a standards-based curriculum with lessons aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards. Instructional content, process, and products are differentiated in accordance with each student's individual interests, readiness, and developmental levels.
- There is a strong communication process to collaborate with local education agencies (LEAs) for planning student's re-integration into his/her public school. The education director has outstanding collaborative communication skills, which serve as a model for the interdisciplinary team approach essential to the success of students in the program. The education director serves as the liaison with the LEA—informing them of the student's residential placement and instructional services provided. If the student has an extended stay, the education director participates in the planning and placement team meeting. The education director facilitates the instructional and related services provided to the student and ensures that these services are implemented. Staff is able to provide evaluations as needed, as well as, communication with the student's LEA, to ensure a smooth re-integration into a less restrictive environment in his/her school district.

- Staff share an appreciation for teamwork. Interviewees highlighted a strength of the program as having “a strong partnership amongst the educators and the hospital staff in the residential component with a 100% team approach through daily rounds, which includes each of the disciplines, all experts in their fields, sharing, and growing with each other.” Clinical team members often visit the classroom to observe students in the educational setting.
- Children have access to various services and diverse groups, including individual and group cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness training, therapeutic yoga, dance instruction, art therapy, clown therapy, animal therapy, coping skills groups, outdoor sports, and health and wellness groups.
- Education staff members reported that professional learning opportunities are abundant and diverse with access to resources available through the Yale University Medical School. Education staff members attend the annual Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities Conference. Staff members may request to attend outside professional learning activities of individual interest and receive reimbursement.
- Assessments support the development of the appropriate individualized program and may include educational, social emotional, adaptive functioning, medical/medication, psychiatric, psychological, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language or other specifically requested evaluations.
- The Yale Child Study Center School utilizes the Connecticut State Department of Education System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) evaluation process. Additionally, the education staff is also required to participate in the Yale University SMART Goals evaluation process annually.
- School administration has worked with Yale University to provide clear signage for visitors to locate the school within the Yale New Haven Hospital and from the street entrance.

2. Standard Deficiencies:

No standard deficiencies have been identified:

3. Recommendations:

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

- Consider developing a plan of succession for emergencies, extended absences, and/or future retirements being that the education staff is comprised of an education director/chief administrator and one special education teacher. Consider hiring a paraprofessional with a bachelor’s degree to provide classroom support and to fulfill the role of substitute teacher if needed.
- Consider exploring technology oversight software to allow students increased opportunities to utilize existing program technology such as the iPads, laptops, and color printer, to enhance instruction while still operating in alignment with hospital policy.

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- Consider expanding the Yale Child Study Center School services to provide full-day programming, as appropriate, for students receiving services in the partial-hospital program provided by the Yale Child Study Center—the current school program provides educational services solely to students admitted into the Children’s Psychiatric Inpatient Service (CPIS) unit.

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. 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 Acting Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Yale Child Study Center School:

Approved Ages to Serve:	4–14 years old (Grades PK–9)
Approved Student Capacity:	16 students
Approval Expiration Date:	June 30, 2026