



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Kathryn O'Connor, Ph.D.  
Chief Administrator  
Connecticut College Children's Program

**FROM:** Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant/Coordinator  
Bureau of Special Education  
Approved Private Special Education Programs

**DATE:** May 18, 2018

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

On May 10, 2018, an evaluation team visited the special education program, Connecticut College Children's Program (CCCP) in order to conduct an on-site review for continuous approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education. The team consisted of:

- Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant/Coordinator, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Linda Kapitan, Director of Education, Webb School; and
- Michael Dietter, Director of Pupil Personnel, Bristol Public Schools.

During previous on-site visits on May 3, 2018, and May 9, 2018, Ms. Colleen Hayles reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, she has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by the CCCP administration.

At the exit conference on May 10, 2018, 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:**

- CCCP provides an excellent inclusive setting to address the needs of young children eligible for special education services within a play-based early childhood program that is child and family focused.

- The play-based curriculum is implemented by professional teams. These teams include highly qualified teachers who hold dual certifications in early childhood education and special education, as well as, contracted related service personnel that currently includes a board certified behavior analyst, speech therapist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist.
- All staff including contracted personnel and paraprofessional staff participate in weekly interdisciplinary team meetings characterized as collaborative and supportive of the application and appropriate implementation of goals and objectives.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's development and are included in the interdisciplinary team meeting one to two times a month.
- Informational meetings for parents are held regularly and efforts to engage parents are varied. The topics of focus at these meetings include literacy development, school readiness, and promoting healthy choices (nutrition, self-regulation, and setting boundaries).
- Students are positively impacted by the affiliation with Connecticut College, which promotes cooperative research and ongoing adult learning. The outcome positively impacts the young children served and their families.
- The application of the Early Learning and Development Standards and integration of developmentally appropriate activities was evident throughout the program.
- The overall climate and atmosphere of the school is warm, welcoming, and inclusive. A strong sense of community and team collaboration was noted.
- The program provides access to observation areas for each classroom space allowing parents, professionals, students, and fellow staff the opportunity to view activities occurring in a classroom without interrupting the learning experience of the students. An "open door policy" illustrates that families are an integral part of the program. Parents are encouraged to observe and participate in school-based activities with their children.
- Part-time related service professionals view themselves as true team members whose experience and expertise is valued and integrated into the fabric of the total program, benefiting all students enrolled.
- Therapists work with students within the classroom, modeling interventions and best practices, and work within a 1:1 setting. Related service providers collaborate with each other and engage in co-treatment when appropriate.
- Typical students enrolled in the program benefit from the experience and expertise of the related service area specialists (occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech and language therapist) through the support of grant funding.
- The program administrators are available and accessible to staff throughout the day for questions and direction. Administration is extremely responsive to the needs identified by staff.
- The program director of education/chief administrator is recognized statewide for her leadership in the field of early childhood education.

- The program benefits from the partnership, support, and resource backup provided by Connecticut College, assuring that all students receive the support and services necessary to meet their individual needs.
- The program administrator is vigilant in the implementation of the educator and administrator evaluation system.

## 2. Standard Deficiencies:

No standard deficiencies have been identified at this time:

## 3. Recommendations:

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

- Continue to create opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to observe their students during the provision of related services to enhance the level of understanding of the approaches implemented and to expand opportunities to generalize skill development outside the therapy setting.
- Ensure that additional required documentation in accordance with the *"Principles, Procedures and Standards for the Approval of Private Special Education Programs"* (i.e., professional development, employment verification, criminal background checks, and reference to the educator evaluation outcomes) is also included in the file overseen by the college's Human Resources Department. Information contained in the staff file is aligned to the college's human resources index of information.
- Ensure that the program can fully implement the individualized education program (IEP) developed and agreed to by the PPT as written. At the time of the visit, only one student file representing a local education agency (LEA) placed student, was available for review. While the IEP was well developed and for the most part appropriately articulated in relation to specialized instruction and required related services to be implemented by the program, it is highly recommended that the program establish a policy and procedure to review IEPs when received as a finalized document from the responsible LEA.
- Ensure that the setting (i.e., 1:1 versus small group) for specialized instruction and related services is clearly articulated on page 11 of the IEP upon review of IEPs proposed by the LEA. Statements such as "flexible scheduling based on student need" are difficult to implement with fidelity as service delivery is undefined and open to interpretation.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether CCCP agrees with the report and whether your program accepts the delineated corrective action plan, if applicable. Upon receipt of CCCP's acceptance of the report in its entirety, a recommendation for continuous approval through June 30, 2023, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to the special education program:

**Approved Ages to Serve:** 3–7 years old

**Approved Student Capacity:** 16