



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Mr. Jonathan Trichter, Chief Administrator
Hubbard Day School

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

DATE: December 22, 2022

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

On Thursday, November 3, 2022, an evaluation team visited Hubbard Day School to conduct an on-site review for reapproval. The team consisted of:

- Dr. Dori Papa, Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE/Bureau);
- Dr. Stacey Heiligenthaler, Chief Officer of Special Education, Greenwich Public Schools; and
- Dr. Lisa Riggi, Education Director, Aspire Living and Learning.

On Wednesday, November 2, 2022, 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 November 3, 2022, the evaluation team shared its impressions and preliminary findings. The following areas of the special education program were 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
termination of enrollment

Commendations:

The overall climate and culture of the Hubbard Day School is warm, inviting, supportive, and engaging.

Staff described leadership, specifically the education director, as supportive, very positive, responsive, highly visible, hands on, and integrally involved in the individualized educational and behavioral programming of all students.

Staff interviewed reported they “really love working at the program and strong relationships exist among all school community members.” Staff were characterized as collegial, supportive, trusting, and respectful of each other. The atmosphere was described as “familial.”

The program recently hired a full-time school nurse.

The program utilizes the live online Central Reach Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) data collection, progress monitoring platform, to support individuals with autism and intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Communication with parents is a program strength. Daily virtual parent communication logs were implemented for the 2022–23 school year. Parents are welcome and very involved as the program has an open-door policy and welcomes parental input and feedback. Student-centered meetings occur with the Hubbard Day School team and parents every six to eight weeks. Families are integrally involved in the development of their child’s individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives. The program engages families in school events, including graduations, special assemblies, and recently held an outdoor “meet and greet” for parents to get acquainted with each other.

Staff shares an appreciation of the need for collaboration and teamwork. The program has a strong culture of collaboration with a student-centered multidisciplinary team approach—providing students with academic, behavioral, and therapeutic support.

The program has a very large occupational therapy room, which the observation team described as “amazing and extraordinary” because of its abundance of new state-of-the-art equipment for addressing the sensory needs of students.

The observation team reported evidence of well-planned instruction, which appeared to be appropriate to the current level of performance for each student. Lesson content was aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards. Teachers utilized multisensory materials and behavioral goals as identified in IEPs and were reinforced throughout the lessons. Lessons incorporated an academic, activity of daily living, and vocational component. Technology was also effectively integrated into lessons observed.

Small class sizes promote student engagement and individualized academic support. Overall, the school provides a safe, intimate learning environment in which all staff are committed to high academic and behavioral expectations for students.

The program has a large outdoor area with “state-of-the art” playground equipment, which includes a designated ABA area.

An excellent rapport between education staff and students was observed as evidenced through smile exchanges, humor, and teachers providing students with specific positive praise.

The program has technology to support teachers in the provision of instruction and students in their learning. Classrooms are equipped with interactive Smart Boards and each student is provided with an individual iPad. Instructional assistants utilize iPads for student behavioral data collection.

Staff interviewed reported they are provided with “a lot” of professional development and training opportunities. Recent in-house training activity topics focused on special education legal updates, ABA, occupational therapy, and sensory behavior. The school affords teachers and related service personnel with opportunities to access off-site professional development activities of individual interest at no cost.

Standard Deficiencies:

No standard deficiencies were identified.

Recommendations:

The Bureau offers the following recommendations to Hubbard Day School:

Contact the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office to coordinate participation in the Teacher Educator And Mentoring (TEAM) Program ([CSDE TEAM program](#)) for the recently hired/new teacher.

Move forth with the plan to hire a school psychologist.

Consider finding and/or making space for a physical education room and hiring a physical education teacher.

Move forth with the plan to expand upon the program’s existing post-secondary transition plan through hiring a school social worker to engage in the role of transition coordinator and to expand upon community-based partnerships, thereby increasing career interest exploration for students.

Maintain a written plan for ongoing personnel development, including a professional development policy that shall include 18 hours of professional development to staff each year at no cost, professional development opportunities aligned to individual educator evaluations to support areas of identified need, and the proper documentation of professional development activities (maintain a list of professional development activities in each individual personnel file). Staff interviewed expressed an interest in professional development focused on differentiation of instructional content, process and products in accordance with student’s individual interests, readiness level, and preferential learning modality.

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Move forth with the plan for the program's education director to be more involved in the paraeducator evaluation process.

Provide opportunities for teachers and related service personnel to visit and observe public school classrooms as well as other nonpublic school settings where students may transition upon a planning and placement team recommendation. A clear understanding of the expectations, (academic and social/emotional) instructional models, and level of expected self-advocacy will assist in preparing students for this transition.

Explore the menu of activities and events available through the Connecticut [State Education Resource Center](#) for teachers, paraeducators, and related service personnel. Staff shares an appreciation for diverse professional development and training opportunities.

Within 15 working days from the date of this preliminary evaluation report, please indicate in writing to the BSE whether your program agrees with and accepts this preliminary report. Upon receipt of the Hubbard Day School's written agreement and acceptance of the entire report, the Bureau will submit a recommendation for a five-year approval through December 30, 2027, to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to Hubbard Day School:

Approved Ages to Serve: 5 to 22 years old
Approved Grades to Serve: K through 12th
Approved Capacity: 35 students
Approval Expiration Date: December 30, 2027

cc: Ashley Coelho, Education Director