



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Brooke Violante Kelly, Chief Administrator
High Road School of Hartford High

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

DATE: May 31, 2019

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

On March 7, 2019, an evaluation team visited the High Road School of Hartford High (HRS Hartford High) special education program to conduct an on-site review for reapproval. The team consisted of:

- Dori Papa, Ed.D., Education Consultant, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Jane Morris, Director of Education, Raymond Hill School; and
- Denise Messina, Director of Pupil Services, Somers Public Schools.

During a previous on-site visit on February 28, 2019, Dori 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 HRS Hartford High administration.

At the exit conference on March 7, 2019, 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.

Commendations:

- Teacher interview respondents reported that administrators maintain an open door policy, are readily available for feedback and support, and that “communication is a two-way between administrators and staff in contrast to a top-down approach.”
- Students benefit from the support of two full-time social workers, a part-time school psychologist, a nurse shared with the elementary program, and mobile medical and dental services provided by the Charter Oak Health Center Mobile Medical and Dental Van. Families are contacted by the

school social workers to learn what medical and dental attention their child needs. The program is in the process of expanding the contract with Charter Oak to include on-site psychiatric services by the end of this school year.

- Classrooms are large, bright, and contain SmartBoards and individual student study carrels for independent work.
- The overall school climate and culture is described by staff as “team oriented and collaborative, and the small community lends itself to staff being supportive of each other.”
- Procedures are in place to address student absences. The school social workers make daily phone calls to homes of students who are absent, as well as, make visits to the home when they are unable to reach parents/guardians by telephone. Attendance letters are sent to parents/guardians at five, 10, and 15 days of absence and the local education agency (LEA) is copied.
- Students have access to computer-based software programs including Lexia, Keymath, and career exploration programs as well as access to the Odysseyware credit recovery program.
- The program utilizes two teacher evaluation models, Connecticut’s System for Educator Evaluation and Development and the Catapult OWL model, which complement each other. The program has a strong and supportive teacher induction process that includes an initial evaluation followed by formal evaluations and informal classroom walkthroughs.
- Social workers reach out to families and encourage engagement in school-based activities. Family education workshops are offered. The program has partnered with the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center to offer a Thanksgiving feast. Bi-annual family events are held including an open house with Charter Oak to educate parents on the medical and dental services available to their child. This year, the program held its first Valentines’ Day event as well as other activities for families such as student art and talent shows.
- Students enrolled benefit from a variety of enrichment and vocational opportunities that are interest driven, community based, involve service learning, and provide a less restrictive community setting to practice learned social skills. Community partnerships currently include Burlington, Shop Rite, Petco, various hairdressers, and an auto mechanic shop. The program has also partnered with Springfield Technical Community College and students visit the graphic design and nursing programs. The speech-language pathologist goes into the community with students in the transition program.
- The program has an average length of stay of 24 months, evidencing it has experienced success in transitioning students to a less restrictive instructional setting. The program collaborates and coordinates with the LEA for a seamless reintegration of students into their home school.
- Academic and behavior instruction and interventions are data driven. The program employs a strong data collection process through a Catapult data collection and analysis system. Individual student data, as well as trend data, are reviewed often and with regularity to inform tiered intensive academic interventions (academics, curriculum, and instruction).

- The program has well-thought-out tasks for student restorative practice. Students choose from tasks that include writing letters to primary students, apology letters, providing positive advice to younger or other students, and/or doing something to help the animal shelter or maintenance. The restorative task takes place under the guidance and direction of the school social worker during the student's individual counseling session.
- The structure of the school-wide behavior management system allows all staff to be unified when addressing student behavior.
- The program has a proven effective three-tiered model for database individualization and intensive academic interventions (academics, curriculum, and instruction).
- The program shares curriculum resources with other Catapult programs in Connecticut and beyond.
- An "IEP Binder" is maintained in each classroom for each student. Data on progress toward the attainment of goals and objectives is documented throughout the week. An observation team member reported that the teacher was providing explicit math instruction with a student in alignment with the individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives.
- The program employs the Catapult instructional "Rotation Model," which includes teacher directed sessions, independent seat work, small group lessons, and tech-based workstations in the classrooms. The observation team reported that the "classroom reflected the instructional rotation model and the classroom design and equipment are conducive to the model."
- The teacher interview responses evidenced solid understanding of the IEP process. The program utilizes Catapult Learning's custom-developed Academic, Behavioral and Life Skills Education software to enter and track students' daily behavior point sheet data as well as IEP goal and objective tracking on a quarterly basis.
- Staff members have opportunities for career advancement within the program.
- Staff members expressed that they "enjoy working in the program, love it here, and feel proud to work at this school."

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 (PA) 96-246 (reporting of child abuse); PA 11-232 – An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws; PA 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 PA 16-67, each approved private special education program is required to obtain the information listed on the Connecticut State Department of Education Educational Employer 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.

There was no evidence that a CSDE Educational Employer Verification form was completed for three employees hired after July 1, 2016.

Corrective Action: Provide an attestation to BSE that the CSDE Educational Employer Verification form will be obtained for each new employee and that upon obtaining completed forms, the program's chief administrator or director of education 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 an IEP from the placing LEA prior to the enrollment of the student. 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: In five of five 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 basis, or other means.

Corrective Action: While the program has initiated a process and procedure for the review of an IEP received from the LEA and has identified in writing the need to make corrections, there remains a need for further scrutiny of the IEP document. Submit to the BSE copies of the next three 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 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 June 30, 2019, submit to BSE attestation that the program will maintain emergency drill documentation evidencing that every third drill will be a crisis drill.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are offered to HRS Hartford High:

- Move forth with the plan for expanding upon the development of community partnerships to broaden field vocational experiences for students (beginning in Grade 9).

- Consider opportunities for increased collaboration time during the school day for teachers to develop lesson plans and collaborate with teacher assistants.
- Consider the provision of professional development (PD) and training for teacher assistants on the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators. Work with teachers in order to best use their support staff given the diverse needs of the students.
- Move forth with the plan for expanding the school library as well as developing a kitchen space and purchasing additional cooking equipment.
- Expand opportunities to provide selected PD aligned with outcomes of the educator evaluations for individual teachers.
- Explore other mechanisms of communication to replace use of “walkie talkies” as the team observed the communication was loud and highly distracting to students in the classrooms.

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. Please be advised that a recommendation for continuous approval through June 30, 2024, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education once written acceptance of the report in its entirety is received.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to HRS Hartford High:

Approved Ages:	13–21 years old
Approved Grades:	8–12
Approved Capacity:	66 students
Approval Expiration Date:	June 30, 2024

cc: Katelyn McDonald, Director of Education