



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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

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

**DATE:** May 22, 2019

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

On February 27, 2019, an evaluation team visited the High Road School of Wallingford (HRS Wallingford) 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);
- Karen Helene, Benhaven School, Director of Education; and
- Sarah Smalley, Director of Special Education, Regional School District 4.

During a previous on-site visit on February 25, 2019, Dori Papa reviewed the education files of students as well as personnel files. In addition, Ms. Papa has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by HRS Wallingford administration.

At the exit conference on February 27, 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:**

- 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. The program has an abundance of transition related curriculum and resources.
- 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.

- Students and staff benefit from the support of a full-time social worker.
- Academic and behavior instruction and interventions are data driven. The program employs a strong data collection process through a Catapult model including a data collection and analysis system. Individual student data, as well as trend data, are reviewed often and with regularity.
- 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.
- 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 contents of individual workspaces within the classroom provide clarity of daily expectations and structure. For example, student’s individualized daily instructional schedule and behavior management system level are posted.
- Internet protocols are in place to prevent inappropriate or unauthorized use of social media outside of the school environment and to protect student privacy.
- Implementation of principles of positive behavior interventions and supports are evident through visual rules and routines posted throughout the school.
- Teacher interview responses evidenced their solid understanding of the individualized education program (IEP) process.
- Staff views administration as consistently supportive and equally committed to implementing individualized programs that result in the highest level of benefit to each student. When interviewed, a teacher described administration as “organizational leaders, not bosses.”
- The program utilizes two teacher evaluation systems including Connecticut’s System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) Model and the Catapult “OWL” model, which are complimentary to each other. Teachers that were interviewed reported that as a result of the evaluation systems, they are “working smarter and not harder.”
- Staff members have opportunities for career advancement within the program.
- The overall climate and culture of the program is positive and reinforcing. The team observed and shared that the demeanor of teachers, teacher assistants, and all other staff members was “impeccable, kind, low key, and exhibited excellent interaction with students.”
- The program site is welcoming, spacious, and organized. To address the needs of students experiencing dysregulation, the facility includes a sensory room developed by the occupational therapist.

- Plans are in place for the HRS Wallingford site to become the “curriculum hub” for instructional materials and resources that will be readily available to all Catapult Programs throughout and beyond Connecticut.
- Overall, staff expressed they are enthusiastic about their jobs and excited about students’ academic and behavioral progress.

**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 (CSDE) Educational Employer Verification form from all current or former employer(s) of the applicants hired on or before 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 the CSDE Educational Employer Verification form was completed for an employee hired after July 1, 2016.

**Corrective Action:** Provide an attestation to the 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 local education agency (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 two 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 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 I: Qualifications and Requirements for Instructional, Administrative, and Support Personnel -**

Each private facility shall ensure that all special education program administrators, instructional, and related services personnel providing special education and related services who were hired after September 1, 1980, shall hold proper state certification, which shall be on file with the State Board of Education.

**Issue:** The Durational Shortage Area Permit previously provided to Jennie L. Serra expired on February 13, 2019. A current application that includes all required documents, is not on file or under consideration/review by the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification.

**Corrective Action Required:** Immediately identify the teacher, Jennie L. Serra, as a qualified substitute. Upon the 40<sup>th</sup> consecutive day of acting in that capacity, acquire a Long Term Substitute Permit unless or until, she completes the required submissions and is granted an initial certification by the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification, as a Comprehensive Special Education Teacher. Submit a copy of the authorization or certification upon acquisition to the BSE.

**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 the BSE an 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 Wallingford:

- Consider exploring expansion of technological resources, tools, and skills necessary for staff to enhance instruction through the use of technology such as interactive Smart Boards.
- Consider increasing the planning and collaboration time between teachers, teacher assistants, related service providers, and behavior analysts.
- Consider the provision of selected professional development that aligns with outcomes of individual teacher SEED evaluations.
- 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 Wallingford:

<b>Approved Ages:</b>	5–21 years old
<b>Approved Grades:</b>	K–12
<b>Approved Capacity:</b>	88 students
<b>Approval Expiration Date:</b>	June 30, 2024

cc: Vincent Lindsley, Director of Education  
Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant/Coordinator