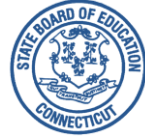




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Dr. Steven Girelli, Chief Administrator  
Raymond Hill School

**FROM:** Colleen M. Hayles, Coordinator *cmh*  
Bureau of Special Education  
Approved Private Special Education Programs

**DATE:** February 14, 2018

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

On December 18, 2017, an evaluation team visited the Raymond Hill School (Raymond Hill) special education program in order to conduct an on-site review for continuous approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education. The team consisted of:

- Colleen Hayles, Coordinator, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Jeff Drew, Director of Education, Charles F. Hayden School; and
- Kimberly Pearce, Director of Pupil Personnel, Hamden Public Schools.

During a previous on-site visit on December 6, 2017, Ms. Colleen Hayles reviewed the education files of five students as well as personnel files. In addition, Ms. Hayles has reviewed the application and its accompanying documents submitted to the BSE by Raymond Hill administration.

At the exit conference on December 18, 2017, Ms. Hayles and the team shared 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 overall climate and culture of Raymond Hill is positive and reinforcing, and aligns with the school's mission to develop academic skills and acquire the social skills to succeed both in school and in the community.
- Staff indicates that the administration is extremely supportive, strives to give all a voice, and encourages collaboration.
- There is evidence throughout the program that positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) have been adopted schoolwide and provides a foundation for behavioral expectations within the school setting.
- The program employs a relational model, which incorporates the tenets of restorative practice, PBIS, and trauma informed care. All staff are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention in an effort to respond appropriately to student behavior.
- The school facility is well maintained and designed to provide a positive learning environment for students. Classrooms are well equipped to meet the requirements of the subjects taught and provide current technology opportunities to meet students' needs.
- The program provides an array of electives allowing students to develop and explore personal interests and capitalize on their creativity. Students benefit from spaces designed specifically for elective offerings (i.e., physical education, art, and music) that are taught by certified subject matter teachers. In addition, resources such as a technology hub and 3D printer, a well-equipped woodworking shop, a kitchen devoted to the culinary arts, an automotive repair shop, an environmental science lab, and a music/recording studio, provide students with hands on instructional experiences that rival those of public high school. Other designated instructional and activity areas include the cafeteria and a school store. All related school-based activities are connected to community initiatives.
- Students benefit from a cooperative instructional model where a content- and skill-specific instructor is teamed with a special education teacher to provide hands on instructional expertise and real-world experience in areas such as technology, environmental science, woodworking, and culinary arts.
- Students have access to a variety of vocational training activities in school and in the community.
- The program fosters the development of a variety of its students' talents, including drama and music and sponsors a musical production each year.
- The program offers a complement of related services and houses an exceptional sensory/occupational therapy area to address student needs.
- Areas in the building that have been designated for "time out," "taking space," or "calming," have been decorated and painted based on designs generated by a collaboration between students and staff.
- The staff engages in ongoing analysis of various data collections, which assist in developing and monitoring students' academic skill development as well as their social emotional growth.

- Evidence indicates that Raymond Hill has successfully implemented the educator evaluation system. Implementation of the system has positively impacted learning among staff in relation to the use of pre and posttest measures and assures that the data tracked and collected provides staff with the information necessary to improve student outcomes.
- Raymond Hill provides the LIVE component to address the vocational needs of 18–21 year olds who have completed their academic credits for graduation, but require vocational, life skills and/or educational supports. In addition, Raymond Hill has developed an intensive support setting as an alternative to in-school/out-of-school suspension. This program component provides academic instruction and emphasizes the development of alternative coping skills, enabling the students to successfully reenter the larger school environment.

## 2. **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 provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, PL 101-476; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; FERPA, Sections 10-76a to 10-76q of the Connecticut General Statutes and regulations adopted thereunder; Public Act 96-246; and all other relevant federal and state laws and regulations and local requirements.

**Issue:** A review of the Raymond Hill Program Manual (October 2012) indicates continued reference to language and definitions within the policy and procedures titled “*Therapeutic External Control*” that are not aligned with the state regulations related to the use of restraint and seclusion in schools.

**Corrective Action:** Review and revise the language and definitions currently in place in the Raymond Hill Program Manual (October 2012), specifically the policy and procedure titled “*Therapeutic External Control*,” to ensure that the definitions contained in the documents are accurately aligned with state regulations related to the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. On or before June 15, 2018, submit to the BSE a copy of the proposed or revised policy and procedure as presented to and/or approved by the Raymond Hill Board. Provide an agenda of the Board meeting reflecting the discussion of this topic.

## 3. **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations are offered for review by Raymond Hill:

- Review individualized education programs (IEPs) developed by referring districts to ensure they are complete and accurate, and include all required components for full implementation. Request that sending local education agencies clearly identify the special considerations for students whose behavior interferes with their ability to learn or the ability for others to learn. Indicate whether those considerations are addressed through IEP goals and objectives, a behavior intervention plan (BIP) and/or other interventions. If a BIP is referenced, ensure that the document accompanies the current IEP as an attachment to the IEP.
- Include in each staff members’ personnel file, the full listing of professional development (PD) activities via a transcript, which reflects all PD activities provided by the program and/or engaged in by staff. Currently only activities required by the greater agency are maintained in the staff file.
- Implement the current procedure utilized upon receipt of an IEP after participating in a planning and placement team meeting. Ensure that all the information in the IEP is complete and accurate, and Raymond Hill can implement the supports and services outlined in the document as written (i.e., require clarification of all related service whether it is provided individually or within a group setting

and include the identification of all staff involved in the implementation of identified goals and objectives). This review and any subsequent communication with the responsible district must be done in a timely manner and must then be reflected in the student file. It is strongly recommended that written documentation of requested changes in the IEP be attached to the current IEP to ensure that the IEP can be implemented with fidelity.

- Continue to explore and implement strategies to recruit and maintain qualified staff through activities such as outreach to college teacher preparation programs, the provision of additional incentives, and a review of salaries and benefits.

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 whether your program accepts the delineated corrective action plan, if applicable. Upon receipt of Raymond Hill'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:

**Ages Approved to Serve:** ages 5 through 21 years

**Approved Student Capacity:** 126 students

cc: Jane Morris, Director of Education