



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Daniel Rezende
Chief Administrator
Connecticut Junior Republic-Bristol

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

DATE: February 1, 2019

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

On Tuesday, December 18, 2018, an evaluation team visited Connecticut Junior Republic-Bristol (CJR-Bristol) in order to conduct an on-site review for initial approval as a Connecticut State Department of Education approved private special education program. The team consisted of:

- Colleen Hayles, Education Consultant/Coordinator, Bureau of Special Education (BSE);
- Sarah Wilcox, Director of Education, Hope Academy; and
- Aimee Turner, Director of Pupil Services, Thomaston Public Schools.

During a previous on-site visit on November 9, 2018, Colleen Hayles reviewed the education files of five students as well as personnel files. In addition, Ms. Hayles has reviewed the application materials submitted to the BSE by CJR-Bristol administration.

At the exit conference on December 18, 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.

Commendations:

- CJR-Bristol provides strength-based, gender specific education within an intimate instructional setting, allowing the delivery of highly individualized supports and services to students enrolled.
- Student needs are addressed through a trauma informed approach imbedded within a framework of positive behavioral interventions and supports—promoting a positive peer culture.

- The program promotes choice theory and implements a strength-based model where students are encouraged to focus on the present and move forward from that point.
- Students are provided the opportunity to practice appropriate social skills throughout the school day, both in school and in the community.
- The positive impact of the implementation of a relational model is observable in the students' level of engagement and the interactions among students and between students and staff.
- The current on-site director of education's experience and background brings an understanding of the needs of the students served and a focus on the importance of maintaining an appropriate level of academic rigor.
- A report of progress is generated weekly to provide students and parents with information regarding a student's status, his/her accomplishments, and his/her challenges.
- Students have access to vocational experiences on both campus and in the community, which include but are not limited to, an in-house culinary experience, a nearby beauty academy, and children's museum. Student experiences are individually designed based on each student's preference, interests, and skills.
- Staff's strong commitment to the well-being of the girls and recognition of each student's strengths, allows them to differentiate supports and services in addressing individual needs.
- The program benefits from personnel and services available through the Connecticut Junior Republic, Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center (Litchfield). This relationship contributes to the program's ability to address and support the individual needs of each student enrolled.

Standard Deficiencies:

Standard F: Program Requirements – A private facility shall have a written description of the individualized education program (IEP) for each student that should include, as appropriate, a behavior intervention plan (BIP), the student success plan, the language and communication plan, and transition goals and objectives that move the student toward college or career readiness including opportunities to work and interact in the community; and shall have a written curriculum and sufficient instructional materials, supplies, and equipment in accordance with state requirements for educational programs for full implementation of the IEP.

Issue: In five of five IEPs reviewed, one or more required elements of the IEP was not accurately reflected or the IEP document was not complete. Errors and omissions include the following:

- On page 1 of the IEP, staff of CJR-Bristol was not accurately or appropriately identified as attending the planning and placement (PPT) meeting according to their roles.
- Providers of IEP services and related services were not accurately represented (i.e., limited to special education teacher).
- Documentation for the participation of a representative from CJR-Bristol at a PPT meeting prior to the placement of the student was absent.

- Counseling services indicated on the IEP must be separated/broken out to specify whether delivery of the related service is provided as a 1:1, small group, or other basis.
- A BIP was indicated as a requirement under special considerations of the IEP, but it was not attached to the IEP or found in the student's file. Documentation related to the supports/services needed to address the behavioral/emotional concerns of the student, was not representative of the level of student need.
- One IEP documented placement for diagnostic purposes, but it did not address the question of eligibility or IEP development. Additionally, there was no documentation that the team met every 10 days as required by regulation.

Corrective Action Required: Submit to the BSE copies of the next three IEPs developed by a local education agency (LEA) to provide documentation that the program has consistently implemented its IEP audit process of conducting a careful review of the district prepared IEP. If needed and as appropriate, provide evidence that CJR-Bristol has notified the LEA that the IEP requires revision in order for the program to fully implement the IEP.

Standard G: Evaluation of Student Progress and Reporting Responsibilities - The private special education program shall submit to the sending agency and to the parents/guardian, reports of each student's progress based on the goals and objectives in the student's IEP in accordance with the reporting schedule and content requirements of the child's IEP as determined by the PPT. These reports must be communicated in language that is easily understood by parents/guardians.

Issue: A review of the files did not indicate that a mechanism is in place to ensure that IEP progress reports were shared with the parent and responsible LEA according to the calendar specified on the IEP.

Corrective Action: Provide documentation that indicates that reports of progress toward achievement of IEP goals and objectives have been forwarded to both parents and LEAs in accordance with the dates indicated on the IEP. Submit by June 30, 2019, copies of three notifications or letters that indicate that the Progress Reports have been forwarded to the appropriate parties.

Recommendations:

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

- Consider increasing social worker support to a full time status in order to adequately address the needs of students and to collaborate and consult with staff.
- Explore expansion of vocational class offerings to include child development, health and nursing, and other interests identified by students and staff.
- Ensure that only appropriately licensed and trained staff provide student transportation to and from school activities.
- Expand current curriculum resources to enhance instructional opportunities and expand implementation options and alternatives.
- Provide to staff professional development opportunities that focus on the grade-level content area taught. Consider teaming the CJR-Bristol program staff with public school colleagues and/or tapping into local districts' professional development offerings.

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, if applicable. Upon receipt of CJR-Bristol's written acceptance of this report in its entirety, a recommendation for a one-year initial approval period from February 4, 2019, through February 4, 2020, will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.

Upon such approval, the following will be applicable to CJR-Bristol:

Approved Ages: 9–21 years old

Approved Grades: 4–12

Approved Capacity: 16 students

Approval Expiration Date: February 4, 2020

cc: James Obst, Director of Education