

THE CONNECTION'S ACADEMY EAST **THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

Connection's Academy East is a reclaiming therapeutic environment for boys and girls ages 6 to 21 placed by local school districts. The children may have a special education eligibility diagnosis of one or more of the following categories. Emotional Disability, Specific Learning Disability, Speech Language Impairment, Intellectual disabled, Other Health Impairment, Autistic, or Traumatic Brain Injury. Connection's Academy East provides school, family and community partnerships leading to successful learning.

Classes are small (averaging 8-10 students) with an Illinois Licensed special education teacher and an instructional aide. All staff meets or exceeds Illinois licensure requirements. Students are grouped in age appropriate classes with no more than a four-year span in elementary/junior high classes and no more than a six-year span in the high school classes. Connection's Academy East services elementary classrooms grades 1-3, intermediate grades 4-5, and junior high 6-8 and several high school classes for grades 9-12. The elementary and junior high classes are offered a standard curriculum of Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education. Each student at Connection's Academy East has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and services are provided based on the IEP that was developed by the placing district.

The High School Curriculum parallels the basic offerings of local high school districts. A variety of classes are available to meet individual student needs (as called for on the IEP) as well as graduation requirements. These high school classes are departmentalized, which provided an opportunity for the student to rotate to subject-specific classrooms throughout the day.

A great deal of extra assistance is provided to help the students make progress in the general curriculum including providing breaks within the classroom, creating instruction with interwoven kinesthetic activities to provide for these children's need for movement, as well as trained staff in sensory integration techniques in order to proactively disperse the sensory activities throughout the day.

Due to the nature of the student's needs, a full continuum of related services is available including Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Substance Abuse Therapy, Psychological Counseling, Psychiatric and Psychological Consultation, and School Health Services.

Upon enrollment, Connection's Academy East staff assesses the student's functioning in academic, personal and interpersonal skills and provides programming that is developmentally appropriate. Connection's Academy East staff then continue to assess progress on each student's goal on their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals through a variety of methods including progress monitoring through our goal tracking system, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, curriculum based measurements, student point sheet, classroom assignments and homework, and teacher and therapist observations. Progress reports are sent to parents on a quarterly basis with mid-term progress updated every 5 weeks.

Successful transition to a less restrictive educational environment is our ultimate goal for all Connection's Academy East students. Individualized criteria to meet this goal will be defined for each student, as will the time-span for this process. Connection's Academy East main programmatic outcomes are: to increase students' attendance to 90% on a monthly average, decrease the number of behavioral visits and students meet or exceed Individualized Education Plan goals as created by the team. Data collection for attendance is through student daily attendance records and is reviewed by the student's team on a weekly basis. When there is a pattern of excessive absences, or absences on the same day of every week, the team meets to determine what interventions can be implemented to assist the student in being successful in achieving the 90% monthly attendance rate. Data collection for the decrease in behavioral visits is collected through student point sheets, goal-tracker data collection system, behavioral visit reports and detention forms. The team meets on every student once every 10 weeks to review behavioral data and determine if additional interventions need to be implemented. Data collected for meeting or exceeding IEP goals is collected through a variety of resources dependent upon the goal written. Data for academic/classroom behavioral goals is collected through classroom observations, student point sheets, classroom assignments, homework assignments, student work samples, and curriculum based assessments. Data for academic/classroom behavioral goals is reviewed weekly with teachers meeting on individual students on a weekly basis. Data for social/emotional goals is collected through individual therapy and student role plays. Data for social/emotional goals is reviewed weekly with therapist supervisor and/or behavioral staff.

Each student has an individual therapist who sees the student once or twice per week (as delineated on the IEP) or more often if necessary and who also acts as the primary liaison to the family. Students have group therapy every day, which takes place in the classroom with an assigned therapist and high school students earn ½ credit towards their elective requirement every semester. Students are assigned to appropriate group therapies based on the recommendation of their therapist and their school district. The primary therapists at Connection's Academy East also has available the resource of outside program consultants with expertise in a wide variety of issues related to child and adolescent development. Connection's Academy East emphasizes the incorporation of the family in the treatment of the student. Therapists routinely offer family therapy to students on their caseload. If families are interested in this service, accommodations are made into scheduling of appointments.

The Behavior Management consists of Connection's Academy East model of the Circle of Courage. There is a behavior management point system, which provides students with clear, concrete, immediate feedback. Various privileges and rewards are contingent on the student's achievement on the behavior management system. The goal is to use the behavior management system as a transitory tool towards internalization of new behaviors and skills. The combination of a concrete behavioral management system, a challenging curriculum, and the nurturing therapeutic environment enables the students to make educational progress and become ready to move to less restrictive settings.

All staff members are trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, a system of non-violent crisis intervention and de-escalation. While Connection's Academy East does not accept students who are at imminent risk of harming themselves or others, students may occasionally become

disruptive or threatening. At such times, students may be referred to our Behavior Intervention Service. This is a separate classroom with trained Behavior Intervention Specialists. Students receive help in crisis intervention, access to their therapist and additional counseling related to solving the behavioral problem and returning to class.

The school day is 8:30am to 2:30pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Thursday hours are 8:30am to 1:30pm. Students are transported to and from school by their public school district. Students are provided a well-balanced hot lunch each day. Students are met at the bus each morning by Connection's Academy East staff and again escorted back to the bus at the end of the day.

Referrals can be made directly to Connection's Academy East Principal, Elaina Shannon. Tuition is paid by the local public school district according to the rate set by the Illinois Purchase Care Review Board.

Referrals are made by a student's home school district, directly to the Principal of CAE, Ms. Elaina Shannon: 224-544-5920, ext. 102 OR eshannon@connectionsacademyeast.net