

Special Education District of Lake County
Connection's Academy East

Diagnostic Program and Interim Alternative Education Setting



AN INTEGRATION OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO
PROVIDE THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND THERAPUETIC
PROGRAMS

The SEDOL Diagnostic/IAES programs are both housed within Connection's Academy East (CAE). **Despite this physical proximity, these programs are separate from CAE.** CAE is a private therapeutic day school, providing academic, therapeutic, and family support for special education students within the Lake and Cook County areas. **Participation in the Diagnostic program does not imply or guarantee future placement in Connection's Academy East.**

DIAGNOSTIC PROGRAM & INTERIM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

SEDOL has contracted with Connection's Academy East (CAE) to provide placement option for students who require either a diagnostic evaluation or an interim alternative educational setting (IAES). The SEDOL Diagnostic Program at Connection's Academy East (CAE) is an alternative educational setting specifically designed for children identified with Autism Spectrum Disorders, or those suspected of having an Autism Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Delay, Emotional Disturbance or other special education classifications). The Program provides individualized programming within the framework of an academic and therapeutic environment. When a student's current placement is seemingly not meeting his or her emotional, behavioral, or psychiatric needs, the school district and parents may be in agreement that an alternative placement is necessary for a temporary time period to further assess the student's educational needs. The student can be a regular education student needing an alternative placement while undergoing an Initial Case Study Evaluation, or it can be a Special Education Student needing an alternative placement while undergoing a reevaluation. In either case, the student would receive these evaluations along with all of the academic, therapeutic and behavioral supports traditionally offered at CAE.

The student can be a regular education student needing an alternative placement while undergoing an Initial Case Study Evaluation, or it can be a Special Education Student needing an alternative placement while undergoing a reevaluation. In either case, the student would receive these evaluations along with the individual, group, and family counseling traditionally offered at CAE. **The Diagnostic program is available for up to 60 school days.** At the end of this programming, a staffing is held to review all of the diagnostic data and observations. Special education eligibility will be discussed; if a student is found eligible for special education services, an individualized education plan (IEP) will be created, or the existing IEP will be modified as needed. Placement options will also be discussed. If the student is not found eligible for special education services, a plan for the student's transition back into mainstream classes will be formulated

An IAES is required whenever a student has been involved in a behavioral infraction, leading to his/her expulsion from the home school district. Continuation of services is mandated at the time of an expulsion. The IAES program at Connection's Academy East will 1) enable the student to continue participating in his/her general academic curriculum; 2) enable the student to continue receiving services and modifications listed in his/her IEP; and 3) include services and modifications designed to address the behavior that led to the disciplinary action. This placement will include Case Study Reevaluation components, updated behavioral, therapeutic, and academic observations, and intensive therapeutic interventions for the student and his/her family. This IAES program is a 45 school day program. At the end of those 45 days, a staffing will be held to discuss the reevaluation, update the IEP, plan for the student's transition back to their prior educational placement, and/or discuss other appropriate placement options.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The staff within the Diagnostic and IAES programs believes that all students can learn and be successful. Through the development of supportive and nurturing relationships, our staff enables students to make academic progress and learn the skills necessary to succeed. A primary goal is to allow students to understand their own behavior - how it affects their interpersonal relationships, and opportunities for success. Students are encouraged to learn new, more appropriate ways of interacting in order to get their needs met. With guidance from faculty, students focus on and evaluate their behaviors as being supportive, or non-supportive, or their desired outcomes. Problems that may arise during classroom activities are seen as opportunities for growth and learning. Our staff utilizes a cognitive/behavioral and narrative problem solving approach to help students identify the challenge and practice more successful behavioral alternatives. While students may experience the logical consequences to problematic behavior, the approach is always positive and non-punitive. We do not encourage the use of isolation, physical restraint or other aversive interventions unless needed to ensure the safety of the student and school milieu. Instead, we utilize effective social skill building and creative behavior modification techniques designed to help each student develop strategies to improve his/her educational performance.

The behavior management policies of the Diagnostic and IAES programs are highly individualized, using both anticipated and actual behavior problems as positive teaching opportunities. A consistent cognitive restructuring is used to help the student learn the skills and behaviors necessary to succeed in the school environment. When problematic behaviors arise during the school day, our staff will work with the student in identifying alternative ways in which the situation could have been handled. At times, students may persist in disruptive and/or disturbing behaviors. When this occurs, staff will make every effort to remove the immediate stressor from the situation. If a student is deemed to be a possible threat to his/her own safety, or the safety of others, therapeutic holding and restraint may be necessary to ensure the safety of all involved. Our staff is fully trained in the Crisis Prevention Institute guidelines of such intervention.

SERVICES OFFERED

Academics



Students enrolled in the SEDOL contractual programs experience highly individualized instructional support. Our teaching staff works closely with the home school districts to ensure that students continue earning appropriate academic credit. Each district is asked to provide a current course listing, which is facilitated within the Diagnostic or IAES programs in one of two ways: 1) Home districts may provide their own textbooks and curriculum for students to use; 2) Districts may request that their student follow the curriculum all ready in place within the framework of Connection's Academy East. With either option, the primary objective is to help students earn the maximum amount of credit possible, bringing them closer to the ultimate goal of high school graduation.

Individual Therapy

Therapeutic services are an integral part of your student's stay in the Diagnostic or IAES program at CAE. Each student is assigned to an individual therapist, who will meet with him/her at least twice per week. These sessions will focus on a wide variety of issues, including the presenting issue/concern, increasing levels of self-awareness, problem solving, communication, and relationship skills. The individual therapist will also complete a Social-Developmental History with each student and his/her family, as part of the Case Study Evaluation/Reevaluation.

Group Therapy

Group therapy is provided within both the Diagnostic and IAES programs. These sessions are designed to address specific topics such as anger management, relationship issues, relaxation skills, interpersonal communication, as well as specialty groups for Art and Music Therapy.

Family Therapy

Family work is seen as an essential component in your child's placement in the Diagnostic/IEAS programs. The individual therapist assigned to your child will expect to meet with you at least once per month. Primary goals include completion of the Social/Developmental History, improving communication and listening skills between family members, identifying mutual goals and accompanying plan for success, and any other specific concerns you feel would be helpful to address in family sessions. In addition, a monthly Parent Support Group is offered to all families, within the Diagnostic/IAES programs and Connection's Academy East. This can serve as a valuable outlet, allowing you to talk with other parents/guardians struggling with similar challenges and receive support and guidance from Connection's Academy East's therapeutic staff.

Chemical Dependency Services (if applicable)

All students enrolled in the Diagnostic/IAES programs will undergo a substance abuse screening (if applicable) with a certified Drug and Alcohol counselor to determine if substance use or abuse is a concern. Students who are identified as having a history of substance use or exposure to a drug using peer culture undergo a comprehensive diagnostic substance abuse assessment. In addition to these assessments, the following substance abuse-related services are also available: individual therapy sessions; bi-weekly drug & alcohol education group therapy; sobriety group; family issues group; and referral to outside agencies. **If a parent/guardian has any questions or concerns regarding this portion of the evaluation process, please contact the program coordinator.**

Other services available in these programs include:

- *Speech/Language Therapist
- *Psychiatric Consultation and Evaluation
- *Occupational/Physical Therapy
- *Certified School Nurse on premises daily

General School Information

School hours are as follows:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:30am – 2:30pm
Thursday 8:30am – 1:30pm

During the summer session (June-July), school is in session on Tuesday – Thursday, 8:30am – 2:30pm.

Food Policy

Lunch is provided for all students on a daily basis, free of charge. Students are not allowed to bring any of their own food/beverage items to school for consumption.

BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

Our school community is based upon mutual respect, cooperation, and generosity. Positive behaviors such as politeness, thoughtful listening, participating in the classroom or group, ignoring negative influences from peers, and remaining on task will be rewarded with incentives that are meaningful to each individual student.

Inappropriate, negative, or otherwise disruptive behaviors will be addressed as immediately as possible and will bear “natural consequences”, individually tailored for each student, according to his/her specific needs and learning style.

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in ways that bring pride to themselves and the school community. Articles of clothing displaying alcohol or drug related advertising; obscene or suggestive slogans; signs/colors/manner of wearing clothing that could be gang-related; hats; hooded sweatshirts, and any clothing deemed to be disruptive to the educational process are all prohibited. Students will be asked to turn clothing inside out, change, or remove certain items. Hooded sweatshirts, jackets/coats, and hats are not allowed inside the classroom. In addition:

- *Tattoos need to be covered by clothing or band-aids. They are not to be visible during the school day.
- *Students with a history of self-injurious behaviors must cover any current or historical scarring with clothing during the school day.
- *Facial piercings must be removed during the school day.

Alcohol or Drug Possession and/or Use

Students are expected to be free from the effects of illicit drugs or alcohol use while in attendance in the Diagnostic and IAES programs. If it is suspected that a student is under the influence, or is suspected of possessing an illegal substance, the following options are available to our staff:

1. Removal of the student from the classroom.
2. Having the school nurse assess vital signs to further determine level of intoxication.
3. Notification of parents to pick the student up from school
4. Notification of police if illegal substance is found.
5. Notification to home school district, with request for “re-entry” meeting to discuss possible consequences and needed interventions.
6. Referral to substance abuse program for assessment/evaluation.

Contraband

In order to promote a safe school environment, students are searched on a daily basis upon their arrival. **The following constitutes a list of items/possessions which students are not allowed to bring into school:**

1. Weapons of any kind, or any instrument that could be construed as a weapon.
2. Cell phones may be brought to school but must be housed in a student’s locker during the school day.

3. Cigarettes, lighters, and/or matches. Smoking is prohibited on school grounds, including while a student is on his/her transportation to and from school.
4. Facial Piercings – i.e., nose, lips, tongue, etc.
5. Sack lunches or other food/beverage items. Hot lunch is provided by the school free of charge on a daily basis.
6. Students are allowed to bring a maximum of \$10 to school. Any amount over \$10 will be held by the front desk and returned at the end of the school day on the first offense. A subsequent incident will require a parent to come pick the money up from school.
7. **Prescription Medications** – prescription medication that needs to be taken at school must be accompanied by the appropriate consent form provided. This requires both parental and physician signatures.
8. **The provided form must also accompany over-the-counter-medication – pain relievers, allergy medications, cold medications, etc.,** in order to be brought to school. Students are not allowed to carry these medications loose in their pockets, purses, etc. If any medications are found without the appropriate consent forms, disciplinary actions may occur.

Attendance



Students are expected to be in attendance every school day.

Excused Absences: A parent or legal guardian must call the school office, explaining the illness or other reasons for absence, by 8:00am. Students are not allowed to call themselves in.

Unexcused Absences: Any day a student is not in attendance and the above has not been adhered to. The home school district will be notified, and school officials will initiate contacts with truancy personnel if the absences become excessive.

Transportation



All students are provided door-to-door transportation by their home school districts. ***All Diagnostic and IAES program policies and behavioral expectations are in full effect while your child is on this transportation.*** Our school staff works closely with the transportation companies, and has daily communication with the drivers to ensure that students are behaving appropriately and are adhering to all mandatory safety guidelines. Students must wear their seat belts at all times while on the bus or cab.

Diagnostic Staffing Purpose/Procedures

At the end of a student's time within the Diagnostic/IAES programs, a multidisciplinary staffing is held to discuss the case study evaluation components, academic and therapeutic progress, and any other areas relevant to a student's needs. Participants at this meeting typically include the following:

- *Parents/guardians
- *Student
- *Staff representatives from the student's home district
- *Staff representatives from the diagnostic program
- *SEDOL (Special Education District of Lake County)

The meeting is generally divided into three sections: discussion of case study evaluation information; discussion regarding special education eligibility and creation/revision of IEP if necessary, and placement options.

WHAT IS A CASE STUDY EVALUATION/REEVALUATION?

A case study evaluation is a series of in-depth multidisciplinary diagnostic procedures conducted within an established time frame and designed to provide information about your child and the nature of the problems that may affect his/her educational development. These components may include the following:

- ✓ Psychological testing, including analysis of intelligence, achievement, social/emotional status, and personality functioning;
- ✓ Classroom observations and teacher's report on academic progress
- ✓ Social/Developmental History
- ✓ Therapeutic Summary
- ✓ Psychiatric Evaluation (if deemed necessary)
- ✓ Substance use screening and/or evaluation
- ✓ Vision/Hearing screening and other reviews of relevant health history
- ✓ Assessment of communication status and motor abilities if needed

The nature and intensity of each component to be included will vary depending on the needs of your child and the type of existing information available. Upon completion of your child's case study evaluation/reevaluation, a staffing will be scheduled with you, the home district, staff from the Diagnostic/IAES programs, and any other relevant professionals to discuss the findings and determine eligibility for special education and related services.

HOW DOES A CHILD BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION?

There are several official categories under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services support. These include physical conditions, emotional or behavioral problems, or learning disabilities. Some of the more common eligibility categories, and accompanying qualifications, are listed below. (Please note this is not an exhaustive list).

Emotional Disturbance

A diagnosis of emotional disturbance means that the child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics to a marked degree and over an extended period of time:

- difficulties in learning that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health impairments;
- problems relating to children and adults;
- inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- a general mood of unhappiness and depression;
- a tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with personal or social problems.

There should be evidence that the child's behavior is not the result of a temporary reaction to home, school, or community situations.

Other Health Impaired (OHI)

Your child may be found eligible under this category if there is a medically diagnosed physical or physiological condition, including but not limited to, a seizure disorder, asthma, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or diabetes, which may create challenges to educational success. It must be determined that the disability interferes with your child's ability to function at school using the traditional instructional materials and techniques.

A child with a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD is not automatically eligible for special education services. If your child diagnosed with ADD or ADHD meets the requirement(s) under OHI or one of the other disability categories, he/she may be eligible for special education and related services. A special conference would be necessary to determine your child's specific disability. Students with ADD or ADHD who do not meet the eligibility criteria of any of the specified disabilities may be entitled to the services and legal protections described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 was the first federal Civil Rights Law to protect the rights of people with disabilities. It prohibits discrimination in:

- ❖ The education of students with disabilities
- ❖ Vocational education programs

- ❖ College programs and other post-secondary education programs
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Health, welfare, and other social service programs
- ❖ Other programs and activities that receive federal funds.

Section 504 requires an evaluation to determine whether or not your child meets the eligibility criteria. If found eligible, the school district is required to provide a free and appropriate public education. This may mean modifying the regular education program and providing any necessary supportive services (e.g., reducing the amount of required work, completing fewer assignments in a shorter period of time, providing more visual instruction, and/or developing behavioral interventions).

Specific Learning Disability

A child with a learning disability may have a disorder in one or more of the processes needed to receive, understand, or express information. As a result, the child may have difficulty in one or more of the following:

- ✓ Basic reading skills
- ✓ Reading comprehension
- ✓ Written expression
- ✓ Math calculation
- ✓ Listening comprehension
- ✓ Oral expression

Children with learning disabilities show a significant difference between their measured abilities and achievement. The learning disability, then, is not primarily due to a physical, mental, or emotional disability, nor to environmental, cultural, or economic factors.

Autism

Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism if the other criteria of the Section are satisfied). Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements; resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.

WHAT IS AN IEP?



The individualized education program (IEP) is a written document describing how special education and related services will be provided for eligible students. The IEP describes your child and what the school will do to give your child the extra support and attention needed. Since parents are part of the team that helps to write IEPs for their children, it is important that you know what they consist of.

Your child's IEP must include the following things:

- ◆ Present level of educational performance
- ◆ Annual Goals
- ◆ Progress toward annual goals and how parent(s) will be informed of progress
- ◆ Specific special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, and a statement of program modifications or supports for school personnel
- ◆ Beginning date, amount, frequency, location and anticipated duration of services and modifications
- ◆ Extent of participation in regular education programs
- ◆ Language(s) or mode(s) of communication
- ◆ Participation in assessments
- ◆ Placement
- ◆ Extended school year services

HOW IS AN IEP DEVELOPED?

The IEP is created at an IEP meeting, or “staffing”. Participants at this meeting typically include:

- Parents/guardians
- The student
- Regular education teacher or special education teacher, depending on the student's background
- A representative of the local school district
- An individual who can interpret the results of any psychological testing/evaluation if needed
- A representative of any other agency that may be responsible for providing supportive services
- Any other professionals invited at your discretion
- Representatives from possible placement options

During the staffing, the team discusses the student's current levels of academic and behavioral performance. Specific strengths and challenge areas are identified. If your child is over the age of 14, a transition plan is discussed, exploring goals for after high school graduation. Primary therapeutic and academic goals are written, to serve as a

framework for guiding instructional and support services through the next year. These goals are monitored and evaluated at predetermined intervals to ensure that progress towards these goals is achieved. Related service areas that will help support achievement of yearly goals, such as individual, group, and family therapy, psychiatric consultation, and vocational assessments are identified. Specific accommodations or modifications in presentation of academic tasks are outlined, to ensure that your child receives an equal opportunity to complete all necessary requirements. Finally, the team discusses what would be the most appropriate and least restrictive environment in which these services and goals can be facilitated.

PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Your child must be provided an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means that to the greatest degree appropriate, any student with a disability aged 3 through 21, in public or private institutions or other care facilities, is educated with children who are not disabled. Any separation of a student from the regular education environment (e.g., special classes, separate schooling) should take place only if the student's IEP team determines that the nature and/or severity of the student's disability is such that education in a regular classroom setting, even with the use of supplemental aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Federal regulations require that the IEP team's first placement consideration should be a regular education setting with accommodations or modifications. However, this may not always be the most appropriate setting for your child.

Educational placement decisions are based on your child's needs and **may** include the following locations. (Please note this is not an exhaustive list).

- A. **Regular Education** – your child receives specially designed instruction with supplementary aids and services in the general education classroom.
- B. **Regular Education with Social Work Support** – your child receives additional support from a social worker/counselor within the school setting for therapy sessions.
- C. **Resource Room (Special Class)** – your child receives specially designed instruction through a special education class, while staying included in regular classes as much as possible.
- D. **Self-Contained Room (Special Class)** – your child receives specially designed instruction in a special education class, while remaining in those parts of regular education classes, with support, where appropriate.
- E. **Alternative Educational Setting** – your child receives specially designed instruction in a special school. These can be either public or private therapeutic day schools.
- F. **Residential Programs** – your child receives specially designed instruction in a special school and lives on the grounds of that same school.