SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT OF LAKE COUNTY

Diagnostic Program & Interim Alternative Education Setting (IAES) at Connections Day School

Integrating School, Family & Community to Provide the Highest Quality Academic & Therapeutic Programs

Updated: August, 2015
The SEDOL Diagnostic & IAES programs are both housed within Connections Day School (CDS). Despite this physical proximity, these programs are separate from the therapeutic alternative school program at CDS. CDS is a private therapeutic day school, providing academic, therapeutic, and family support for special education students within Lake County and surrounding areas.

Both the Diagnostic and IAES programs are a unique combination of academic, therapeutic and behavioral services, provided in a highly individualized manner, so that the needs of each student can be met most effectively. Students enrolled in both of these programs intermingle in classrooms, with a maximum of 12 students, a special education teacher and at least one instructional aide/program assistant to ensure the maximum amount of one-on-one support.

**DIAGNOSTIC PROGRAM**

The SEDOL Diagnostic Program at CDS is an alternative educational setting designed to provide 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 CDS.

The Diagnostic placement is a 60-school-day program. At the end of those 60 days, a staffing is held to review all of the diagnostic data and academic and therapeutic 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.

*Referrals are made by a student’s home school district, directly to the CDS Diagnostic Coordinator, Dr. Giovanna Vitullo:*

847.680.8349, ext. 307 OR gvitullo@connectionsdayschool.net.

**INTERIM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING (IAES)**

SEDOL has also contracted with CDS to provide a placement option for students who require an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES). 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 CDS 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
3. Include services and modifications designed to address the behavior that led to the disciplinary action.

This placement will include Case Study Re-Evaluation components, updated behavioral, therapeutic & academic observations; and intensive therapeutic, academic & behavioral interventions.

This IAES placement is a 45-school-day program. At the end of those 45 days, a staffing will be held to discuss the re-evaluation, update the IEP, plan for the student’s transition back to their prior educational placement, and/or discuss other appropriate placement options.

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**DIAGNOSTIC/IAES 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.

**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 model 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 already in place within the framework of Connections Day School. 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 CDS. 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 on a daily basis in 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. In addition, all students undergo an initial substance use screening to determine the degree of their exposure and/or involvement with drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse education groups are also available to any students identified with this challenge.

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 Connections Day School. 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 Connections Day School’s therapeutic staff.

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY SERVICES

All students enrolled in the Diagnostic/IAES programs will undergo a substance abuse screening 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 Dr. Giovanna Vitallo, Program Coordinator, at 847.680.8349 ext. 307

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 DAYS & HOURS

Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Fridays: 9:00am - 3:00pm
Thursdays: 9:00am - 2:00pm
**Summer Session** (June-July)
Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 9:00am - 3:00pm

CDS Staff arrive at 8:00am and school doors open at 8:40am. Classes are in session from 9:00am - 3:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; and from 9:00am - 2:00pm on Thursdays to accommodate staff in-service training. Students are expected to remain in their classrooms, monitored by CDS Staff, all day, unless otherwise directed.

**TRANSPORTATION**

All students are provided door-to-door transportation by their home school districts. School rules and expectations are in effect from the time a student enters his/her transportation in the morning, through the time s/he is dropped off at home. Our school staff work closely with the transportation companies, and have 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.

**ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to be in attendance every day school is in session. Students must maintain a 90% attendance rate, unless the IEP states otherwise, in order to successfully pass a term.

**SUMMER TERM ATTENDANCE**

Summer Term consists of 20 school days, and students are expected to be in attendance every day. If a student has more than 3 absences during Summer Term (unless approved by CDS Administration), s/he will not successfully pass the term.

**EXCUSED ABSENCES**

In order for an absence to be considered Excused, a parent/guardian needs to call school personnel prior to 9:00am on the day of any absence. If attendance falls below 90%, a doctor’s written excuse may be required specifying the dates that the student’s absences were excused, and the reason for absence.

**UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

An absence will be considered Unexcused absence when the student is not in attendance, and the above has not been adhered to. The home school district will be notified of unexcused absences, and school district officials will initiate contact with truancy officials if the absences become a concern.

**HOMEWORK**

If a student does not complete his/her homework or class assignments by the due date, the student’s point sheet will be addressed for not being prepared; this will occur in every class when an assignment is not handed in on-time. In addition, late assignments will be graded by the following criteria: 1 day late = $\frac{1}{2}$ credit; 2 or more days late = no credit. Students are still
expected to turn in assignments even if they are receiving no credit – this effort will be acknowledged by the teacher. CDS Staff will make parents aware of all late and missing assignments on the student’s homenote.

**CHECK-IN**

To ensure the safety of both students and staff, all students are searched prior to admittance into the school building. These searches are gender-specific (e.g., female staff search female students and vice versa). Searches generally include the use of a metal detecting wand, emptying of pockets, removal of outerwear and shoes, and examination of all belongings. Random searches may also be conducted at other times during the school day if deemed necessary by school staff or administration.

**RULES, BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS**

Our school community is based upon mutual respect, cooperation, generosity and courtesy. Positive behaviors such as politeness, thoughtful listening, participating in the classroom or group, ignoring poor peer behavior, 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 the natural, logical consequences of making poor choices. These consequences will be individually tailored for each student, according to his/her specific needs and learning style.

**DRESS CODE**

Students are expected to dress in such a way to bring pride to themselves and the school community:

- No short skirts or shorts – the length must be below the longest fingertip
- No leggings, unless the length of the shirt over them is below the longest fingertip
- No spaghetti straps or strapless tops – straps on tops must be at least 1-2” thick
- No exposed undergarments (bras, underwear, boxers, etc.)
- No low pants – pants are expected to be worn at, or just below, the waist
- No midriff exposure (even when one sits, stretches, bends down, etc.) – shirts must cover the entire torso
- No transparent/“see through” clothing
- No facial piercings
- No tight or low cut garments
- No visible tattoos or hickeys
- No torn clothing
- No hanging straps, buckles or chains on clothing
- No hooded sweatshirts or coats
• No garments displaying alcohol/drug related advertising or implications; obscene or suggestive slogans; signs/colors/manner of wearing that could be gang related
• No hats
• No slippers or pajamas
• Students need appropriate shoes for P.E. class (gym shoes can be left at school)

Any clothing, piercings, make-up, jewelry, nail polish, etc. that is determined by staff to be disruptive to the educational process is prohibited. Students will be asked to turn clothing inside-out, change, or remove certain items if found to be inappropriate by any staff member.

**FOOD**

Students are not allowed to bring any food or drink items into the school building. This includes hard candy, gum, breath mints, etc. Students are provided with a nutritionally balanced, catered lunch. Accommodations can be made based on dietary necessity, (e.g., diabetes). Students have access to water throughout the day. They may earn a mid-morning snack as well.

**MONEY & PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Students do not need to bring money to school. If there is a field trip, parents will receive advanced written notification. If deemed appropriate by the teacher, parents may send spending money in a sealed envelope with the child’s name and the amount enclosed, on the front. If a student chooses to bring money to school, they may not be in possession of more than $10.00. Students may bring one CD/MP3 player or Personal Gaming System with them, and only one CD or game cartridge for use during transportation to and from school.

These, along with any other non-school related belongings, will be kept in a locked coat room, in their individual cubby, and will be returned to students at the end of the day. Student cannot bring mobile phones to school or on transportation for any reason. Students who do not follow these rules will be given one warning. Subsequent attempts to bring in excess money/CDs/game cartridges, or a mobile phone, etc. will result in these item(s) being confiscated and returned only to a parent or guardian. CDS does not allow students to trade, exchange or purchase belongings with/from other students.

**MOBILE PHONES & OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Mobile phones are not permitted on school property (including transportation) and will be confiscated. Other electronic devices may be permitted; the “Acceptable Use Policy for Personally-Owned Electronic Devices” must be reviewed and signed by the parent and student.

**LIVE ANIMALS**

Students are not permitted to bring live animals to school without prior approval of the classroom teacher. Any animals brought to school without approval will be confiscated as soon as they are discovered and parents will be called to immediately pick up the animal.
**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 at CDS. If school personnel suspect that a student is under the influence, or in possession of an illegal substance or paraphernalia, the following options are available to our staff:

1. The student will be removed from the classroom for an in or out-of-school suspension
2. The School Nurse will be asked to assess vital signs and determine level of intoxication
3. Parents will be notified and may be asked to pick-up the student from school
4. Depending on level of intoxication, an ambulance may be called to take the student to the Emergency Room
5. Police will be notified if an illegal substance, or paraphernalia is found
6. The student’s home school district will be notified, and a “Re-Entry” meeting may be scheduled for the team to discuss possible consequences and interventions
7. The Student may be referred for an assessment for substance abuse treatment
8. The Student may be referred for an assessment for psychiatric treatment and/or hospitalization

**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 & Pagers
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. Sack lunches or other food/beverage items. Hot lunch is provided by the school free of charge on a daily basis.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Over-the-Counter-Medication – the provided form must also accompany any 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.
**Threats or Actions that Result in Physical or Emotional Harm to Others**

Students are expected to consistently demonstrate respect for others. CDS intends to provide a safe, nurturing, comfortable environment for all students and staff members. If a situation arises in which a student becomes threatening, is verbally cruel, harassing, sexually inappropriate and/or becomes physically aggressive in any way the following options are available:

1. The student will be removed from the classroom for an in or out-of-school suspension
2. The student will receive one-to-one behavioral and therapeutic intervention
3. Others involved in the situation will receive therapeutic intervention
4. Parents will be notified and may be asked to pick-up the student from school
5. Police will be notified in cases of battery, aggravated battery, severe damage to property, etc.
6. The student’s home school district will be notified, and a “Re-Entry” meeting may be scheduled for the team to discuss possible consequences and interventions
7. The Student may be referred for an assessment for psychiatric treatment and/or hospitalization

**Gang Behavior**

Students may not wear, possess, distribute, sell, draw or display anything that could be interpreted as a gang sign or symbol. Students may not communicate gang representation verbally, or non-verbally with gestures, handshakes, etc. Students may not solicit others for gang membership through any means.

**Internet Usage**

Responsible use of the Internet is expected. Direct staff supervision is required. The “Acceptable Use Policy for Internet Access” must be reviewed and signed by the parent and student.

**Case Study & Individual Education Plan (IEP) Q & A**

**What is a Case Study Evaluation/Reevaluation?**

A case study evaluation encompasses 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:

1. Psychological testing, including analysis of intelligence, achievement, social/emotional status and personality functioning
2. Classroom observations and teacher’s report on academic progress
3. Social/Developmental History
4. Therapeutic Summary
5. Vision/Hearing screening and other reviews of relevant health history
6. Psychiatric Evaluation, if needed
7. Substance use screening and/or evaluation, if needed
8. Occupational therapy evaluation, if needed
9. Speech & language evaluation, if needed
10. Assessment of communication skills 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, a staffing will be scheduled with you, representatives from the school, 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?**

Based on the results of the case study evaluation, there are several official categories under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services support. These include, but are not limited to:

- Emotional and/or Behavioral Disability (ED)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech & Language Impairment (SLI)
- Cognitive Disability (CD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

The following are some of the more common eligibility categories and qualifications:

**Emotional Disability (ED)**

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

1. Difficulties in learning that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health impairments
2. Problems relating to children and adults
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
4. A general mood of unhappiness and depression
5. 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:

1. The education of students with disabilities
2. Vocational education programs
3. College programs and other post-secondary education programs
4. Employment
5. Health, welfare, and other social service programs
6. 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 an appropriate 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 (SLD)

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:

1. Basic reading skills
2. Reading comprehension
3. Written expression
4. Math calculation
5. Listening comprehension
6. 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.
**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 elements:

1. Present level of educational performance
2. Annual Goals
3. Progress toward annual goals and how parent(s) will be informed of progress
4. Specific special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, and a statement of program modifications or supports for school personnel
5. Beginning date, amount, frequency, location and anticipated duration of services and modifications
6. Extent of participation in regular education programs
7. Language(s) or mode(s) of communication
8. Participation in assessments
9. Placement
10. 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:

1. Parents/Guardians
2. The Student
3. Regular education teacher or special education teacher, depending on the student’s background
4. A representative of the local school district
5. An individual who can interpret the results of any psychological testing/evaluation if needed
6. A representative of any other agency that may be responsible for providing supportive services
7. Any other professionals invited at your discretion
8. 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):

- **Regular Education** – your child receives specially designed instruction with supplementary aids and services in the general education classroom.
- **Regular Education with Social Work Support** – your child receives additional support from a social worker/counselor within the school setting for therapy sessions.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Alternative Educational Setting** – your child receives specially designed instruction in a special school. These can be either public or private therapeutic day schools.
- **Residential Programs** – your child receives specially designed instruction in a special school and lives on the grounds of that same school.