

Special Education Quality Assurance

NYS Approved Private School & Special Act Residential Focused Review 2009-2010

Final Report

COVER SHEET

School: Boston Higashi School

Date of Report: February 23, 2010

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Attachments:

- Final Report Narrative
- Compliance Summary

Compliance Issues and Corrective Actions

**Special Education Quality Assurance
NYS Approved Private School & Special Act Residential Focused Review**

Final Report Narrative

This report on the NYS Approved Private School Focused Review of the Boston Higashi School's special education program is the result of the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), Special Education Quality Assurance, and special education school staff. The review of the Boston Higashi School special education program is the result of a Quality Assurance Nondistrict Program Review conducted on January 25, 26, 27, 28, & 29, 2010, by the New York State Nondistrict Unit and in cooperation with staff and administration from the program.

The goal of the focused review is to make programs more effective and to improve results for students with disabilities. The review team, whose members are listed on the preceding page, reviewed and evaluated school performance regarding the provision of educational access and assessment of equity for all students with disabilities through a variety of activities. The review team focused on the following areas:

Core Areas

- I. Certification and Licensure
- II. IEP Implementation
- III. Instructional Practices
- IV. Instructional Program and Testing
- V. Monitoring of Behavior Intervention Plans and Use of Time Out Rooms
- VI. Health and Safety
- VII. Responsibilities to Parents and Maintenance of Confidentiality

The Boston Higashi School (BHS) is a residential school located in Randolph, MA for students who are diagnosed with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). Their mission is to instruct children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder learn to reach their full potential through the application of the methodology of "Daily Life Therapy". This unique educational philosophy was developed by the late Dr. Kiyo Kitahara of Tokyo, Japan and incorporates an expansive and balanced curriculum including academics, art, music, physical education, computer technology and social education.

The basic hypothesis in "Daily Life Therapy" is to learn to manage behavior as an integral part of the methodical educational approach to achieve social independence and dignity. The goal of the BHS behavior management program is to enhance the

character of the student through a process of regulating shared emotional relationships through establishing bonds between staff, peers, family and community. It is not based upon a procedure to control discrete behaviors. Their educational approach is based upon three “pillars” of:

1. Physical stamina building
2. Emotional stability, and
3. Intellectual stimulation

These principles help to foster the development of human dignity and self-esteem in the growing child and allow him or her to contribute to and benefit from society. Their mission is to help the children form bonds, relate to others, communicate and control their anxieties. The students learn to master tasks and learn skills that allow them to relate to others and at the same time develop independence into adulthood. "Daily Life Therapy", the core philosophy of the program, which distinguishes itself from other educational approaches by emphasizing the student's ability to control their own challenging behaviors, as opposed to other methodologies that deny the student their reinforcer when the target behavior is not achieved. This methodology at BHS is unique in that they do not believe in any medication for behavior management. The student's day is highly consistent, with a very structured approach to every aspect of the day.

Boston Higashi endeavors to always use pro-active methods of teaching, instead of simply teaching a child what not to do. The BHS Curriculum is based on sound and systematic standards which are embedded in communication, behavior management and social skills. Their Curriculum is designed to:

- Individualize each student's performance.
- Formulate active learning for every student. This includes everything from listening practices which help the students to absorb what they hear, to short writing exercises in which students react to lecture material, to complex group exercises in which students apply course material to "real life" situations and/or to new problems.
- Assess student strengths to allow he/she to learn new or more complex skills.
- Identify the importance of skills being taught.
- Measure a student's self-esteem by teaching self-advocacy skills and self-respect.
- Assemble students into daily cooperative learning situations in which active learning activities allows for groups of 20 or more students to come together rather than isolating them alone or in pairs. This learning model of instruction helps to employ more formal structured groups of students who are assigned complex tasks, such as multiple-step exercises and/or presentations and to learn to work cooperatively together in large group situations.
- Integrate opportunities to learn and practice proficiency in a variety of natural environmental settings, with rich positive reinforcement.

- Provide for continuous guidance and feedback to develop every teacher's performance.
- Provide the students with a comprehensive core skill assessment, skill acquisition, task analysis, incidental teaching, and supervision.

“Daily Life Therapy” is an educational methodology and a way of teaching based on that philosophy found only at two schools, the Boston Higashi School in Randolph, MA and the Mushashino Higashi Gauken in Tokyo, Japan. This philosophy promotes the principle of education for each child is to find that “most precious bud of self identity” by fully developing one's potential and self-esteem.

Boston Higashi's “Daily Life Therapy” approach is consistent across all facets of teaching and campus life. Through daily group interactions in classes, students are logically taught social connections and relationships as they study appropriate curriculum covering literacy, math, science, social studies and the arts, consisting equally of music, art, physical education, and computer technology. Students continuously move around their daily environment, participate in community events, and interact socially with classmates and others in a wide variety of opportunities that expand their world and help them mature into adulthood. The natural developmental playtime sequences of the “Daily Life Therapy” curriculum build a strong foundation for social relationships.

In addition, their comprehensive “Daily Life Therapy” encompasses the following strengths:

- Formulates an educational approach that focuses on the students 24 hours a day.
- Identifies more than just behavior management; it is actually a step by step approach complete with curriculum that teaches the following: language skills, social skills, play skills, fine motor skills and self help skills.
- Employs the practice of a daily moderate aerobic physical activity-based program to increase attention span, on-task behavior, and communication. BHS has shown their effectiveness in controlling many types of inappropriate behaviors associated with Autism by using creative teaching techniques, changing activities frequently, employing learning stations, and planning transitions between stations to help overcome their short attention spans. This is observed and documented through very few restraints, students continuously staying on task, a reduction in self-abusive behaviors, classroom observations that were positive and an environment that was actively engaging with orderly and respectful transitions.
- Utilizes no time out rooms and/or seclusions. The program believes in a very positive behavior system.
- Employ's a 3P Plan of (Prediction, Proaction, & Prevention) which is consistent and comparable to the components of a Functional Behavioral Assessment and

Behavior Intervention Plan. The program progress monitors through a Descriptive Prompting rating scale (quantity/frequency, explicit/implicit, verbal/non verbal, proximity).

- Practices and trains staff in restraint procedures through a program called Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention (NAPPI), as well as direct instruction under the methodologies of "Daily Life Therapy". The program believes the safest restraint is the one that never happens and is very proactive in restraint reduction and restraint avoidance techniques.
- Demonstrates the fundamental nature of teaching Autistic children to "learn how to learn."
- Encourages parent involvement in their children's lives as an essential element in their child's happiness and learning. Parent training is provided so family members can teach and support skills during home visits and family activities. In addition, regular meetings between family members and the program are provided throughout the year.
- Integrates vocational training 2½ days per week in house for all high school students. The students are trained in graphic design, paper recycling, ceramics, clerical, auto detailing, food services, meals on wheels and the Salvation Army. Students were observed through the day in their on campus vocational training.
- Integrates vocational training for students 18 and older through the Emergence Program. These students are required to work 2 full days per week their first year and 3 days there after. The students are employed at area hospitals, landscaping, recycling, cafeteria duty, clerical, building maintenance, greenhouses, Salvation Army, soap making and ceramics. Students were observed in an off campus assisted living community for senior adults. Students were provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Interactions with staff and senior adults was respectful and provided positive reinforcement.
- Integrates and practices skills every day, in structured and unstructured situations. Students are continuously given instructional goals across all daily environments. Positive interactions and feedback were observed to teach children with autism to focus their attention, control their movements and stabilize their moods.
- Manages a residential program where the environment fosters therapeutic interactions among staff and students. Emphasis is placed on peer interaction and allows for the teaching of daily life skills and counseling of students to learn and develop social and self-management skills. Students were observed throughout the dorms interacting with peers and staff that was interactive and sociable.

The reviewer also conducted staff interviews that provided important information on individuals' perspectives and experiences regarding the effectiveness of school practices and how staff responsibilities are carried out within the school. In interviewing the professional training staff, the following positive commentary remarks were noted:

- "BHS is a rewarding place to work in. It is a shared journey between staff, students and family."
- The bond between the staff and students is intrinsically motivating."
- "It is all about the praise you give them. We expect 100% from them all the time and get it."
- Here it is magical and mystical. Everyone is so positive and we love each one of our students with dignity and respect."
- "The staff is committed and has a tremendous perseverance."
- "Here everyone is very humble. We support one another all the time and this helps us to see the growth and to do our very best."

Throughout the review, Boston Higashi's staff were cooperative and supportive. The school environment was nurturing and the teaching staff provided therapeutic and educational support services designed to promote positive and personal growth for each student. The school climate was always positive and their buildings were very well maintained.

As a result of the focused review process, there were no compliance issues identified. However, the reviewer noted the following programmatic recommendation:

Programmatic Recommendation Summary

Issue	Recommendation
During the tour of the residences, there were alarms on the doors in the main residential building living areas, during the hours of 7:30 pm to 7:00 am. However, it was observed that in the Brady town homes, which accommodates all 18 to 21 year olds, the building was without alarms on the doors leading outside and the connecting doors between the 7 town homes. This could result in a student leaving/wandering and/or intruder entering without notification to staff.	The Boston Higashi School should consider installing alarms on all the doors in the town homes.

I wish to formally thank the members of the review team for their diligence and dedication. Their efforts in the pursuit of excellence in education will, we are convinced, improve student learning outcomes in this district.

My signature below represents an assurance that all documentation contained in this report, including the documentation of corrective action records and improvement strategies, is consistent with State and federal statutory and regulatory requirements

governing special education, including Part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

VESID Regional Associate

Signature

Date