



Waypoint Academy

Program Description

Waypoint Academy is an alternative school program designed to service Local Education Agencies (LEA), within the Collaborative member communities. The program services students between the ages of 10 – 18 with a variety of educational needs, including learning difficulties and social/emotional problems. There are two programs that make up Waypoint, a latency, or middle school program for students in grades 5-8 and an adolescent or high school program for students in grades 9-12. The students are served in the same school building located in two wings. The classes and schedule for the younger students does not overlap or blend with those of the older students. A strict observance of the forty eight month age difference is maintained for each class in all groups for both younger and older students.

Waypoints student population encompasses individuals from different geographical areas throughout the Cape Cod region. These students need assistance with a wide range of academic, behavioral, and clinical concerns. Many of the students will present issues of school truancy, unhealthy relationships, difficulty dealing with anger and frustration, underdeveloped problem solving abilities, problems in coping with their mental health issues and ultimately any combination of personal and environmental conditions contributing to an unsuccessful school experience. Initially only serving adolescents Waypoint was encouraged to expand its services to the middle school population in an effort to increase the possibilities of a student receiving therapeutic interventions at an earlier age and ultimately reducing the amount of time spent in a substantially separate program. This expansion was encouraged and supported by the collaborative districts.

The school offers multiple components to meet the diverse needs of the LEAs and students, including diagnostic services, functional behavioral assessments, academic and pre-vocational training, positive behavior shaping, and individual, group, and milieu counseling. In addition,

the school works closely with parents, LEAs and community services and agencies to set up necessary supports and/or networks that combine efforts to assist in the successful participation of the student in his/her educational efforts. Extensive reintegration efforts are pursued to place children back into a less restrictive setting within their sending district.

Waypoint Academy promotes skills and abilities directed toward returning students to their regular education setting. Combining the diagnostic, behavior and academic interventions, students are being prepared for moving on to further academic or vocational training in a less restrictive setting. The program provides access to the general curriculum by following the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and Learning Standards and the Common Core Curriculum as a reference and guides in aligning instruction to the academic needs of the students.

Mission Statement/Philosophy

Philosophically, the program and faculty value providing a safe environment where students can confront sensitive emotional issues, and receive individualized academic and clinical treatment. The treatment is supported by professionals who provide unconditional caring to students in their quest to acquire interpersonal skills that can be used successfully in their educational experience and throughout their lives. This unconditional caring and model of positive reinforcement and behavior shaping promotes students' self-esteem, which is instrumental in student success.

Personnel in the program are trained and supervised to model healthy adult behavior that conveys a tone of respect and dignity in communicating with students, parents, staff and other professionals. We value the building of strong relationships as a vehicle to provide quality care that is holistic in nature. The utilization of empathic communication reinforces our commitment to help students see through all issues to resolution, regardless of their intensity.

Admission, Suspension, Termination, and Transition

Waypoint Academy services students from the ages of 10-18 years who are experiencing difficulties in the public schools. These difficulties may be learning deficiencies, behavior problems, and/or emotional problems, which result in difficulties forming relationships with peers, teachers and other school personnel.

Waypoint receives referrals from the public school systems of the member communities. Referral packets containing educational records and history, discipline reports, testing results, TEAM meeting and IEP information and evaluations, etc. are sent to the school director. Interviews are set up with each student's parent/guardian and are conducted by the school director and/or school counselors/clinicians. Public school representatives are invited to be part of this process. Admission is based upon the combined information derived from the record review, interview (parental, LEA and student), as well as the consensus of the collateral team to

establish a well defined exit criteria and estimated length of placement. This placement can be anywhere from 45 days to a complete academic year of 180 days. Our goal is to remain flexible enough to try and serve all referrals; however, we do expect the cooperative effort, identifiable goals and exit criteria to be instrumental in each student's successful participation in the program.

An orientation/intake meeting is held with each new student to explain program expectations, policies, schedule, point and level system, and milieu. During this meeting school personnel are introduced to the student, as this is an integral time to begin developing relationships. Once an admission date is set, parents have signed the intake packet and all releases, and the LEA has arranged transportation, the student is eligible to begin attending the program.

Communication is essential during the beginning process and throughout the student's enrollment at Waypoint. Families and public school officials are kept informed of student progress and any emerging issues. For many families, this is the first time they have had to deal with a school outside of the mainstream. Communication keeps all parties informed, working together and able to collaborate for the well-being of each student.

Suspensions are used as an absolute last resort. We are well aware of the reinforcing nature of suspensions for some students, however, when the safety of students and staff are at risk, students responsible will be suspended. When a suspension occurs, parents and public school officials are notified. Records of suspensions are maintained and monitored to insure a pattern of suspension is not being used in lieu of a behavior management plan. In accordance with Massachusetts regulations all students placed at Waypoint will have documented suspensions included for all in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions, suspensions from transportation or any action that prohibits the student from participation in his/her prescribed education program. In all cases, the student will be readmitted to the program as soon as possible, usually the day following the incident. In the case of a serious issue/incident, the student may be held out of school until a conference can be arranged with the parents and LEA as deemed appropriate. TEAM meetings will be convened as indicated to discuss changes or modification to the IEP. All students are expected to follow the Code of Conduct developed for Waypoint and contained in the Student Handbook. Violations of this Code of Conduct can result in termination from the program depending on the seriousness of the violation and its nature. Only where indicated in a child's IEP will there be exceptions made for a student to not be held to a particular standard in the Code of Conduct. In these instances, the TEAM will identify the exceptions, explicitly state the replacement conduct and formulate behavioral intervention plans appropriate to that student with consideration of all other student and faculty's safety.

Transitions, reintegration and/or return to another educational setting, including the regular education setting will occur upon the students completion of the identified exit criteria. The criteria is set at the time of a student's enrollment in Waypoint. Criteria will be explicit and developed with LEA's, parents and other involved professionals and collaterals. Progress toward goals/criteria will be monitored and modified as required based on student performance and participation in the program. Any modifications will be developed and shared through the procedural safeguards of the TEAM process.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement begins at the point of referral and continues throughout the student's enrollment in the program. Once a student is referred to Waypoint Academy, parents are notified by the program administration and a meeting is arranged. This initial meeting is designed to provide a program description for parents and answer any questions they may have regarding the school, its operation, student status, philosophy, and mission. This initial meeting also provides the school an opportunity to conduct an intake interview with the parent to discuss their concerns regarding their child. This discussion focuses on the parent's opinions of the types of difficulties the child is experiencing, what they would like to see addressed during the student's enrollment period, and their expected outcomes for the child. Once the meeting is concluded and the parents/guardians determine that Waypoint Academy is an acceptable placement, the communication and collaboration continues throughout the student's enrollment at the school.

Upon enrollment engagement of the parent continues. Students receive a daily point sheet that is sent to the parent to indicate progress on goals, performance in class, and the school day in general. In addition to the point sheets, phone contact is a common method of keeping parents informed of progress and any ongoing concerns or issues that require close attention. Parents are invited to attend regular conferences to discuss student progress. Progress reports addressing student IEP goals and objectives are provided quarterly. They are sent to parents and the school district Special Education Director. Report cards grading academic performance are also sent to the parent and district quarterly. Parents are invited to meet with teachers, counselors or administrators at any time during the year. Establishing a sound relationship with parents is a priority of the program, as is recording and communicating progress. Through ongoing communication and involvement with parents, Waypoint faculty believe that sound relationships can be achieved and maintained for the welfare of all students.

Waypoint Academy believes in and strives for cultural sensitivity and understanding. In the event that English is not the primary language of the household, and a communication barrier exists, the program will acquire an interpreter fluent in the native language of the child's family. To the extent possible, the interpreter selected will also be familiar with the family's cultural practices and nuances. When appropriate, individuals and/or faculty will participate in training to promote understanding and sensitivity to cultural differences.

Curriculum

Waypoint Academy has designed its curriculum to offer program components that effectively meet the unique learning and clinical needs of its student population. The program aligns the curriculum to reflect the Core Concepts of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core Curriculum in the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, History and Social Science, Science and Technology, and Health. While following the Guiding Principles and Standards emphasized in the Learning Strands for each content area in the Frameworks and Learning Standards in the Common Core, course content and teaching methodologies are modified to meet individual learning styles and needs of the student.

Waypoint Academy consistently reinforces to students the value and importance of learning. The employment of a highly competent teaching staff with strong academic backgrounds facilitates the success of each student's experience. The core concept and guiding principles of each curriculum framework and Common Core standard directs the development of each lesson plan to carry through specific skill instruction. Repetition and reinforcement of these skills are conducted as needed, based on the individual academic and social/emotional needs of a particular student. Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for Teaching Critical Reasoning Elements," and the 4 Domains in her "Framework for Teaching," are stressed as the instructional standards that Waypoint Academy instructors strive to provide for its students.

For all students educational goals and objectives will be developed through the IEP process with the coordination of academic programs and course requirements of the district considered. Waypoint will strive to unite our efforts in determining the appropriate core concepts for each student's cognitive ability and academic performance level. Regardless of achievement level, students will be instructed with accommodations for all handicapping conditions and/or learning disabilities. All instruction is done with the outmost regard for each student's dignity, taking into account exceptions and limitations in ability.

On an individual basis, each student is held to high expectations. They are taught using a variety of strategies and approaches that are sensitive and accommodating to the individuals learning style or identified special needs. Curriculum materials are designed to have meaning and purpose for the students so they may build on previous learning and apply those concepts to other relevant experiences occurring in their lives. Students are provided with learning opportunities to interact and work cooperatively with peers, professionals, and others interested in or engaged in similar areas of study. Curriculum material will be directed to promote skill development, discovery, problem solving, inquisition, self-management, advocacy, reasoning and reflection.

Using a diagnostic model, assessment of instructional concepts and skills *is* an ongoing process to enhance student learning and evaluate the methods and materials used through the learning process. In this manner, Waypoint Academy will provide instruction for each student based on a circular and developmental model of assessment, instructional strategy, implementation, evaluation, and return to assessment. The application of the assessment method of instruction

will be used in all content areas of the core curriculum and in the development of basic skills. Areas of instruction will be determined through the TEAM process and combined with the LEA's local requirement of course instruction, the child's learning abilities, and their identified needs.

Waypoint Academy will participate in the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehension Assessment System) administration. Participation will be in accordance with the Education Reform Act and will support all Department of Elementary and Secondary Education policies as it is related to ethics and security of the testing process. Waypoint Academy will instruct students in the core curriculum areas assessed by the state mandated testing. Emphasis will be placed on meeting the goals of the common core learning (thinking and learning, gaining and applying knowledge, working and contributing as a member of society) and in preparing students for participating in the state-testing program. Individual accommodations will be identified by the TEAM and provided for each student as an instructional accommodation in class. When identified on their IEP students may participate in the testing with the same supports provided in class. Accommodations will be identified on the student's Individualized Education Plan and may be, but are not limited to timing, setting, presentation or student's responses as well as any other allowed accommodation used in a student's current instructional program. If and when appropriate, alternate assessment may be used for individual students.

Goals/Objectives:

Waypoint Academy strives to meet the individual needs of students in the following developmental areas: clinical, academic, behavioral, and adjustment. Program supports are available in each area to assist the students in building upon their successes, improving self-esteem, and strengthening academic, organizational, and communication skills. Each student has an identified plan, which delineates specific objectives in each major need area or diagnostic area. These objectives make up the primary focus of treatment planning for each student with the ultimate outcome being reintegration into a less restrictive education program. It is our intention to help students achieve healthy, balanced growth in each need area, and develop the autonomy and maturity to eventually achieve this growth with emerging independence and a successful transition to less restrictive settings.

