



**Rhode Island Department of Education
Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports**

School Support System Report and Support Plan

**The Groden Center
November 2022**

SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM
A Collaborative System of Focused Monitoring

Introduction

The purpose of the School Support System (SSS) is to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The School Support System model is designed to promote the involvement of the whole school district, general educators as well as special educators and parents. It is designed to learn if the district meets the regulations and what effects programs, and services have on student outcomes. Finally, the SSS develops a school support plan for training and technical assistance.

To accomplish this the SSS includes these components:

- **The Orientation Meeting:** The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff meets the Local Education Agency (LEA) to plan the site review and identify issues or initiatives that may influence programs or service delivery.
- **Data Analysis Meeting:** The RIDE staff meets to review LEA demographic information on selected reports including: the LEA annual plan, census information, and information collected through record review, staff questionnaires and parent interviews. To ensure that the child is at the center of the study, all analyses begin with the child. Thus, a stratified random sample of students with IEPs are selected; the records of these students are reviewed; their parents, teachers and related service providers are interviewed, and their classrooms are observed. The result is an in-depth, unified examination of the actual provision of programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The RIDE staff compiles a preliminary summary of their analyses of this data.
- **School Site Review:** On-site reviews to all school sites occur. The team members interview school administrators, teaching staff. Parents and central office staff are also interviewed. The team gathers sufficient information and works with the LEA personnel to generate a report, covering the following:
 - The district's compliance with the state and federal regulations, relative to the education of students with exceptionalities.
 - The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the district.
 - The need for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the LEA to improve programs and services.
- **The Support Plan:** The Ride team, LEA central office and building administrators meet to review the data and complete a report of results. The group designs a professional development/technical assistance support plan with timelines for implementation. This plan enables the school and district to correct areas of non-compliance and to strengthen promising programs and correct areas of weakness/challenges to improve services and programs for all students.
- **The SSS Report:** The report summarizes the findings from the various data sources. The format of the report uses four divisions: Indictors, Findings, Documentation, and Support Plan. Indicators describe either performance/result or compliance. Finding areas include Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment, Evaluation /Individual Education Program (IEP) and IDEA Transition. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding as either compliance or result. The support plan reflects the response to the described findings. The support plan describes the corrective action by the district as well as resources and timelines to improve programs and services.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
2. Evaluation/Individual Education Program (IEP)
3. IDEA Transition

Nonpublic School School Support System Review

Team Member

Team A – Susan Wood, Sandra Cambio Gregoire

The RIDE, Office of Student, Community & Academic Supports School Support System process is facilitated to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The following pages reflect the findings of that process.

1. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (FAPE/LRE)

Indicator		Findings	Support Plan
Result	1	<p>The RIDE, Office of Students, Community & Academic Supports School Support System process is facilitated to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The following pages reflect the findings of that process.</p>	
Result	2	<p>Program Overview</p> <p>The Groden Center is a nonpublic, nonprofit, treatment and educational center for children and youth with autism and related disabilities addressing communication and behavior. The Groden Center offers year-round day treatment programs which provide intensive educational, behavioral and clinical supports and services for children and youth and their families. In addition, the Groden Network provides early intervention services, over- 21 programs, multidisciplinary evaluations, individualized consultation and three community-based group residences.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Observation</p>	
Result	3	<p>Student Support and Interventions</p> <p>Each classroom team is comprised of the clinical supervisor, a special educator, behavior specialists and as appropriate other paraprofessionals. Each classroom meets weekly to discuss student progress, curriculum development, problem solving strategies and interventions. Special educators additionally meet with their clinical supervisor once a week. A clinical supervision team, which includes the clinical supervisors and clinical directors, meets monthly as a group. In addition, each clinical supervisor meets separately with the clinical directors. Meetings have an established agenda which addresses curriculum development, behavioral protocols and interventions, analyzing the positive psychology/social emotional learning model, case reviews, data collection protocols, program integrity and teaching methods.</p>	

	<p>Clinical Services and Supports</p> <p>An array of clinical supports and services are provided through the school for both students and their families. Services include social skills training, relaxation and cognitive therapies, imagery - based procedures, and individual/group counseling as appropriate. Behavior therapy is inherent to the school -wide program. A wide range of empirically validated behavioral analyses and interventions are facilitated and managed by both the teachers and clinicians to enable learned skills and behaviors to be practiced and reinforced throughout the students' daily activities and within numerous environments.</p> <p>Social Emotional Learning</p> <p>Social emotional learning at the Groden Center is facilitated through the Positive Psychology Approach model. Faculty and staff assist students in realizing their resilience, their sense of optimism, to recognize and enjoy humor and kindness received and shared (good deeds) and to increase student self - efficacy skills and experiences.</p> <p>Groden Day Program (both locations) places emphasis on Relaxation and Cognitive Picture Rehearsal, created by Dr. June Groden during the earliest years of the Groden Center. Both methods give learners with disabilities the self-management tools required to deal with stressful situations.</p> <p>Academic Interventions and Supports</p> <p>Academic instruction is conducted in a one-to-one discrete trial teaching format driven by individualized goals with data driven decision making. Additional supports include speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. Data is summarized weekly and reviewed by the classroom teachers. Goals and strategies are modified as needed.</p> <p>School Removals/Disciplinary Policies</p> <p>The Groden Center has a comprehensive approach when responding to challenging behaviors. Faculty and staff collaborate with parents and other professionals in the use of positive, proactive teaching strategies for students. These strategies include: clearly articulated rules and expectations, skill building, structuring the environment, reinforcing appropriate behaviors, and responding to disruptive or aggressive behaviors. In addition, behavioral</p>	
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		<p>expectations along with disciplinary action protocols and policies are comprehensively defined in a student/parent/guardian handbook.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Observation</p>	
Result	4	<p>Program Continuum</p> <p>Day Programs</p> <p>Groden Center (Mt Hope) and Transition Program (Manton):</p> <p>There are currently two-day program locations established by the Groden Center (Mt. Hope and Manton) providing instruction and support for students with developmental disabilities, significant communication needs, autism, emotional/ behavioral disabilities and or psychiatric disorders. Students are assigned to classes according to their age, cognitive level, adaptive skills, programmatic needs, and behavioral characteristics. Each classroom is staffed by a team of direct care teachers, a supervisor and a director. The direct care teachers include certified special educators and 2 to 3 behavior specialists/paraprofessionals. The Special Educator is responsible for the IEP development and classroom schedule and assignments. All team members work with each student in the classroom to implement the various IEP objectives. Instruction is provided in functional skill development, communication, emotional and social development, physical and recreational skills, domestic responsibilities, community awareness, adaptive living skill and vocational education. Transition IEPs integrate these instructional objectives in the context of an identified post-school vision as well as mandates related to RIDE/DOJ Consent Decree addressing transition services.</p> <p>Groden (Mt. Hope) currently provides 49 students ages 5 through 22 with an elementary, middle and high school program.</p> <p>The transition program currently serves 20 students at the Manton Avenue location which features two classrooms for older students who are ready to transition to a career readiness and community engagement program to help them lead more empowered, confident, independent lives. The transition</p>	

	<p>program is primarily designed for older students, and typically serves students between the ages of 16 and 22.</p> <p>An additional aspect of the overall program includes opportunities for students to be integrated in their natural environments to better retain, practice and experience generalization of skills/behaviors learned. Weekly specialized activities are planned to support individual student learning needs. Students experience goal specific community instructional activities at a variety of sites such as, but not limited to, local retail stores, restaurants, recreation facilities, banks and public transportation.</p> <p>Additional services</p> <p>The Residential Intensive Treatment and Evaluation (RITE) program is a component of the continuum of services provided by the Groden Network. This program is designed to serve the special needs of persons with a developmental disability or a dual diagnosis of developmental disability and psychiatric disorder. The RITE program provides an option to inpatient hospitalization or a step-down from hospitalization to the home setting. The program offers a blended behavioral, psychological and psychiatric evaluation and treatment approach to maximize the potential for stabilization and continued progress.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Observation</p>	
Result	5	<p>Adaptive Physical Education (APE)</p> <p>APE is provided as directed by individual education plans. The Groden Center Adapted Physical Education Program is committed to providing a developmentally appropriate experience that strives to enrich the lives of special education students. All students should experience a quality physical education program that meets their individual needs and provides them the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. It is the goal of the adapted physical education program to prepare each student for a lifetime of physical activity, health and well-being. Participation and activity are necessary components of physical, emotional, intellectual and social health. The school will accomplish this by developing and implementing a dynamic, fun and safe instructional program. IEP goals will be structured to reflect the needs of each student, and monitored regularly to ensure that all students are continually maintaining skills,</p>

		<p>making progress and experiencing success.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Observation</p>	
Result	6	<p>Extended School Year (ESY)</p> <p>The Groden Center provides extended school year (ESY) per the student's IEP.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews, Record Reviews</p>	
Result	7	<p>Parent Engagement</p> <p>Parent/Family engagement is an integral treatment partnership. The classroom staff communicates with families through daily logs, email, phone calls and home school notes on a daily and as needed basis. A parent liaison is available to provide parent to parent opportunities for support and guidance, home visits, and a personalized communication plan in supporting parental partnerships and positive relationships with the center.</p> <p>Additional Family Engagement Opportunities:</p> <p>A Respite Program is available to families for planned and/or emergency relief, to assist in crisis prevention and reduction of family stress, and thus supporting families' ability to continue caring for their children at home.</p> <p>The Groden Network Parents & Friends Association (PFA) is an organization comprised of family members, Groden Center friends and staff. The group focuses on providing support, parent to parent interaction and information through topical presentations which include communication, stress management, transition and adult services, SSI, legislative actions and more.</p> <p>Treatment Foster Care (TFC) is a therapeutic foster care program to assist children and adolescents in a less-restrictive home setting while working to achieve an individual's full potential.</p>	

	<p>Specialized Family Support Program (SFSP) is a home-based family preservation program servicing children and adolescents with autism and developmental disabilities. The goal is to prevent out-of-home placement or post-reunification services after foster care or residential care.</p> <p>Parent and Family Empowerment Program (PFEP) is an evidence-based treatment program for families of children with autism and other developmental and behavioral challenges. PFEP includes an array of services including parent group training, parent-child interaction therapy and family therapy in both clinic and home/community settings.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Observation</p>	
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2. EVALUATION / INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

Indicator		Findings	Support Plan
Result	1	<p>Student Accommodations and Modifications</p> <p>Intake, Assessment and Evaluation Planning</p> <p>Sending LEA's are responsible for assuring evaluations and reevaluations are facilitated and completed. If the team determines that the Groden Center will complete the evaluations, clear articulation of responsibility has been established.</p> <p>Typical assessments include initial intake evaluations, behavioral evaluations, clinical, psychological and psychiatric evaluations, speech and language, educational and vocational evaluations, social histories and medical examinations.</p> <p>Students identified for potential placement at the Groden Center are approved through a diagnostic or interim (6-8 weeks) IEP. Intake assessments are facilitated and recommendations are provided to the IEP team for further discussion and determination of placement.</p>	

	<p>Curriculum and Instructional Strategies</p> <p>The curriculum design at the Groden Center incorporates the major life domains of functional skill development. The overarching goal of the curriculum maximizing a student's potential of being fully integrated environmentally and effectively functioning within a relevant social network.</p> <p>The major life domains are infused in the specially designed instruction identified through the student's individual education plan. Academic instruction focuses on teaching skills that will be functional and relevant for students to live independently and IDEA in natural environments.</p> <p>Specialized instruction may address readiness skills, written and spoken language, literacy in reading and writing, math skills that include telling time, following schedules, money management, measurement along with basic operations and more; general knowledge in science and social studies as appropriate, communication skills, everyday living skills, socialization and leisure as the competencies embedded within the major life domains. Most students utilize multi -purpose assistive technology to enhance communication throughout their day. In addition, the curriculum may be supplemented by other published materials such as: Connecting Math, Distar Reading, Hand Writing Without Tears, Unique, New2You, and Learning A-Z. Materials developed by the center are additionally utilized.</p> <p>Additional instruction is incorporated as identified for adaptive daily living experiences, behavior therapy and applied behavior analysis, social skills training, stress management, adaptive and or corrective devices, occupational therapy and vocational instruction.</p> <p>A Curriculum Development Team meets periodically to discuss current research based learning strategies, structure and alignment to the current alternate assessment grade span expectations and opportunities for improving student outcomes.</p> <p>Re-Evaluation</p> <p>Though the Groden Center facilitates individual student assessments both standardized and informal for progress monitoring and instructional planning,</p>	
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	<p>the three year re-evaluation (triennial assessment) process is not consistently facilitated.</p> <p>The team meets and determines which evaluation(s) (for reevaluation purposes) are needed. Consent is obtained, reevaluations are conducted, and the results are sent to the appropriate parties (parent, LEA, etc). Unless the LEA wants a re-evaluation meeting there is no meeting held along with continuation of eligibility documentation.</p> <p>IEP</p> <p>The Groden Center (Mt Hope and Manton) utilizes PowerSchool as its special education case management system. Educators can develop and manage compliant, high-quality special education documents using intuitive guided actions and business rules aligned with IDEA and federal and state laws. A majority of the IEP documents are created within this web-based program and are accessible by all teachers, related service professionals, behavior specialist (i.e., paraprofessionals), and office staff.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	
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3. IDEA TRANSITION

Indicator		Findings	Support Plan
Result	1	<p>IDEA Transition Planning</p> <p>For students ages 14-22, transition planning is coordinated through the Transition IEP process. Students and their families work with their educational team, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Rehabilitative Services in planning for their adult transition. The Associate Director of Transition and Vocational Services coordinates with the family/legal representatives to move through action steps (attaining benefits, applying for DD or ORS services, concerns of guardianship, etc.) related to the transition process. The educational mandates and practices for transitioning students, as outlined in the DOJ Consent Decree between RIDE, DD, and ORS, are</p>	

		<p>integrated into the student's IEP and supported by school and community-based programming which supports transition to an adult experience that is community integrated and enables participation in competitive employment to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>Student exit planning to a least restrictive environment is always in the fore front of the individualized education plan and design. As appropriate, the Groden Center will provide a number of supports for continued educational success for all students transitioning from the Center specific programs.</p> <p>For students who may be experiencing significant physical and/or behavioral issues that impact the physical safety of both the student and/ or others, the Groden Center's multidisciplinary team will work with the appropriate LEA/parent and/or guardian while an alternative setting is determined.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Record Reviews</p>	
Result	2	<p>The nonpublic special education school works with the sending districts in assisting with referrals to the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS) and to the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH).</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Interviews; Document Review, Record Review</p>	
Result	3	<p>Summary of Performance (SOP) is facilitated by the case managers as appropriate.</p> <p>Upon reaching the point where the student 'ages out' (age 22 for students from RI, CT and MA), a Summary of Performance [SOP] is completed and provided to both the sending school district and parent. An addendum, prepared by the nursing department and entitled Discharge Summary, is often attached to the SOP. The SOP contains summary information, regarding present levels and benchmarks reached, with relevant post-secondary recommendations, in all pertinent specially designed instructional and related service areas.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis, Interviews, Record Reviews</p>	