



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

School Support System Report and Support Plan

**Rhode Island Alternative Academy
March 2020**

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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 sample of approximately 20 students with exceptionalities is 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.
- **Presentation by the LEA and School Site Review:** The on-site review begins with a presentation of programs by teachers and staff. The presentation provides the review team with general and specific information on delivery of programs and services to students. Following this presentation, on-site reviews to all schools are made. The team members interview school administrators and 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 in order 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: Indicators, Findings, Documentation, and Support Plan. Indicators describe either performance or compliance. Findings can include a variety of some six categories, from School Improvement to Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding. 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 time lines 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

**Rhode Island Alternative Academy
School Support System Review**

Team Members

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The RIDE, Office of Student, Community & Academic Supports School Support System process was 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 was 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>Rhode Island Alternative Academy (RIAA) is an alternative school program for students in grades one through twelve. The student body is comprised of students referred by their school district for both general education and special education services. The students require a highly structured, supportive, and therapeutic educational environment to meet their social/emotional, behavioral, and academic needs. The main goal of RIAA is to assist students in acquiring the necessary skills to manage their emotional and behavioral needs in order to be independently successful within their homes, communities, and least restrictive educational environments. Rhode Island Alternative Academy serves as a multi-year placement for students who continue to require specialized educational services and/or may require this level of support to fulfill their high school requirements. Students may also enter the program for a 45-day diagnostic placement, to determine an individualized educational plan or placement within the least restrictive environment to meet their social/emotional, behavioral, and academic needs.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	
Result	3	<p>Student Support and Intervention</p> <p>As students enter the RIAA, they are given a series of assessments such as the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) and Eureka Math, to determine an educational needs baseline. The IRLA delivers specific and actionable data that tells the teacher where a student is, why, and the sequence of skills/behaviors they need to learn next to accelerate his/her reading growth. In using the assessments from Eureka</p>	

	<p>Math, the teachers are able to determine the student's math level, gaps, and interventions that need to be implemented in their educational plans.</p> <p>The school has made a commitment to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the Common Core standards. This has been the focus of conversations and professional development. Teachers use blended learning to accomplish the task of differentiating instruction for multiple grade levels, content area, and student abilities. After much discussion this year, the school has started to adopt the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) for determining reading levels and the Eureka Math curriculum. The teachers have also begun utilizing the IXL assessment and skill building program for mathematics. This will not only support the Common Core Curriculum but will make it easier for students to prepare for state assessments and to transition back to their home school. Students complete many hands on science and social studies projects that utilize national standards for each level, are cross curricular, utilize technology, and are highly motivating. All students receive health and physical education lessons in excess of the state recommendations.</p> <p>Secondary students, particularly in grades 9 -12, follow the graduation requirements and course work for the sending district. The principal and special education director work closely with the guidance departments at each home school to ensure that students will be able to meet all requirements for capstone projects, portfolios, common tasks, and community service. Coursework is directly aligned with the sending districts and each student receives a highly individualized program to ensure that they have the opportunity to succeed and obtain a diploma from the sending district.</p> <p>Until very recently, secondary students have access to a Vocational Specialist. The Vocational Specialist worked with students in many areas such as; obtaining part-time jobs (writing resumes, filling out job applications, practicing interviewing skills), internships, vocational assessments, and referrals to the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS). It is the intent of the school to fill this position with a qualified person in the near future. The homeroom and advisory teachers guide students through the transition scope and sequence for their grade level. The scope and sequence includes vocational assessments, goal setting, skill building, and individual learning plans.</p> <p>Clinical Supports and Services</p>	
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The types of therapies and therapeutic services that are offered at RIAA are consistent with recommendations provided by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). School social workers provide direct and indirect support services to students, following the ASCA recommendation of 80% time involved in direct service provision and 20% of indirect service provision. Counseling is individualized to meet students' unique needs and to ensure that functionally equivalent appropriate behaviors are instructed and reinforced. Clinical services are provided by a full-time social worker in the secondary school, two part-time social workers at the elementary level, and a full time clinical psychologist. The secondary school social worker provides therapeutic services with a certified therapy dog.

The clinician and student work together to develop and work on social, emotional, and behavioral treatment objectives. These objectives become part of the student's IEP and progress towards each of these objectives is then provided in Clinical Quarterly Progress Reports. In addition to individual therapy, students participate in weekly group therapy sessions with a Masters level clinician. The main focus of group treatment is to work with each student to develop and maintain effective problem solving skills and appropriate peer interaction and social skills. An additional benefit of having full time clinicians onsite, all day, every day is that the clinicians are integral in working with their students on a daily basis to assist with conflict and crisis resolution. The ability to process stressors and conflict in the moment with their individual clinician is of tremendous benefit. Communication with the home setting ensures that parents are equipped with the same positive behavior support strategies that the RIAA faculty are trained to employ with the students.

The Rhode Island Alternative Academy provides training by the licensed clinical psychologist for all staff regarding trauma-informed school frameworks. Professional development is completed prior to the start of the academic year, as well as periodic training throughout the year, that are designed to educate all staff members about trauma, the impact of trauma on students and principles of trauma-informed schools. In addition, RIAA also provides training for all staff members regarding Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions model. These trainings are also provided by the licensed clinical psychologist over a multi-day professional development prior to the start of the academic year, as well as periodically throughout the year. Embedded within a PBIS framework, the CPS model expands upon "traditional" concepts and understandings of students' displays of challenging behaviors. Rather than a reliance upon rewards and punishments as the sole means of helping foster positive growth, the CPS model views challenging behaviors as the result of lagging skills and unsolved problems. Therefore, in addition to rewarding displays of expected behaviors and

having consistent contingencies for undesirable behaviors, a primary mission of staff at RIAA is to work collaboratively with all students to help identify unsolved problems and teach the skills that students are lacking. It is the philosophy of RIAA that all students do well if they can, not simply if they want to. This philosophy is a central tenet of the school's approach to students to allow all staff to partner with students in this mission, rather than simply try to make students want to do better. In this regard, challenging behaviors are viewed as manifestations of lagging skills, akin to a reading disability or other developmental delay, rather than simply a product of students not being motivated enough to do well. Clinical staff have dedicated times in their schedules to meet with students proactively, and information from these sessions are shared with staff during daily meetings so that all staff are in the students' planning.

The Rhode Island Alternative Academy promotes positive behavioral interventions and supports. The entire program is based on the concept that helping students address and improve challenging social behaviors needs to be addressed through the milieu or culture of the program. Each student has their own, individualized daily behavioral point tracking sheet that allows them to earn points every period of the day for displaying and exhibiting identified positive and appropriate school behaviors. Points earned then allow each student to participate in a wide array of positive reinforcers ranging from daily breaks and recreation periods to more long-term reinforcers including school store and field trips.

A key component of this at RIAA is the daily "debrief" meetings at the beginning and end of each day. These meetings, chaired by the team schools' principal or lead teacher, provide the opportunity for all staff to review student progress daily and discuss and assess the social, emotional, behavioral and clinical needs and interventions of each student. Any change in student plan is a team decision and, as a result, all team members are aware of the new plan.

Social Emotional Learning

A primary goal of RIAA is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the students. Rhode Island Alternative Academy develops plans, supports, and interventions necessary to address issues including bullying, bigotry, racism, and intolerance. Students will not progress behaviorally or academically if they do not first feel safe and accepted. The philosophy of RIAA is such that a key belief is the academic success of the students is first helping them develop the ability to effectively manage their behaviors and emotions and establish positive relations with others. The clinical staff

		<p>at RIAA supports and strives to incorporate the principles put forth by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). These include:</p> <p>Self -Awareness – understanding your own feelings and beliefs</p> <p>Self -Management – developing the ability to effectively manage and express your emotions and impulses</p> <p>Social Awareness – developing the ability to empathize with others and accept differences</p> <p>Relationship Skills – developing healthy and respectful relationships, managing peer pressure and developing conflict resolution skills</p> <p>Responsible Decision Making – making informed decisions with an awareness of possible consequences.</p> <p>As a staff, the school is moving in the direction of making these concepts a part of the everyday practice at the school, in and outside the clinical setting.</p> <p>School Removals/Disciplinary Policies</p> <p>Disciplinary practices and policies are clearly outlined in the student parent handbook. Staff work with parents to ensure an understanding of practices and to ensure a consistent approach between school and home. Disciplinary practices, policies, and authorizations are reviewed with parents during the intake process and then annually at the beginning of each school year.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	
Result	4	<p>Program Continuum</p> <p>The Rhode Island Alternative Academy works with students with varying social, emotional, behavioral, psychiatric and learning issues. Diagnoses include Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impaired, Specific Learning Disability, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.</p> <p>The elementary school has approximately 30 students and 28 are students with IEPs. It consists of four elementary classrooms which address the needs of students in grades 1 -2, 3-5, 4-6, and 5-6. The secondary side of the school includes 59 students and 42 are students with IEPs. Students are fully included in all core content classes. Students are able to return to their districts as RIAA provides similar programming as to their district offerings. Rhode Island Alternative Academy also provides credit recovery</p>	

		<p>through the Apex online learning program so the students will be at the age appropriate grade level or close to the correct grade level once they return to their district.</p> <p>All classrooms are well staffed with a student to staff ratio of no more than five to one. Each classroom has a designated teacher and classroom behavioral specialist/teaching assistant. Clinicians are available (one on each side) for clinical oversight, conflict resolution, crisis management, and weekly group therapy. There is also a full time physical education/health teacher. Rhode Island Alternative Academy is in the process of filling the career coordinator position to work with students to develop the skills necessary for successful transition to adulthood. Rhode Island Alternative Academy has a full-time nurse who dispenses medications, assists students with medical needs, consults with students around emotional and medical topics. Rhode Island Alternative Academy currently has a vacancy for a part-time fine arts teacher. The position has been advertised and has yet to be filled.</p> <p>Rhode Island Alternative Academy has an alternative program within the school building for students in grades 9th-12th. The students are on a modified schedule and come either in the morning or afternoon session. A special education teacher facilitates the program to help students with credit recovery and graduation requirements. The Apex Learning online program is a common core curriculum for students to reach grade level content material. The special education teacher makes modifications and accommodations based on the students' needs.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	
Result	5	<p>Adaptive Physical Education (APE)</p> <p>Currently, RIAA does not have any students requiring adaptive physical education (APE). Rhode Island Alternative Academy does have a physical education/health teacher certified in APE.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	

Result	6	<p>Extended School Year (ESY)</p> <p>If students attending RIAA require ESY, the sending district finds a placement for those students during the summer months.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	
Result	7	<p>Parent Engagement</p> <p>Parent involvement is viewed as one of the keys to the success of the students. Parents participate in an in-depth intake meeting with their child prior to acceptance and attendance. During this meeting the program is explained in detail to the parents. School expectations and multiple policies are reviewed and various consents, releases, and authorizations are obtained. Parents have the opportunity to express their concerns and have all of their questions answered prior to enrolling their child in the RIAA.</p> <p>Once enrolled, elementary school parents receive daily reports of their child's behavior and progress. In both school programs, the principal, lead teachers, and clinicians take the lead in maintaining close communication with parents via the Remind app as well as phone and email. The elementary program provides mid-trimester progress reports in addition to the end of trimester report card. Individual Educational Plan progress reports are included with trimester report cards for special education students. The secondary program provides mid-semester progress reports in addition to the end of semester report card. Individual Educational Plan progress reports are included with semester report cards for special education students. Parents are invited to meet with the teachers and clinicians to address any concerns the trimester/semester reports/report cards may raise. The Rhode Island Alternative Academy maintains an open door approach with parents, phone calls, and parent conferences are always welcome.</p> <p>At the end of August, students and their families are invited to a 'Welcome Back' bar-b-que to kick off each new school year. In October, students and their parents are invited to a Halloween Trunk-or-Treat event so students have a safe place for trick-or-</p>	

treating. In November, staff collect food items and create food baskets for families identified in need of food for Thanksgiving. Baskets are picked up by the families or delivered by staff to the families' homes. In December, staff facilitate a toy and clothing drive for the school. Each elementary student is presented with a wrapped gift before the vacation. Students on the elementary and secondary sides are given clothing such as sweaters, sweats, socks, underwear, hats, and gloves. In May, the secondary school hosts an awards banquet for students and their families to recognize student accomplishments. In the same month, the elementary staff host a May breakfast to bring together students and families within the school. In June, a graduation ceremony is held at the Amphitheater in Pawtucket to recognize those seniors that have completed their graduation requirements. Administrators from each students' sending districts are invited along with the Mayor of Pawtucket.

A monthly newsletter is sent home from each elementary classroom teacher. In the newsletter there is information about topics of instruction, events, activities, and news to be aware of in the month ahead. The 'Student of the Month' is recognized in the newsletter as well.

Parents are encouraged to be an active part of the IEP process and staff makes every effort to encourage participation of students 14 or older to attend their IEP meetings. Parents are provided with information on their Local Advisory Committee at the time of the IEP and are encouraged to attend.

Documentation: Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews

2. EVALUATION / INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

Indicator		Findings	Support Plan
Result	1	<p>Student Accommodations and Modifications</p> <p>Accommodations and modifications are made for each student according to the IEP. Placement at the RIAA is usually driven by needs as identified in the IEP, therefore, teachers utilize the document to help guide planning and instruction. Teachers have access to all key documents for each student; however, all confidential information is kept in a locked central location. All teachers and team members that interact with students are made aware of present levels of functioning and accommodations and modifications that are required. All IEPs are carefully reviewed prior to state testing to ensure that all needed accommodations are available. The team reviews all non-IEP students every 45 days that the student is placed at RIAA to determine if placement is still appropriate.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Document Reviews</p>	

3. IDEA TRANSITION

Indicator		Findings	Support Plan
Result	1	<p>IDEA Transition Planning</p> <p>The Rhode Island Alternative Academy developed a transition scope and sequence for students in grades 6-12. Classroom teachers and advisory teachers are responsible for completing the vocational assessment and list of other transition activities for all age appropriate students. Students work with the transition coordinator to complete assessments, job applications, participate in internships, and prepare for job interviews. Staff facilitate college campus visits and military office inquiries. Rhode Island Alternative Academy is a testing site for RICAS, RINGSA, PSAT 10, and SAT annual evaluations.</p> <p>The Rhode Island Alternative Academy works with the sending districts in assisting with referrals to the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS) and to the Department of</p>	

		<p>Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH). Additionally, if necessary, when a student turns 17 or enters the 11th grade a referral is made to ORS. A meeting is scheduled with the ORS counselor to be held at RIAA which also includes the student and parent/legal guardian. At this first meeting appropriate authorizations, releases and consents are obtained and the students' IEP and Educational Testing etc. are reviewed. Once approved for ORS services, ORS will refer the student for job evaluations at various sites. Upon completion, all parties (ORS, Case Manager, Student, Parent/Guardian) meet to review the evaluation and make appropriate recommendations.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Data Analysis; Interviews; Record Reviews</p>	
Result	2	<p>The nonpublic special education case managers work 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</p>	
Result	3	<p>Summary of Performance (SOP) is facilitated by the case managers as appropriate. The SOP is completed by the special education case manager with input from other special education teachers and the clinician who have worked with the student. Summary of Performances are reviewed with the student in a one-to-one setting. The original document is given to the student (parent) with a copy provided to the LEA and a copy kept on file in a locked and secure location with the student's confidential information.</p> <p><u>Documentation:</u> Interviews; Document Review</p>	