

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW

Approval Recommendation: Grant renewal of general education independent school approval for five years, through June 30, 2022. Approval would be subject to the school complying with the assurances as outlined in the General Education Approval Application during the approval period.

School Description: The educational philosophy of Foundations is that all children can learn. Foundations is an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) intensive Special Education day program. The program is based upon the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Applied Verbal Behavior (AVB). Programmatic decisions are based on the individual needs of the student and on supporting formative data. Functional assessment results and inventory of the students' behavioral and communicative repertoires are used to develop instructional programs for each student. Foundations' objectives include the following: to provide a healthy and effective learning environment; to teach the fundamental skills necessary to become as independent as possible; to provide students with educational programming that will make them the most successful adults that they can be; to teach essential, effective communication skills; and to reduce and eliminate challenging behavior and other barriers to learning, replacing them with learning-to-learn skills.

Review Findings: Foundations occupies the third floor of the former Windsor Fire House building on Main Street in Windsor. There is a large classroom for older students (grades 10-12), a classroom for the middle grades (grades 6-9), and a classroom for younger students (grades K-5). The school is ungraded by nature, however, and focus is on individual student needs through the IEP process. There is also a library/computer lab, a functional life skills room, two break rooms (one with a swing, the other for de-escalation), an exercise room, a kitchen and dining area, offices, and a large "teaching" bathroom for toilet training/hygiene instruction. There is also a staff bathroom. The facility meets all state and federal health and safety regulations and is handicapped accessible by elevator.

The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. §906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students. Foundations accesses the Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union's curriculum, which is modified to fulfill individualized goals as outlined in a curriculum specifically designed for special learners. Functional assessment results and inventory of students' behavioral and communicative repertoires are used to develop instructional programs for each student. When at all

possible, Foundations implements specific academic learning programs shared by the sending districts. Foundations has the services necessary to support its educational objectives, including assistive technology devices, board-certified behavior analysts, and a speech/language pathologist. There is also a curriculum strategist and an assistive technology specialist, who consult on a regular basis with the program and provides ongoing staff training. On the day of the visit, there were nine students, aged between six and twenty-one, who were busily occupied in various learning scenarios.

The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. Foundations is a component program of a larger behavioral services company, SD Associates, LLC. School operations are managed by a building-based team that includes the Head of School, a licensed special educator, the Windsor Programs Coordinator, who oversees building-based human resource functions, logistical arrangements and ABA programs, and an assistant behavior analyst. The school secretary is the liaison to the SD Associates business office in Williston, VT.

Educational programs are administered by Behavioral Instructors (BI's), about 50% of whom are registered behavioral technicians (RBTs). The balance of BI's are working on this credential. The staff is qualified by degree, training, and experience in the area(s) to which they are assigned. The school has a professional development program in place for the staff. Foundations provides two levels of programming: a 180 day program aligned with the typical school year, and a year-round program for those students who have behavioral and learning challenges at a level of intensity that requires ongoing instruction with minimal interruption in order to maintain behavioral safety and retain incrementally acquired information.

The health, safety, attendance and assessment records are in good order. Fire drill and evacuation drill records are also in good order.

The school maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional hours each year that is not less than that required of a public school serving the same grades.

The school has a policy on prevention of harassment of students that is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

Summary: SD Associates' Foundations in Windsor, VT is a very well run school for severely impacted youngsters. Foundations is the "last stop" for such youngsters, who are usually referred by one of four sending school districts. If ever a student in unable

to thrive at Foundations, the next step would be a residential program in Massachusetts.

Respectfully Submitted:

Brian Morgan
May 3, 2017