



**COOPERATIVE
EDUCATIONAL
SERVICES**



Special Education Services

Therapeutic Day Program

THERAPEUTIC DAY PROGRAM

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► ► ► Welcome To TDP

The Therapeutic Day Program (TDP) is a regional special education school placement for children and adolescents with a variety of emotional and behavioral disabilities. Elementary, middle and high school students who are referred by their local school districts are eligible for placement in the program.

TDP offers a comprehensive treatment approach rooted in the principles of humanistic and behavioral psychology. The program's goal is to improve a student's overall educational, emotional, and social functioning, and return the student to a school placement within his or her own school district as early as possible. Length of enrollment varies as a function of the student's individual needs and circumstances.



▼ Program Highlights

- ♦ Highly favorable student to staff ratios (e.g., 3 staff in a classroom of 6 students)
- ♦ Class sizes generally range from 4 to 8 students
- ♦ High rates of positive reinforcement in response to pro-social behaviors
- ♦ A consistent, predictable, and highly structured atmosphere rooted in the use of intensive positive behavioral supports
- ♦ A comprehensive and flexible approach to behavior management that includes contingency management and behavioral contracting
- ♦ Considerable emphasis on social skills instruction, and positive student/staff relationships
- ♦ Individual and group counseling
- ♦ Frequent parent contact and parent support services
- ♦ Individualized academic programs
- ♦ Individual and small group instruction
- ♦ Full time reading support teacher
- ♦ Full time technology integration teacher
- ♦ Fully equipped science lab and full time science teacher
- ♦ Fully equipped art room and full time art teacher
- ♦ Vocational–Transitional support services
- ♦ Crisis Intervention Staff
- ♦ Speech and Language Therapy
- ♦ Occupational/Physical Therapy, and Nursing Services

Population Served

The program enrolls students who present with a wide range of difficulties in the areas of emotional, behavioral, social and academic functioning. Included in this population are students who exhibit internalizing symptom profiles as well as students who, at times, are prone to engage in more externalizing symptoms. Diagnostic indicators common for students enrolled in the program include mood instability, attention deficit/hyperactivity, anxiety, depression, school avoidance, behavioral dyscontrol, oppositional behavior, and the social impairment associated with PDD or Asperger's Syndrome. The students' academic abilities range from very superior to below average and the students are highly diversified with regard to socio-economic status and ethnicity.



▶▶▶ Program Philosophy

Students with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities are arguably among the most challenging students confronting educators in the United States today. Effective interventions with this student population require a considerable degree of expertise and resources rarely found in school settings and extremely difficult to implement successfully due to a variety of logistical, financial and personnel factors. However, Cooperative Educational Services has developed a unique school program with a comprehensive and highly effective intervention strategy for this student population.

Beginning with the understanding that students with emotional and behavioral difficulties are a heterogeneous group with regard to the etiology, nature, severity, and chronicity of their symptoms, and therefore present with diverse and complex needs, the program utilizes a comprehensive, flexible, and multidisciplinary approach to intervention. The intervention model utilized in TDP is rooted primarily in humanistic and behavioral psychology, but also incorporates principles and intervention strategies from other paradigms including Attachment Theory, Social Learning Theory, Cognitive-Behavioral Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Psychodynamic Theory.

Several core beliefs about the nature of this student population and effective strategies to be used with this population underlie and guide this intervention model. These beliefs include the following: students must be treated with respect, compassion and patience at all times; supportive interpersonal interactions and positive relationships with students are critical aspects of the intervention process; students need to experience success and contentment at a much greater frequency than frustration and failure; the effective use of pro-active interventions (i.e., Positive Behavioral Supports) to promote pro-social behaviors will greatly minimize the need for more restrictive interventions to reduce or eliminate problematic behaviors; the use of punishment (i.e., response-cost) procedures must be used minimally and judiciously with this student population; flexibility and compromise, whenever possible, help to reduce conflict and resistance from students struggling to meet academic or behavioral expectations; and the maintenance of reasonable behavioral limits is necessary to cultivate a safe and productive educational atmosphere.

►►► Core Intervention Strategies

Positive Behavioral Supports:

Otherwise known as proactive behavior management, positive behavioral supports have been the cornerstone of TDP's intervention strategy since its inception in 1990. Positive behavioral supports refer to a variety of interventions and strategies aimed at cultivating a structured, pro-social school atmosphere where preferred academic and social behaviors are taught, promoted, and valued. The proper implementation of positive behavioral supports can have a significant effect on the overall climate of the school by minimizing the extent to which problematic student behaviors are exhibited.

These strategies include high rates of positive reinforcement for desired behaviors, frequent instruction of pro-social behaviors, non-confrontational interventions in response to mildly problematic behaviors, the structured management of transitions, a consistent daily schedule, the establishment of helpful routines, the cultivation of a supportive peer group, and the staff maintaining a calm, supportive demeanor during all interactions with students.





Social Skills Instruction:

Despite the diversity of symptoms associated with students who have emotional and behavioral difficulties, social skills deficits are quite common among this student population. Therefore, effective intervention for these students must include considerable emphasis in the instruction of social skills. The school setting is ideal for this instruction due to the numerous opportunities for students to engage in social interaction, to observe appropriate role models (both adults and peers), to practice the skills, and to receive feedback about their performance.

The program's approach to social skills instruction includes formal instruction several times per week wherein the teachers explain and then model specific skills (e.g., being a good sport when you win/lose, negotiating disagreements, coping successfully with teasing), and arrange for the students to have an opportunity to role-play the skills using different "real-life" scenarios. Classrooms also use some of the more popular social skills programs such as "Superflex."

The Program's approach to social skills instruction also includes a classroom immersion model wherein staff members in each class model pro-social behaviors throughout the course of the day, offer students on-the-spot instruction when they observe students struggling to cope successfully with a social situation involving a peer or an adult, and offer high rates of positive reinforcement in response to students engaging in desired social skills. In this manner, students are immersed in a classroom culture where pro-social behaviors are valued and emphasized.

► ► ► Core Intervention Strategies, cont.

Emotional Regulation:

Students with emotional disabilities invariably struggle, at times, from impairment in the ability to regulate, or control their emotions. They can become disproportionately frustrated, agitated, or sad in response to environmental stimuli and have difficulty calming themselves once these emotions take hold. Many students with these difficulties also have temperamental or neurological vulnerabilities such as sensory integration problems, hyper-arousal, hypersensitivity, and hyperactivity that predispose them to emotional instability.

To assist students in this area, the Therapeutic Day Program relies on various intervention strategies aimed at providing the students with the sensory input or interpersonal interaction necessary to help regulate, sooth, or calm them prior to the onset of an agitated emotional state or once such a state has become evident. One type of intervention involves exercises or activities that provide the student with an appropriate means of obtaining tactile or muscular stimulation. For example, by attaching a “theraband” (thick elastic band) to the front legs of a child’s desk, the child can place his feet on the band and gently push against the band as he sits at the desk. This enables the child to release muscle tension and/or obtain sensory stimulation that can help to avert his resorting to some other less constructive means of achieving this goal. Similar strategies include taking walks, wearing weighted vests, offering a child a “squishy ball” at the first sign of agitation, using exercise equipment and providing students with the opportunity to remove themselves from the activity area to a location that has reduced or alternate stimulation (“taking space”).

Other interventions for assisting students with emotional regulation are more interpersonal in nature. These interventions involve a supportive and calm adult who assists the child using a variety of de-escalation strategies aimed at modeling self-control, offering the child a “sympathetic ear,” providing encouragement and/or reassurance to the child and assisting the child in problem-solving. Children are also taught cognitive-behavioral strategies to assist with self-regulation such as learning to numerically quantify their own internal experience of anger and then choosing an appropriate de-escalation strategy that corresponds with this rating. These strategies can be implemented by classroom, clinical, or administrative staff as well as by the behavioral support staff associated with the Student Support Center which is a separate area designated for this purpose.

Contingency Management:

Contingency management systems are utilized with a wide variety of populations within the educational and mental health fields as a means of systematically reinforcing desired behaviors and reducing or eliminating problematic behaviors. They provide the teaching staff and the students with a predictable, consistent, and objective method of providing positive reinforcement and response-cost interventions in response to student behaviors. They supply students with frequent feedback regarding target behaviors and motivate students through the opportunity to obtain rewards and experience success in the classroom.

The particular contingency management systems used in TDP involve the distribution of “points” (“tokens” are used for younger students) for engaging in the desired behaviors during a given time period and/or withholding points/tokens in response to problematic or undesired behaviors. The accumulation of points/tokens is associated with various forms of positive reinforcement (e.g., tangible reinforcers, privileges, desired activities). Response-cost strategies are also carefully incorporated into this system wherein certain predetermined reinforcers are temporarily removed in response to behaviors targeted for reduction or elimination.

However, to optimize the effectiveness of the contingency management systems, the implementation of these systems do not occur in a rigid or impersonal manner that neglects, or detracts from the human or interpersonal dynamic underlying the interaction between the student and the staff member. For the system to be effective, the student must remain connected, or invested in the change process and believe that his or her cooperation in the process is in his or her best interest. Toward this end, staff members in TDP are trained to implement these systems in a compassionate and flexible manner that includes individual modification and compromise whenever appropriate to promote positive behavioral change in the student. Furthermore, a kind, flexible and compassionate approach to setting limits and implementing rewards and consequences helps to maintain a positive student/staff relationship.

► ► ► Academics

Students enrolled in TDP vary considerably with regard to their academic abilities. They range from very superior to well below grade level capabilities and include students with learning disabilities. Each student's Individual Educational Program (I.E.P.) directs the specific emphasis of his or her academic focus; however, the program relies on the Common Core State Standards to guide the overall instructional focus of each academic area at each grade level. In this manner, the program's curriculum is quite similar to those of our local school districts.

The specific materials and instructional practices utilized by our teachers will vary from class to class as a function of the needs of the particular students in that class. Teachers tend to emphasize high interest, interactive activities and assignments (all classrooms are equipped with *Smartboards*). Homework is regularly assigned to our students, however, the amount and nature of the homework is adjusted to meet the current needs of the individual child.

The program has a full time science teacher and fully equipped science lab where middle and high school students participate in a wide array of scientific inquiries. The program also employs a full time reading teacher who helps provide direction to the literacy program in each classroom and works individually and in small groups with students whose reading abilities are in need of remediation. Additionally, there is a full time technology integration teacher who works closely with the teaching staff to provide students with numerous opportunities to benefit from computer learning and a multitude of online resources. An assistive technology (AT) specialist is available to the program to provide AT devices and low and high tech instructional modifications required to address the individual needs of students.

Academic Achievement Data: In an effort to evaluate the academic progress of the students enrolled in TDP, the program conducts yearly assessments of students using nationally recognized standardized achievement tests such as the Woodcock – Johnson Test of Academic Achievement. Students are tested upon entering the program and then again at the end of each academic year in which they are enrolled. Recent data indicated that 98% of the students tested evidenced improvement in their overall reading scores with an average increase of 1.2 years grade equivalency. In math, 86% evidenced increases with the average increase being 1.4 years. For Writing, 88% showed increases with an average increase of 1.1 years in grade equivalency.

▼ Clinical Services

The Program's clinical team consists of school social workers and school psychologists who work directly with the students, their parents, and the teaching staff. This highly trained group of professionals provides individual and group counseling to the students, consultation to the teaching staff and works closely with parents to keep them informed of their child's functioning in school as well as to assist with concerns regarding their child's functioning at home or in the community. The clinical team also communicates regularly with any outside service providers (e.g., mental health professionals, social services) who are involved with the child in order to maintain continuity between the school and these services. The program employs a psychiatrist and two clinical psychologists who provide biweekly consultation to the staff regarding individual students and program-wide intervention strategies.

Related Services ▼

The program has access to the services of a speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist for students who require these related services based on their I.E.P.s. These staff provide both consultative services and individual or group therapy based on a student's individual needs in the areas of communication, fine and sensory motor and gross motor development.



▼ Vocational/Transitional Services

The program employs two full time certified staff members in the role of vocational/transition specialists who work closely with our middle and high school students. They help prepare high school students for life after graduation including assisting students with the college application process (e.g., taking SATs, accessing their high school's college resource centers, filling out applications) and/or providing them with job training opportunities. These opportunities have included automotive care in the C.E.S. transportation department, child care in daycare settings, job shadowing at various sites within the community (e.g., law enforcement, area businesses), and participation in Habitat for Humanity where students assist in the construction of new houses. They also offer direct instruction to middle and high school students regarding employment acquisition skills (e.g., interviewing) and career awareness and interests.





▼ TDP Instructional Staff

The staff at TDP is comprised of a group of highly dedicated special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The teaching staff have dedicated their careers to understanding and working with students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities. Along with their paraprofessional support teams, they have received comprehensive training and professional development in all aspects of this highly specialized field. The vast majority of our paraprofessional staff have college degrees and, in many cases, are studying to become certified teachers or mental health professionals.

Professional Development ▼

Each year, TDP staff undergo 6 full days of professional development training and numerous supervisory and consultation meetings on topics selected to meet the specific needs of the TDP student population. Considerable time is spent on developing staff competency in the use of positive behavioral supports, relationship building, social skills training, de-escalation strategies, behavior management and academic instruction. Various other topics relevant to general education such as state testing, bullying prevention strategies, and academic content area curriculum are also covered by our professional development training.

▶ ▶ ▶ Parent Testimonials about TDP

- ◆ “I think this program is exactly what my son needs behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. This is the first time we’ve ever seen any positive behavior changes for my son and he’s very happy to be there.” (Parent of a Redding student)
- ◆ “TDP has been a wonderful and positive experience for my child and myself. There has been marked improvement academically, and he has become more sociable with more self-confidence. I also like the fact that I can reach a staff member immediately or upon request. Staff is very friendly and informative.” (Parent of a Stratford student)
- ◆ “I feel your program has given my child his childhood back. The staff is wonderful.” (Parent of a New Fairfield student)
- ◆ “My son has had a great experience at TDP. I think the staff took a difficult situation for both educators and parents and eased my son into a workable situation. I think they did a great job. They are experienced and committed to the children and it shows. I am grateful for this program.” (Parent of a Stamford student)
- ◆ “C.E.S. stands for ‘Children Enjoying School’ or so it seems from my child’s improved demeanor!” (Parent of a Weston student)
- ◆ “My daughter has never done as well as she does at TDP. She’s happier than she’s been in years because she can feel good about herself.” (Parent of a Westport student)
- ◆ “I am overjoyed that my son finally found himself a place he can call his own. He has found a place he likes and feels a sense of belonging. He and I both look forward to the next school year.” (Parent of a Bridgeport student)
- ◆ “The Therapeutic Day Program saved us. Your staff was non-judgmental toward me and focused totally on the student. My son made tremendous progress. Your staff was nurturing and caring and helped us all during his 3 years at TDP. With my deepest gratitude and appreciation.” (Parent of a Fairfield student)
- ◆ “I wanted to give you all something to thank you for all that you have done for my son but everything just seemed inadequate. I loved the program.” (Parent of a Greenwich student)
- ◆ “This is a ‘God-send’ program made fantastic by the C.E.S. staff of teachers, assistants, speech pathologist, and psychologist. We love the fact that it is a nurturing, reward-based system, which also makes the child responsible for his own actions. We are pleased that the academics are stressed as well. Thank all of you!!” (Parent of a Trumbull student)



▼ About C.E.S.

For over 30 years, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) has been one of six Regional Educational Services Centers (RESC) within the state of Connecticut. Our mission is to identify and provide quality educational opportunities for educators, students, families, and communities. It is our goal to be on the cutting edge of educational excellence and to promote high quality services to children and families. C.E.S. serves the geographical area of the southwestern part of the state, and is governed by a Representative Council consisting of board of education members from each of the towns we serve. As a support and an extension of the public schools, C.E.S. offers a variety of services throughout the agency to our member districts. The Special Education Division of C.E.S. operates several educational programs in addition to the TDP program. For more information about C.E.S., visit the agency website at www.ces.k12.ct.us.

It is the policy of C.E.S. that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise discriminated against under any service or program on account of race, color, religious creed, age, marital or civil union status, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ancestry, residence, present or past history of mental disorder, mental retardation, learning disability or physical disability including, but not limited to, blindness, or pregnancy and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Inquiries regarding C.E.S. nondiscrimination policies should be directed to the Associate Executive Director's office, C.E.S., 40 Lindeman Dr., Trumbull, CT 06611, (203) 365-8831.



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