

Supplemental Principles of Good Practice for Therapeutic Schools

June 7, 2004

The Board of Directors of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs has unanimously adopted the following Supplemental Principles of Good Practice for Therapeutic Schools. These supplemental best practice standards for therapeutic schools recognize and highlight the unique nature of education and its relationship to other program components found in the therapeutic school. In addition to meeting the general best practice standards, full member therapeutic schools certify that they are also in compliance with these supplemental standards. Associate member schools are aspiring to the general best practice and supplemental standards, but are not yet in full compliance. The intent of these supplemental best practice standards is to raise the general level of operating practices within therapeutic schools.

Definition: Therapeutic schools provide an integrated educational milieu with an appropriate level of structure and supervision for physical, emotional, behavioral, familial, social, intellectual, and academic development. Therapeutic schools either grant a high school diploma or award credits that lead to admission to a diploma-granting secondary school. Therapeutic schools serve students who have a history of failing to function at home or in less structured or traditional schools in terms of academic, social, moral, or emotional development.

These guidelines refer to therapeutic and emotional growth schools as “schools” and refer to clients/program participants as “students.” The standards are organized using the same numeric headings found in the NATSAP Principles of Good Practice Standards.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

2.1.3 Mission Statement

The school will have a clear mission statement, philosophy, and goals.

- 2.1.3.1 The school’s governing body and staff will understand and support the school’s mission, philosophy, and goals.
- 2.1.3.2 The school will effectively communicate the school’s mission statement, philosophy, and goals.
- 2.1.3.3 The schools programs and operations will reflect the mission statement, philosophy and goals.
- 2.1.3.4 The school’s philosophy, principles, and practices will be consistent with a humane and diverse society.
- 2.1.3.5 The school will provide an intellectual environment that promotes student freedom of inquiry and in which students are encouraged to express individual points of view, develop independent critical thinking and to examine and debate all sides of a subject in a rational mature manner.

2.1.6 Services

2.1.6.1 Integrated Student/family Services

The school will have a planning process for each student/family relevant to the school’s mission that includes:

2.1.6.1.1 An enrollment strategy to ensure the successful integration of the student into all aspects of school life.

2.1.6.1.2 An ongoing planning process with:

2.1.6.1.2.1 An appropriate and sufficient menu of services designed to support all aspects of a student's journey toward completion or exit (e.g. education services, special education, guidance counseling, IEP management, standardized assessment preparation and administration; psychological and counseling services; health and medical services and physical education and recreation services).

2.1.6.1.2.2 Evaluative components to determine if the goals of the planning process are met.

2.1.6.1.2.3 A process to assess the ongoing suitability of the student to the program.

2.1.6.1.2.4 A completion/exit strategy that helps the student plan for a successful life after leaving the school.

2.1.6.2 School Curriculum

The school will have a curriculum designed to foster the intellectual, aesthetic, personal, physical, social, and career development of the student population and engage students in rigorous and challenging educational pursuits commensurate with their level of development.

2.1.6.2.1 The school will have a collaboratively developed program of studies that includes a balance of disciplines that reflect the needs and Interests of the students and is consistent with the school's mission and beliefs.

2.1.6.2.2 The curriculum will include a set of essential knowledge and skills in each content area with written course descriptions that reflect attention to scope, sequence, continuity, integration, materials, and performance assessments as appropriate to the school's mission and goals.

2.1.6.2.3 The curriculum will address the development of content standards and an appropriate balance of the following components of learning: factual mastery, skill development, creativity, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as appropriate to its mission and goals.

2.1.6.2.4 The school will have a process for a timely review and revision of curriculum.

2.1.6.2.5 The student's academic progress will be monitored, documented, and communicated to parents in an appropriate manner.

2.1.6.2.6 Assessments of student learning will be based on clearly articulated and appropriate expectations for student academic achievement.

2.1.6.3 Credit, Grades and Graduation Requirements

The school will have developed, articulated and/or made available to students, parents, faculty, and others the following:

- 2.1.6.3.1 Clearly defined grading rubrics and requirements.
- 2.1.6.3.2 Clearly defined criteria for awarding course credit.
- 2.1.6.3.3 Clearly defined graduation requirements that are consistent with the school's mission and goals, integrated with the school's program components and designed to meet the needs of the students.
- 2.1.6.3.4 School accreditation by a state, regional, or national accrediting body.

2.1.7 Organizational Structure

2.1.7.1 Program Integration

The school will have policies, procedures, and plans that describe the integration of its several school components within the context of its mission and philosophy. This plan will include:

- 2.1.7.1.1 Direct references to the school's mission and philosophy.
- 2.1.7.1.2 Policies providing for effective inter and intra departmental information sharing.
- 2.1.7.1.3 An explanation of how all aspects of a student's life are integrated by the school in such areas as academics, residential life, recreation, and counseling/therapy.
- 2.1.7.1.4 A description of the structure and process by which the school shares information both intra and interdepartmentally (e.g. meetings, regular reports, etc.).
- 2.1.7.1.5 An explanation of how each aspect of the curriculum (e.g. academic, social, emotional, and physical) will address the student's development.

2.1.9 School Self Evaluation and Improvement

The school will develop and implement an ongoing improvement plan that emphasizes learning for all students and is consistent with the school's mission and goals.

- 2.1.9.1 The school will have a regular review of its mission and goals.
- 2.1.9.2 The school will have a process for initiating, planning and coordinating the school's improvement efforts. The planning process may include the following components:
 - 2.1.9.2.1 Evaluation to select focus for areas of improvement.
 - 2.1.9.2.2 Development of strategies for improvement.
 - 2.1.9.2.3 Implementation of strategies.
 - 2.1.9.2.4 Monitoring and evaluation of results.

2.1.9.3 The school will engage in a periodic self-study or evaluation process that provides for broad participation of its stakeholders and full disclosure of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

2.3 Accounting Practices

2.3.1 The school will have sufficient financial resources available to provide space, people, time, and materials to support the balanced integration of programs and services to maximize the potential for all students as appropriate to its mission.

3.0 EMPLOYEE PRACTICES

3.1 Hiring Practices

3.1.3 Professional Qualifications

3.1.3.1 The school will establish demonstrable levels of professional competency for faculty by education, experience, and/or certification as appropriate to its mission.

3.1.3.2 The school will publish competency requirements and professional qualifications for its Academic Faculty.

3.2 On-going Employee Practices

3.2.2.2 Professional Development for Faculty

3.2.2.2.1 The school will have an on-going staff development program that is responsive to the demands of its curriculum and the unique needs of its students and is consistent with the mission and goals of the school.

4.0 ADMISSION/DISCHARGE POLICY

4.3 Student Files/Records

4.3.10 The school will maintain cumulative records for academics that include at a minimum all records of standardized testing, grades, credits earned, and diplomas awarded.