

**Franklin Public Schools
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

Action Required

Subject: Amego

Date: May 14, 2019

Dept: School Committee

Reason: Required Vote

Enclosure: yes

Recommendation:

- a. Amego School Approval

I recommend approval of the Amego School as recommended by Paula Marano, Director of Student Services as detailed.

Action Requested of the School Committee:

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

<u>Vote Tabulator</u>	
A. Bergen: Y / N	D. Schultz: Y / N
C. Douglas: Y / N	MJ Scofield: Y / N
D. Feeley: Y / N	G. Zub: Y / N
M. Linden: Y / N	Action: _____

Franklin Public Schools

Office of Student Services

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To: Dr. Sara Ahern, Superintendent of Schools
From: Paula Marano, Director of Student Services
Date: May 8, 2019
Re: Approval of Amego School Curriculum and Instruction

The purpose of this memo is to recommend the approval of Amego School's curriculum and instruction as outlined in the Amego School Program and Student Description.

Amego School is a private day and residential special education school for students ages 8-22 who have been identified with a disability of autism or other related disorders. The students who attend Amego School are referred and funded by local school districts.

Students who attend Amego School have different learning capabilities and styles. Individualized Educational Programs are written based on each student's individual strengths and areas of growth. Many of the students require various methodologies of instruction in order for them to access curricula, such as discrete trial, errorless teaching, guided practice, and repetition.

Using the Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities in addition to other specialized systematic research-based curricula, academic instruction is provided in the areas of English Language Arts, Reading, History, Social Sciences, Math, and Science and Technology. The academic instruction in each of these areas is functional for each individual. The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks are modified to a level that is both challenging and achievable for each individual student. Instruction is provided in both a 1:1 and small group setting.

The students are assessed using The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) or The Assessment of Functional Life Skills (AFLS). The methods and types of assessments are decided each year by the student's Individualized Educational Program Team at the annual review. Typically the students at Amego School complete MCAS-Alt portfolio, which assesses the skills of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks through access and entry-level skills.

There are many other services available to students at Amego School such as social-emotional and behavioral support, self-help, daily living skills, adapted physical education, speech-language services, occupational services, physical therapy, and pre-vocational, vocational and career education. These services are determined and recommended by the

student's Individualized Educational Program Team and based on each student's individual needs. In addition, the Amego School also offers parent counseling and training as well as health and medical services.

It is my opinion that the curriculum and instruction offered at the Amego School are equal in thoroughness and efficiency to that offered by the Franklin Public Schools but delivered in a way to meet the individual and specialized needs of students with autism and other developmental disabilities. I, therefore, recommend that the School Committee approve the curriculum and instruction of the Amego School.

The next steps would be for the School Committee to notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that they approve the curriculum. In addition, the district along with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will complete a site visit of the new facility. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Amego School

Program & Student Description

Student Population

Amego provides educational services in a day and residential school for students between the ages of 8 – 22 with autism and related disorders who have been determined eligible for special education services. Our students are referred and funded by local school districts.

Educational Characteristics

Educational characteristics of students at Amego differ greatly from student to student. Students have different learning capabilities and styles, with one thing in common – they are all capable of learning and growing in their general knowledge of the curriculum frameworks and common core standards. Individualized educational programs are designed around each student's unique abilities and challenges. Many students at Amego require discrete trial, errorless teaching and guided practice as methods to gain knowledge. Students at Amego require individualized instruction with frequent practice and repetition to learn and retain new skills. Curriculum is modified to instruct students at a level where they can be challenged yet quickly experience success. Learning opportunities are incorporated throughout the day to reinforce concepts and information learned across settings.

Behavioral Characteristics

Our students engage in a variety of challenging behaviors, which is ultimately a result of a skill deficit and as such, the challenging behavior serves a function for the student. More often than not, students are referred to our program due primarily to the challenging behaviors that they can engage in which can not be address effectively in a less restrictive setting. A large portion of the education for these students is around learning socially appropriate alternatives to the challenging behavior to prepare the student for instruction in other curricular areas.

Philosophy, Goals and Objectives

Mission Statement

Amego is committed to providing individuals with the resources they need to grow and become independent, productive citizens of their community. By integrating teaching, support systems and diverse opportunities, each individual will gain the experience needed to meet and succeed in the challenges he/she will encounter in life.

Guiding Principles

Amego believes ...

... In the potential of every individual to be participating, contributing members of society;

... That each person's Individual Education Program should be developed by the members of the interdisciplinary team and should address each student's unique strengths, needs, aptitudes and personal desires;

.... That each student should gain independence to the greatest level he/she is capable.

... That family members, guardians and significant individuals in a student's life are essential and add intrinsic value to the success of the program and of the student;

.... That each student is entitled to an education in the least restrictive environment;

.... That each student and his/her family have the right to be free from discrimination and harassment;

.... That behavior can be changed with positive interventions and does not believe in the use of aversive tactics.

Implementation of Educational Services

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (Common Core)

Students at Amego are diagnosed with autism and related disorders typically resulting in below grade level access to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The content requirements of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks are implemented through the development of each student's Individual Educational Program. Using the Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities in conjunction with other curricular, academic instruction is provided in the areas of English/Language Arts and Reading, History and Social Sciences, Math, and Science and Technology. Students receive small group and individual instruction designed to provide access to the curriculum at a challenging, but attainable, level for each individual student. The students receive instruction in communication, reading, math, science and health and social sciences that is functional for each individual.

The Head Teacher/Case Manager for the student in collaboration with other teachers, clinical staff, speech, OT, and PT therapists, and parents develop IEP goals and objectives that address curriculum areas at a challenging but achievable level for the student.

Individual lesson plans are created for students to address the goals and objectives of the IEP and for each of the subject areas being tested by MCAS for that student. Lessons are run in the classrooms through discrete trial and other behavioral teaching methodology. Lessons are broadened to include real life situations and reinforced through computer and other interactive supports, such as the reinforcement of the understanding of certain prepositions while receiving directions in adaptive physical education class. Many teaching methods are used to assist the student toward achievement of Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks driven goals and objectives.

Students are assessed using The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) or The Assessment of Functional Life Skills (AFLS). Methods and types of specific assessments, standardized test or portfolio, is decided by the Team each year at the student's Individual Educational Program Annual Review. Typically, students at Amego complete a MCAS-Alt portfolio, which assesses their skills of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks through access and entry level skills. Each student's individualized program ensures that he or she is provided with essential learning opportunities to reach his or her greatest learning potential.

Implementation of Behavioral Services

Amego provides positive behavior support services to its students served, utilizing an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) approach. Based on Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), each student has an individualized Behavior Support Plan (BSP) detailing various methods for preventing and deescalating challenging behaviors as well as teaching alternatives to these challenging behaviors. Our students engage in a variety of challenging behaviors because of a skill deficit. The challenging behavior serves a function for the student. A student may engage in a challenging behavior in order to gain attention or access to a tangible or activity, to escape a demand, or for the sensory feedback it may provide.

Each student is overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who analyzes the data and determines the function of the student's maladaptive behaviors. With this hypothesized function(s), the BCBA develops the Behavior Support Plan. The BCBA continuously monitors data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and makes adjustments to strategies implemented based on levels and trends in the data.

Each Behavior Support Plan (BSP) includes an introduction, antecedent management procedures that detail preventative strategies, procedures for the van, meal time and the community, reinforcement procedures for increasing appropriate behavior, as well as consequence procedures that target decreasing maladaptive behaviors.

Other Services

Self-Help, Daily Living Skills

Instruction occurs in all functional life domains during the school day. As part of their daily academic program, students receive instruction in self-help and daily living skills; including but not limited to personal hygiene skills such as; showering, tooth brushing, hair care, and shaving, as well as, laundry skills, cooking, and other functional living skills. Nutrition, meal etiquette, and pacing programs are developed and taught during natural times throughout the day.

Adapted Physical Education

Students participate in a structured adapted physical education class at least four times weekly with a full-time physical education teacher. Physical education and recreation are used to promote healthy lifestyles, build self-confidence, and increase appropriate social interactions, both with peers and within the community. In addition to structured physical education classes, students are also involved in swimming at the YMCA and on-going Special Olympics events in southeastern Massachusetts. Students are encouraged to be active in school through the use of our gymnasium and outdoor recreation area.

Speech and Language Services

Amego has a Speech and Language Pathologist on staff that conducts assessments and consultative services relative to speech and language goals outlined in student's IEPs to the teaching staff, as well as supervision to our SLPA who provides direct services within the classroom setting. Lesson plans are written in a manner that allows for implementation from all personnel, as our students require repetition to acquire skills. All staff is trained to teach

communication skills, including basic sign language, and to reinforce communication with students. Assistive devices are made or provided to assist each student be a more effective communicator. Total communication approaches are used with the majority of our students. This may include communication apps on an iPad, Picture Exchange Book, or a Picture Point Book. Communication tools are individualized for each student's needs. In addition to specific speech and language goals that are outlined within an IEP, all students receive direct and incidental instruction in social skills and social communication throughout the day.

Occupational Therapy

Amegon has a full-time Occupational Therapist and COTA on staff who provide direct and consultative services. The COTA works under the direction of the Occupational Therapist and provides services to students as documented in their IEP's.

Physical Therapy

Amego has a full-time physical therapist that provides direct and consultative services to students. The physical therapist works in conjunction with the other therapist and with the classrooms to ensure carryover of skills. IEP goals and objectives are written by the physical therapist for those students with direct service.

Prevocational, vocational and career education

Students at Amego participate in prevocational skill development. Many of the pre-vocational tasks are connected to academic skill development as well, such as sorting by attribute, matching, alphabetizing and following directions to complete a task. Amego staff work to provide the students with opportunities to participate in varied and genuine work scenarios, focusing on learning the tasks and demonstrating safe behavior while at work. Students practice running a school store and gain the confidence to make purchases, that is then carried over to making purchases in the community. This consist of waiting, completing a money exchange, receive a receipt, and waiting for their item, while using appropriate social skills.

Social/Emotional Needs

Social skill development is a key component of the Amego curriculum. Amego uses a social skills curriculum and incorporates social stories to teach students how to react and interact in social situations. The high teacher-to-student ratio provides many opportunities to practice social interactions during the school day.

The ability to recognize and express emotions is a fundamental skill. Deficits in this area can lead to challenging behaviors. By teaching socially appropriate replacement behaviors students learn to communicate effectively, which ultimately results in lowered rates of challenging behavior. Students who take medication to assist with mood/affect/behavior regulation have the opportunity to receive services via a licensed psychiatrist who consult with our program on a monthly basis. It is not required that students and families participate in these meetings; they have the option to seek services in their local communities.

English Language Support

Currently, all students at Amego are English Language Learners in that they need to learn language in order to communicate effectively. Amego, in accordance with the non-discrimination policy, will not discriminate or deny admission to a student based on the home language. For those students for whom English is a second language, Amego will work cooperatively with the referring school district to identify and implement support services and program modifications in accordance with the student's Individual Education Program and ensure that communication to the family/guardian is in their native language.

In addition, Amego employs teachers and teaching assistants who are bilingual and may provide assistance with communication to students and parents. Amego will also work cooperatively with the sending district to ensure that correspondence is translated when necessary.

Transportation

Amego personnel provide transportation for day students during community outings. Staff must possess a valid driver's license as an employment requirement. Driving records are checked with staff consent upon hire and staff is provided with an approved driver training that is part of our Orientation and Training curricular.

All staff is orientated to the Amego vehicles during orientation, and vehicle safety is reviewed annually during scheduled training days. Company vehicle maintenance is overseen by the Physical Plant Manager.

Braille needs (blind visually impaired)

When a student requires specialized services for a visual impairment, Amego will work cooperatively with the LEA to provide the necessary instruction and services to the student, including but not limited to a teacher of the visually impaired for consultation and direct services and mobility specialists where appropriate.

Assistive Technology

During annual and three-year reevaluation Individual Education Plan meetings, a discussion occurs around the topic of assistive technology. For students that have a skill deficit and the TEAM is in agreement that assistive technology will benefit the student in making academic gains or accessing the curriculum, it is documented within the student's IEP. Amego does not currently have a teacher certified in assistive technology, but if there is a need for an evaluation, Amego works cooperatively with the LEA to this end.

Communication Needs

For students who have communication needs due to being deaf or hard of hearing, Amego will work with the family, sending school district and the child's physician to provide access to the necessary devices and communication methods that will enable the student to understand and communicate more effectively.

Recreation Services

Amego provides students with recreational opportunities on a routine basis. Students have the opportunity to explore a variety of activities based on their own interests. During the school day, field trips are coordinated by the teaching staff and approved by an Educational Director. A student's ability to engage in an activity with appropriate behavior is considered before each outing. Some of the recreational activities a student may participate in include swimming at the YMCA, dining in local restaurants, shopping, attending theatrical performances and other community based physical fitness activities. Providing recreational opportunities in order to increase social skills and develop appropriate leisure activities is a priority.

Orientation & Mobility training

Amego works with the LEA to coordinate services for students with low vision or similar/related deficits that require or benefit from a trained O&M specialist. Typically, the Carroll Center is contacted and contracted direct/consultative services are provided as outlined in the student's IEP.

Psychological Services, Counseling Services, Rehabilitation Counseling and Social Work Services

Students receive psychological services as appropriate and directed. Amego has a consulting psychiatrist who provides monthly medication regimen reviews for some of our students. The teaching staff also provides instruction in social skills and emotions as part of a student's Individual Educational Program. Therapy and counseling services would be provided as necessary in coordination with the sending school district and the student's physicians.

Amego employs a full time licensed social worker who works with the families of students. Support is offered to families in matters related to insurance benefits, Social Security entitlements, assistance and oversight for students' personal needs accounts, admissions and discharges, TEAM meetings, DCF foster care reviews, transitions and guardianship. The Director of Social Services coordinates the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and sets the agenda for the quarterly meetings.

Parent counseling and training

Amego was founded by families seeking education for their children. Parents are valued and considered an integral part of the interdisciplinary team. Parent training is offered on an individual basis to address specific needs of the family to support their child. When a specific issue or need is discussed and assistance is sought either by the family or sending LEA, Amego will provide families with suggestions to help manage situations while they have their son/daughter at home and basic principles can be taught for home implementation. Amego offers parent progress meetings on their child as often as a parent requests. In conjunction to each Head Teachers/Case Managers having a minimum of weekly contact with each students family.

Health services, medical services

Amego employs a Director of Health Services, physician, two psychiatrists (children's and adults') and a school nurse. Medical care and health services are coordinated with these personnel and community based practitioners.

The overall health and safety of all students is the responsibility of all staff at Amego Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and are required to renew their licenses in these areas through offered training, prior to expiration.

Medication is administered in accordance with procedures outlined by the Department of Public Health. No student is administered medication (including over the counter) without a physician's order and parental/guardian consent. The school nurse administers medication during the school day. If a student requires medication while on a school trip, our direct care staff are trained in medication administration and must pass and maintain certification as a job requirement.

In the event that a student requires medical attention beyond the scope of our nursing staff, the student's primary care physician is called for direction on the matter. When necessary, the students are transported to the local emergency room for medical attention. When this is the case, a Form 2 is completed in accordance with DESE requirements, and notifications are made to the parent/guardian and the sending school district.