



Bromley Brook will shut down when school year ends

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MANCHESTER -- A private therapeutic boarding school for girls will close this summer after as its parent company looks to cut back programs to match faltering demand, impacting about 45 local jobs.

The Aspen Education Group announced Thursday that the Bromley Brook School and four others around the country will close by July. Bromley Brook in Manchester is for girls "who have difficulty finding success in a traditional school setting," according to its Website. Students follow individual learning plans that focus on education, self-awareness and family relationships.

Aspen Education will consider transitioning "to a more focused national network of services." A smaller group of schools will allow resources to be deployed where there is most need "and assure the best possible service for our students and families."

Phil Herschman, president of the Aspen Education Group, said the company's board of directors recently approved the consolidation plans.

"We got formal approval to do it ... in the last couple of days. It had been something we have been thinking and planning for a number of months," he said.

The shift reflects the declining demand for therapeutic schools and programs, according to Herschman. "It's purely the economics of the times that has really created a really reduced demand for these services," he said.

Herschman said there are currently 57 students enrolled at the Manchester school, down from an average of about 80 in previous years. "It's

way down. The decline started in probably the end of 2007 ... and has gone down steadily since then,"

he said.

About 45 employees work at the school, according to Herschman. The company is working with parents, students and staff to minimize impact, according to Herschman. "Stay incentives" have been created "to ensure the continuity of high-quality services" at each of the programs.

Herschman said "some subset" of employees will be offered positions at the remaining 18 schools run by the company. "We're trying to figure out how many as we speak," he said.

Meanwhile, classes at the Bromley Brook and the four other schools slated to close will continue through the end of the school year. "There will be a graduation in July. We're trying to have as many girls complete as we can."

The company's remaining schools will provide choices for students to transition to another program. Aspen will pay relocation costs for students who transfer to another program even if the student chooses a school outside Aspen's network.

Herschman said the executive directors at each closing school were notified earlier this week. The information was then passed on to staff, students and their families, he said.

In addition to Bromley Brook, the New Leaf Academy and the NorthStar Center in Oregon, as well as the Aspen Ranch and SunHawk Adolescent Recovery Center in Utah, are set to close.

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The school property is leased, Herschman said, and it's unclear how it may be used once the school closes.

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