



## Education... for a Lifetime

# GPA today

News and  
Information  
About Garfield  
Park Academy

Spring 2013

### Bridges to the Future

Regardless of where they are going, Garfield Park Academy students have a bridge to their future. For those interested in a career skill, GPA offers programs in cosmetology, horticulture, culinary arts, carpentry, retail trades and auto mechanics. The School to Careers Program provides added opportunities for students who need flexibility because they work during the regular school day.



And for those planning on higher education, GPA's connection with Burlington County College offers supports to prepare students for the academic rigor of college, allowing them to earn college credit while still in high school.



## Every Interaction is a Chance to Teach

When serving students with behavioral disabilities, what makes one specialized school succeed while another fails? The answer lies in the efficacy of a school's over arching approach, and how that approach is implemented day-to-day.

At Garfield Park Academy, effective teaching hinges on effective communication. "Regardless of the curriculum or behavioral goals in the IEP, if teachers cannot communicate with their students, change will be difficult," said Matthew Murphy, a teacher consultant at Garfield Park Academy.

The Teaching Family Model (TFM) used at Garfield Park Academy is a comprehensive, evidence-based approach backed by decades of research. One of the most studied programs available, TFM has been hailed by The American Psychological Association, the Office of Juvenile



Justice Delinquency Prevention and the Surgeon General's Office for its effectiveness.

One key element of the TFM is the "teaching interaction," a highly-structured, sequential process for communicating. A teaching interaction is initiated whenever staff are working to correct student behavior.

During a teaching interaction, students gain insight into their

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## Cultivating Self-Esteem and Confidence

Students in the horticulture center at Garfield Park Academy may be busy with seedlings and floral arrangements, but what they are cultivating is self-esteem, patience, confidence and nurturing. In the state-of-the-art classroom, complete with a greenhouse, florist's refrigerator and grow lights, they quickly find that the creative, hands-on work is non-threatening.

"Here, I teach students not to fear mistakes – they are just another chance to learn," said David Hamilton, director of the center.

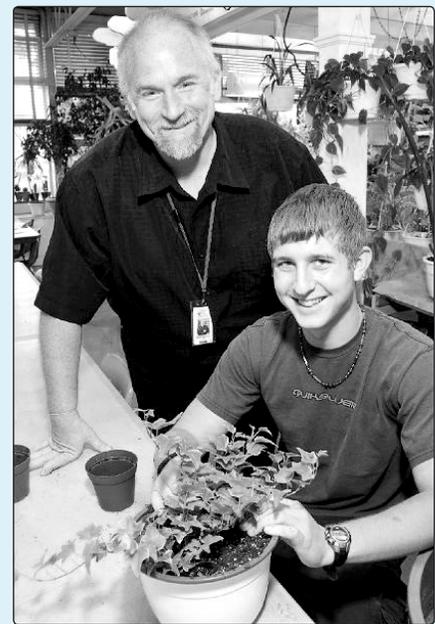
Hamilton, a florist by trade, knows that most of his students will not

become florists or farmers, but he has high expectations for them, nonetheless. "I expect them to develop good work skills so they can be successful in whatever career path they choose," he said.

It begins with confidence and a feeling of genuine accomplishment.

"Teens walk into my classroom, see a beautiful floral arrangement and say: 'I could never make that,' or they see an exotic orchid and say 'I could never take care of that,'" said Hamilton.

"I break things down into smaller steps, and provide guidance and support so each student can do the



job. When they identify themselves with "success" and not "failure," they have learned a lesson that will last a lifetime."

## Every Interaction is a Chance to Teach *continued from cover*

behavior, use problem-solving skills, learn to reflect on their behavior, and build their ability to communicate with others.

"Behavior problems are due, in part, to a lack of communication skills," said Murphy. "When we interact with our students, we want to build positive relationships, help them communicate more effectively, and teach self-management for independence."

"It's not just what you say, but how you say it," Murphy added. Each teaching interaction has "quality components" that address the demeanor of the staff member - facial expression, tone of voice, and body language.

Each step of the teaching interaction is designed to de-escalate behavior and redirect the student to a more positive frame of mind. No matter what the student is doing, feedback is delivered with respect, sincerity, compassion and empathy. The

interaction will build, not damage, relationships and self-esteem.

"Our staff are so well trained in the model that one teacher could step into a teaching interaction and take over for another without missing a beat," added Rafiq Robinson, another teacher consultant.

"That degree of consistency and predictability helps our students know what to expect and provides a safe, reliable setting in which they can learn."

# Accreditation: Why It Matters

Just because a school claims membership in a state, regional or national association doesn't mean that it is accredited. Many schools claim to be accredited when, in reality, they are not.

Accreditation is important. It is your guarantee that a school has met certain standards during a thorough review by a body of its peers. The accreditation process, which is voluntary, assures that a school is a trustworthy institution of learning and its purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program.

"Accreditation fosters our culture of continuous improvement," said Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent of Garfield Park Academy. It reflects our commitment to deliver a program that supports student learning, and reflects our willingness to open our doors to external review and critique."



**Middle States Association:** Garfield Park Academy is one of only a handful of special education private schools to earn accreditation from the Middle State's Association, America's premier regional accreditation agency for schools. The Association recognizes excellence in educational quality, planning, and growth in student performance and provides rigorous standards of educational quality.



**National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF):** Garfield Park Academy is the only state approved private special education school in New Jersey to have an automotive program that is accredited by NATEF, whose mission is to improve the quality of automotive technician training programs nationwide at secondary and post-secondary, public and proprietary schools.



**Teaching Family Association:** Garfield Park Academy is the first school program in the nation to be certified by the Teaching Family Association. The Model has been selected by the American Psychological Association as a "Model Program in Service Delivery in Child and Family Mental Health."

*"Garfield Park Academy represents the gold standard in positive behavioral supports for students with disabilities... Their commitment to excellence is unsurpassed."*

*- Peggy McElgunn, Esq.,  
Executive Director,  
Teaching Family Association*

# STEPS

**Social Teaching for Employment  
& Personal Success**

**Now Open Saturday!**

Now entering our third year, the STEPS transition program has expanded to offer programs and services on Saturday.



STEPS is as an after-hours program for adults with disabilities, offering flexible services and on-going support aimed at independence. STEPS offers fun, engaging activities in a supportive environment designed to address social and life skills. It offers counseling and supports, transition services and employment preparation.

The Saturday program extends STEPS' structured activities into the weekend and offers respite for families who need a break.

To learn more, go to [www.steps4living.org](http://www.steps4living.org) or call 609-877-4111

STEPS is a New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities Approved Provider for:

- Habilitative Services,
- Individual Supports, and
- Transportation Services

**Education... for a Lifetime**





## The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy

In an effort to bring greater awareness of the Teaching Family Model, and its evidence-based approach to serving students with social, emotional and behavioral challenges, GPA has initiated The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy.

We had such a tremendous response to the seminars we offered this year, we were asked to continue our efforts.

GPA will be offering free CEU credits through workshops and seminars throughout the 2013-2104 school year.

Watch our website for more details.

[www.garfieldparkacademy.org](http://www.garfieldparkacademy.org)



Garfield Park Academy is a New Jersey state approved, not-for-profit school that provides effective, evidence-based special education services for students in grades K-12 who have a history of learning, social, emotional and behavioral challenges. Garfield Park Academy is accredited by the Middle States Association and certified by the Teaching Family Association. For more information, please contact Garfield Park Academy or visit our website.

Garfield Park Academy

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