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Education...  
*for a Lifetime*

# GPA today

News and Information About Garfield Park Academy

*Winter 2014*

## Lieutenant Governor Visits Garfield Park Academy



In late September, New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno spent the morning at Garfield Park Academy, meeting students and talking with school leaders.

"We were delighted and proud that the Lieutenant Governor chose to visit Garfield Park Academy," said Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent.

"She learned about our history, our approach and our mission, and talked directly with our students.

She is clearly an advocate for students with disabilities who need more than public schools can provide," he added.



## Jeremiah Osler:



## Looking Back with Gratitude, Looking Forward with Pride

Jeremiah Osler will celebrate his 21st birthday in the Arab state of Qatar, proudly serving his country. Last year, the 2012 graduate of Garfield Park Academy enlisted with the New Jersey National Guard's 114th Infantry.

Osler, now 19, said he owes his success to the support, guidance and structure he got at GPA. "They taught me self control and self respect," said Osler.

Osler was bullied in public school. Explosive and irritable, he was frequently suspended because of his behavior. Eventually, he came to dread school and was failing classes.

"It got to the point that I was ready to swing at anything that moved," he said. He said he became a target

*"My son has become a young man, and has overcome so many things. Had we not found Garfield Park Academy, I do not know where he would be."*

*- Linda Osler, Jeremiah Osler's Mother*

for local law enforcement, who knew him by his first name.

At the end of middle school, his district enrolled him in at Garfield Park Academy. Although it took

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Left to right, above: Rhonda Wright, Kelli Schuyler, Jeremiah Osler, Claudia Faucher & Barbara Manes.

## Jeremiah Osler *continued from cover*

time to adjust, Osler said that he trusted the staff, even when he was at his most challenging.

Osler recalls a critical turning point. "I was going through a rough period, and sat down with the classroom facilitator. We talked for almost two hours. He gave me a whole new outlook - I realized that I did not have to fight anymore," said Osler. From there, Osler says he was ready to listen and learn. "I knew I could make something of myself," he recalled.

Barbara Mang, Social Worker at GPA said Osler was "a great kid," who really benefitted from the

support GPA offered him. "Now that he is in the Army, he has embraced the self-discipline that we were teaching," she added.

Linda Osler, Jeremiah's mother could not be more proud. "My son has become a young man, and has overcome so many things," she said.

"Had we not found Garfield Park Academy, I do not know where he would be," she added.

While he is waiting for deployment next spring, Osler is working as a bus aid helping students with disabilities, and is employed by the same transportation company

### The Teaching Family Model: A Student's Perspective

Jeremiah Osler credits the Teaching Family Model for helping him. "At first, I did not understand it, but I asked questions and the staff explained the process. I always knew what to expect," he added.

"As much as I resisted it in the beginning, I still held it in the back of my mind. I had target skills - once I mastered the skills, I moved on. I knew what was expected of me, and it knew what I needed to do. It became so familiar, it is just like muscle memory - it helped me a lot."

*"I did not know it at the time, but I am really lucky to have gone to Garfield Park Academy."*

*- Jeremiah Osler,  
Former GPA student*

that used to take him to and from Garfield Park Academy.

Sometimes, after his shift, he says he gets on the bus he used to ride, and sits where he used to sit, recalling his days at GPA, grateful for the experience he had. "I did not know it at the time, but I am really lucky to have gone to Garfield Park Academy."

# Tips for Students with School Phobia

Garfield Park Academy serves an ever-growing number of students who experience school phobia. Here are some thoughts about what districts and parents can do to better support these children and teens:

## 1 RECOGNIZE THAT THE PHOBIA IS REAL

Be supportive and understanding, and try NOT to minimize the anxiety it can cause a child.

## 2 UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE AND EXPRESSION

Try to determine the extent of the anxiety (i.e., on a scale of 1-10, is it a 4 or a 7?). How is it expressed in different situations (crying, avoidance, irritability, depression, aggression, agitation etc.)? This might help in determining solutions.

## 3 BRING SCHOOL TO THE HOUSE

If a student has been out of school for a while, or if the phobia is severe, the first step is to have a school representative come to the home and meet with the student. Ideally, this would be a counselor who could address the student's concerns and discuss the transition process back to school. A positive relationship with a school counselor may help reduce anxiety and make school seem less frightening.

## 4 GO SLOW

It is oftentimes best to transition the student back into school slowly, using a gradual process called "shaping." Begin by having the student come to school for only a set period of time - ideally, a time of day that may be less stressful to the student - and then let him or her go back home.

## 5 TEACH SELF-RELAXATION

A counselor can teach the student basic relaxation techniques specifically designed to help reduce anxiety and desensitize the student to the stressful situation.

## 6 REFRAME

Schools and counselors can teach "cognitive restructuring" to help with anxiety-producing feelings. The goal is to teach the student to think differently about the fear, and reframe the anxious feelings in a more productive way.



Garfield Park Academy welcomes Kerrie Anczarki as Director of the school. Kerrie began her career as a teacher in the New York City public school system and has also worked as an educator in both public and non-profit schools in New Jersey.

"Kerrie has a solid track record of enhancing and developing new programs while raising academic performance aligned to the common core through positive teaching strategies," said Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent. "She is already making a difference for our students."

# STEPS

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STEPS is a New Jersey Division  
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- Habilitative Services,
- Individual Supports, and
- Transportation Services



## The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy

...bringing greater awareness of the Teaching Family Model, and its evidence-based approach to serving students with social, emotional and behavioral challenges. 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).

## GOLF OUTING 2014 SAVE THE DATE



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.

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