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## Education... for a Lifetime

# GPA today



Garfield Park  
Academy  
News and Information  
from Garfield Park Academy

Fall 2017

## A "Growing" Interest in Learning

Lush green leaves and the sweet smell of warm potting soil welcome students when they walk into the newly refurbished Horticulture Center at Garfield Park Academy. The center functions as a quiet oasis for students, where they can connect



with nature and get their hands dirty. The program recently added a fenced-in outdoor organic garden classroom complete with a tool shed and a fiberglass greenhouse for growing plants, offering an urban farming experience that is a 'first' for many GPA students.

Through their work at the Horticulture Center, students learn patience and how to care for plants through hands-on earth science lessons. They also learn

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## Preparing Students for Success When They Return to District

**Joe Brogan, a case manager at Rancocas Valley Regional High School, knew that when T's social and behavioral challenges and difficulty maintaining positive peer relationships, were having a negative impact on her academic work, she needed a different approach. He and others on the IEP team turned to Garfield Park Academy for placement when T was in middle school.**

"She came to us ready to learn, but needed strategies to help her manage her anger and emotions," recalled Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent of GPA. "Our goal is to help students learn those skills so they can make better choices, be successful and eventually, return to their local district."

Since GPA's academic curriculum closely mirrors that of neighboring public schools, students like T can be prepared for a seamless transition back to their local school when the time is right.

"In addition to focusing on academic support and pre-vocational training, GPA was able to provide a highly structured and therapeutic learning environment that helped her improve her overall emotional and behavioral functioning," said Mr. Brogan.

Today, T is passing all academic and elective coursework, is consistently attending school, and has had no disciplinary or conduct referrals for the last 30 days. Mr. Brogan believes she is transitioning well to the larger school building and expectations of a traditional high school.

"The best outcome has been that she has become a self-advocate and is willing to ask for help and assistance when needed," he added.

## A “Growing” Interest in Learning (continued)

career skills: the classroom is set up to run as a full-service flower shop, so students learn about marketing, salesmanship, order taking, and cash register operation.



“The horticulture program at Garfield Park Academy offers students technical training in a work-related environment,” said David Hamilton, Teacher of Horticulture.

Students work with plants and flowers and are exposed to various opportunities for employment in the field of horticulture. Students create floral arrangements for the general public offered through holiday plant sales on major holidays. Students also create floral designs for the Park Café, school graduation, and various other school functions.

“They also learn about giving back. We often donate floral arrangements to area nursing homes, connecting our students to the community and helping them see the joy that flowers can bring,” Hamilton concluded.



## Tuning In To Biofeedback

We asked Claudia Faucher, RN, a nurse at GPA, about the biofeedback program at Garfield Park Academy.

### Q: What is biofeedback?

A: Biofeedback uses non-invasive computerized technology to help students learn to manage their stress responses. Special instruments and sensors are used to measure heart rate, respiration, and temperature with the purpose of “feeding back” this information to the student in order for them to control these processes.

### Q: How does it help students?

A: Biofeedback helps students be more

aware of the mind-body connection and self-regulation. These relaxation skills have an overall effect on the body. It can be very helpful with stress, anger, and anxiety.

### Q: Why is it part of the program at GPA?

A: Our goal with biofeedback is to help students become more aware of their emotional state, how it feels in their body and to transfer this knowledge into the classroom and daily life. The data shows that it really helps.

## SENSORY ROOM BRINGS CALM

Color. Sound. Texture. A brand new sensory room is helping students improve self-awareness and explore self-regulation strategies. Used increasingly for students on the autism spectrum and those with sensory integration issues, the multisensory environment consists of an array of lights, sounds and tactile experiences that can be adjusted to individual preferences.

The room includes a five-foot bubble tube, interactive fiber-optic strands, cube lights and reflective mirrors. It is equipped with a stereo system that plays sound through a vibro-acoustic chair that enables the student



to feel the music. Interactive gel floor tiles move with pressure and various tactile objects allowing students the chance to explore through their sense of touch. There is even a padded canoe that provides relaxation through deep pressure.

“Use of the room can be incorporated into daily routines as part of a sensory diet to meet individual needs and promote learning readiness,” said Rebecca Wind-Samu, OTR/L, Occupational Therapist at GPA.

“It can be used as a therapeutic tool to help students communicate and express themselves more freely in a safe environment. The Sensory Room supports our philosophy that students with emotional challenges and learning disabilities can succeed if provided with the resources they need,” she concluded.



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING:

## ZONES OF REGULATION

Every day, we encounter circumstances that test our limits, whether on the drive to work, playing sports, or at the dinner table. When we recognize that we are stressed, we do something to manage our feelings and get ourselves back to a healthy place - a process called self-regulation.

Self-regulation comes naturally for some, but for many students at GPA it is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. This is the goal of **The Zones of Regulation**, a systematic, cognitive behavioral approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing feelings and states of alertness into four concrete colored zones. The framework teaches students to become more aware of their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to solve conflicts.

"The Zones approach addresses underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, so it can help move our

students toward independent regulation," said Audra Snyder, LCSW, Director of Social Work Services at Garfield Park Academy.

The program incorporates visual mnemonics to help students identify their feelings and level of alertness, understand how their behavior impacts those around them, and learn tools to manage their feelings and states.

"All of the zones are a natural part of the human experience, but the framework teaches students how to recognize and manage their Zone based on the environment, its demands, and the people around them," added Snyder.

"Zones of Regulation are an ideal fit for the students at GPA because a central theme of our mission is to teach students self-regulation," concluded Snyder. "It is a student-directed, empowering strategy that is portable, no matter where the student goes."

## The 4 Zones:

### RED ZONE

Extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror. Red reminds students to STOP.

### YELLOW ZONE

A heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions, but with some control. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness. Yellow reminds students to slow down and be cautious.

### GREEN ZONE

A calm state of alertness when optimal learning can occur. A person feels happy, focused, content, or ready to learn. Green reminds students to "go ahead."

### BLUE ZONE

A low state of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored. Like a sign for a rest stop, Blue reminds students to rest and recharge.



Education...  
*for a Lifetime*



24 Glenolden Lane  
Willingboro, NJ 08046

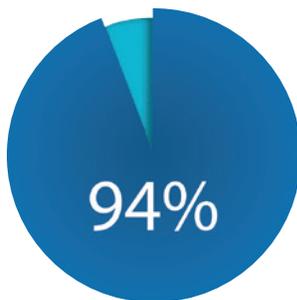
Middle States Association Accredited  
Teaching-Family Association Accredited

## Education... *for a Lifetime*

### By the Numbers

Data-driven decision-making is the foundation of the Teaching Family Model at GPA. We use data to drive what we do every day.

**Did You Know:** In the last 5 years, an average of 94% of our seniors have had concrete linkages to post-secondary services, college or careers, **BEFORE** they graduated.



### The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy

**DECEMBER 8, 2017** - Anger Management and De-escalation Strategies In School, featuring Dr. David Leibovitz, Psy.D.

**MARCH 9, 2018** - Visual Supports & Environmental Planning for Students on the Autism Spectrum, featuring Dr. Sarah Woldoff

**Both events are offered at no charge. 3 FREE CEUs FOR EDUCATORS!**

Learn more and register at [garfieldparkacademy.org](http://garfieldparkacademy.org) or call 609-877-4111.  
[GarfieldParkAcademy.org/the-training-institute-gpa/](http://GarfieldParkAcademy.org/the-training-institute-gpa/)



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 accredited by the Teaching Family Association. For more information, please contact Garfield Park Academy or visit our website.

Garfield Park Academy  
24 Glenolden Lane  
Willingboro, New Jersey 08046  
609-877-4111  
[www.garfieldparkacademy.org](http://www.garfieldparkacademy.org)  
email: [info@garfieldparkacademy.org](mailto:info@garfieldparkacademy.org)