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Spring 2022

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Garfield Park Academy
News and Information from Garfield Park Academy



Community Connections

DeVal Church in Willingboro has 'adopted' Garfield Park Academy as part of their community outreach efforts, building connections and fostering a deeper sense of belonging for our students.

"When we met the students and staff at Garfield Park Academy, they literally won our hearts," said Pastor Vincent S. Russ, Associate Pastor at DeVal Church. "They do such good and important work."

The first connection came in the summer of 2021 when the church organized a back-to-school campaign, collecting and donating back packs and school supplies for the students at Garfield Park Academy. This winter, the church's "Angel Tree" program allowed the church members to donate a holiday gift to a student or their family.

"We are looking to the future, and ways to deepen the connection, with discussions underway for a mentorship program for the students," said Kerrie Morse, Director at GPA.

"Our students want to give back," added Morse. "We are planning for our culinary students to make and help serve lunch to the local community at the church. GPA's horticulture students will also make flower arrangement for an upcoming DeVal conference."





Readers Are Making Big Gains

Garfield Park Academy's commitment to evidence-based approaches means that students are learning to read... and we can measure it! Using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), an individually-administered assessment of a child's reading capabilities, teachers use data to guide instruction and measure progress.

When students first arrive at GPA, educators conduct an assessment to get a baseline. Then, throughout the year, they measure gains and make adjustments to each student's learning plan.

"We have seen students move up as much as seven levels in a single year. When they are ready to put in the work, so are we."

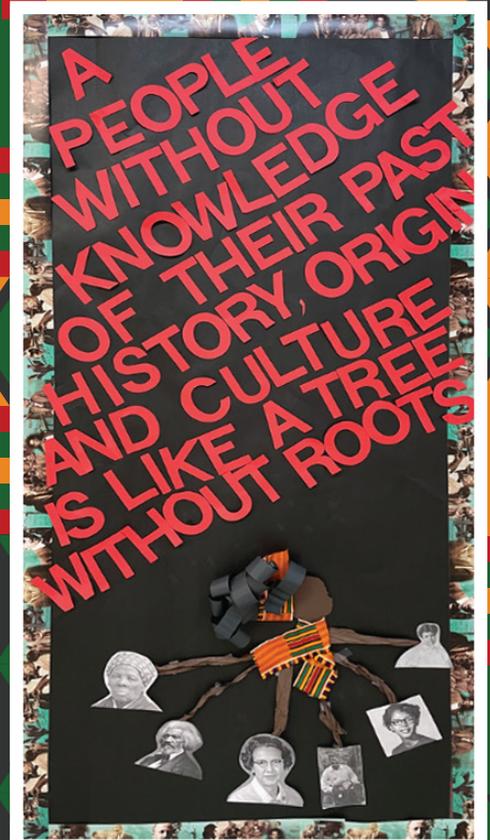
*- Brittany Harmening, MA.,
GPA Reading Specialist*

Most students who come to GPA are far behind grade level in reading, and many have undiagnosed reading disabilities. "They may have been struggling for years," said Brittany Harmening, MA., the school's reading specialist. Now in her seventh year at the school, Brittany is a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner. She finds that when past placements have not been successful in teaching a student to manage their behavior, they are not able to work on reading. "I've met many students who used to act out because they could not read. They simply did not want their peers to see it," Brittany says. "When they learn to read, a lot improves," she concluded.

By using an individualized multi-sensory, science-based reading instruction, nearly every student at GPA shows gains of at least two or three reading levels in one year - even with COVID-related interruptions and virtual learning. As students mature, those gains often increase even further.

Celebrating Black Excellence

Students took a deep dive into learning Black history, demonstrating what they learned through classroom murals.



GPA'S TRAINING INSTITUTE HITS M I L E S T O N E



More than 1,000 educators and school professionals have benefited from free professional development programs offered through The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy.

Established in 2014, The Training Institute shares best practices in the education and therapeutic treatment of students with social, emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities.

Two professional development seminars are offered annually at no cost to educators in Burlington County and the surrounding areas.

With the recent move to virtual learning, the Training Institute has attracted an international audience, with guests from England, Canada, and India. The program is highly sought-

after, with registration often closing at capacity. Expert speakers have addressed topics on Self-Regulation, Trauma-Informed Special Education, Substance Abuse, Auditory Processing Disorders, and Compassion Fatigue, to name a few.

"The Training Institute is an extension of our mission, allowing us to help students outside of our school, and to share evidence-based practices with other educators," said Audra Snyder, MSW, who coordinates the program.

MOMENTUM TRANSITION SERVICES TAKE NO TIME OFF

Leaders at Garfield Park Academy knew that pandemic-related closures could not interrupt transition and vocational programming.

As soon as students were back in the building, the school-based programming was back up and running.

In addition to academic readiness for higher education, students can prepare for careers in carpentry, cosmetology, culinary arts,

horticulture, retail and business, and automotive through GPA's NJDOE certified vocational programs.

"While most transition programs focus only on job skills and college-readiness, Momentum Transition does that and more. Students graduate with job skills, study skills, and connections. They develop the self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-confidence they need to solve problems, communicate effectively, and flourish," said Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent.



"GO PLAY CAMPAIGN" BUILDS NEW PLAYGROUND

The outdoor playground at GPA serves a higher purpose than most. For many students, safe outdoor physical activity is a crucial part of their school day and social/emotional learning.

"One-on-one with a teacher or social worker, a visit to the playground helps a student take respite, calm themselves, and process difficult situations," said Audra Snyder, Director of Social Work Services. "In supervised small groups, the playground becomes an outdoor 'classroom' for students to use new social skills and build and maintain relationships."

Last spring, GPA set out to raise \$50,000 for a significant renovation to the playground, with modern, engaging equipment that meets all contemporary accessibility and safety requirements. The effort also impacts the local community, as the playground is available to neighborhood children and their families.

Want to support the effort? Learn more at <https://garfieldparkacademy.org/gpas-go-play-capital-campaign/>



24 Glenolden Lane
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Even protective face coverings cannot hide the pride and excitement of our students of the month! Each classroom celebrates the achievements and efforts of its students by selecting a student of the month, recognizing improvements in academics, attendance, behavior, social engagement and other goals related to their IEP.



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.



The Training Institute at Garfield Park Academy

Learn more, call 609-877-4111.

Or visit The Training Institute online:

GarfieldParkAcademy.org/the-training-institute-gpa/

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