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Fall 2022

Education... for a Lifetime

GPA today

 **Garfield Park
Academy**

News and Information
from Garfield Park Academy



Therapeutic Training Program:

Resilience through Trauma-Sensitive Weight Training

Students are finding mental resilience while building physical strength in Garfield Park Academy's Therapeutic Training Program (TTP). The program builds on research that uses resistance training and mindfulness to support healing and resilience for those who have experienced trauma. Resistance training—using weights such as barbells, dumbbells, and weight machines—stresses muscles and causes them to adapt by getting stronger, similar to the way aerobic conditioning strengthens the heart.

The impact of resistance training on emotional challenges is an emerging area of exercise science; new research is showing the mental health benefits of strength

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Building the Future

Our lower school wing is open! This fall, Garfield Park Academy cut the ribbon on a new Elementary School wing, adding two classrooms and an expanded multipurpose room/gym to be used exclusively by younger students. A separate entranceway now creates a safe and nurturing welcome to each school day.

The new wing allows students in grades K-5 to move freely about classrooms, bathrooms, and hallways dedicated just to them. The original building received an upgrade, too:

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The Wonder Girls® Comes to GPA



Girls need mentors and empowerment to become future leaders! Garfield Park Academy has partnered with The Wonder Girls® to help young women (grades 7-12) develop confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills, and problem solving skills.

The program enhances our Momentum Transition® program by focusing on professional development and personal "branding," social responsibility, and wellness. Workshops are led by a professional female industry leader and supported by female mentors from all backgrounds and career paths. The program is an extension of a "girls group" that is led by a certified social worker.

"The Wonder Girls® program creates a safe, supportive space for girls to address the emotional, physical, and mental challenges they face. It will give them the tools they need to speak their truth, and to grow and thrive in this world without fear of isolation or judgment," said Audra Snyder, Director of Social Work.

The program also underscores the importance of social responsibility and giving back to those in need. Participants will take part in monthly volunteer events outside the school, including community service experiences with charitable partners and local organizations.

BUILDING THE FUTURE *cont. from page 1*

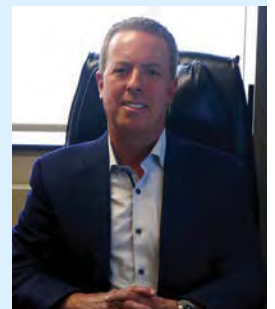
new flooring, including a new wooden floor in the renovated gym. Classrooms once occupied by younger students will be used for specials and new programs.

"This is a win-win for every student and every teacher here at GPA," said Dr. Steven Morse, Superintendent. "The new wing allows us to more closely replicate the public school experience by offering a lower school wing. The additional classrooms allow us to expand enrollment for younger children. The building configuration gives our older students a greater sense of autonomy and school pride, while our younger students have a greater sense of community and connection as well," Morse concluded.

A K-12 school building has important advantages in that it allows for shared resources. And K-12 schools are safe. In fact studies have found that schools with students of wide-ranging ages have less bullying than schools with just a few grades.

DR. STEVE MORSE TO BE HONORED BY STATE ASSOCIATION

ASAH, a New Jersey association of more than 150 approved private special education schools, will honor Dr. Steven Morse with the 2022 President's Award this November at a ceremony in Princeton. The award recognizes excellence in special education and exemplary service to the association. Morse, who served as President of ASAH for four years, continues to serve on the ASAH Executive Committee and Government Relations Committee.



"I am honored and humbled to be recognized by my colleagues," said Dr. Morse. "Excellence in special education is a team effort; it is wonderful to be working with talented, dedicated, and hardworking people."

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR: 2022

This summer, lesson plans emphasized active, hands-on student engagement centered around social and emotional learning (SEL), as well as academics. Students reconnected to the joy of school, learning and each other.



THERAPEUTIC TRAINING PROGRAM

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training to combat depression and anxiety. In addition, participation in exercise and fitness routines in school has been shown to increase teen self-esteem, increase grades, and lower bullying rates.

"We are helping students find reserves of strength they did not know they have," said Renee Edwards, Social Worker. "We emphasize a body-positive outlook, but as much as it might change them physically, the program seeks to transform students on the inside."

The program is offered in addition to Garfield Park Academy's yoga program and mindfulness programs. It was created to combat the isolating and dividing nature of trauma and give students another vehicle for wellness and resilience. Students learn exercise routines and benefit from psychoeducation around the positive impacts of exercise and healing.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

The mental health and well-being of students is at a breaking point: the pandemic and the isolation, disruption, fear, and grief it brought has affected students deeply. At the same time, schools nationwide and here in New Jersey report a lack of professional support—social workers and counselors—to respond to the mounting mental health needs of their students.

School counselors are often the first to see children who are sick, stressed, or traumatized, or who may act out or hurt themselves or others. Schools that employ more school-based mental health providers see improved attendance rates, lower rates of suspension and disciplinary incidents, improved academic achievement and career preparation, and improved graduation rates.

According to Hopeful Futures, the required ratio of school social workers to students is 1:250. So, for example, a school of 500 students needs at least two social workers on staff. In a 2,500-student school population, 10 social workers are needed. Here in New Jersey—one of the best performing states in the nation—that ratio is 1 to 655. That means in schools where 10 social workers are needed, our public schools have fewer than 4.

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24 Glenolden Lane
Willingboro, NJ 08046

Middle States Association Accredited
Teaching-Family Association Accredited

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS ALL DAY, EVERY DAY *cont. from page 3*

Here at Garfield Park Academy, there is a social worker IN EVERY CLASSROOM. Their office is physically located INSIDE the classroom, so they are there to help when they are needed, not hours, days, or weeks later. We have one professional social worker for every 8-12 students, with a total of 17 currently in our building. Students have individual counseling based on the IEP, and get group counseling every day.

We know that cutting back on mental health services is not an option. Students cannot wait. Social work and counseling are as critical as any other aspect of our school curriculum and school safety plan.



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/



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.

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