



# NEWS



HONORING AND RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

## The Clinical Program: Westbridge Academy's Foundation

**W**hile other schools may use behavior modification to reduce challenging behaviors, at Westbridge Academy we provide treatment to address core challenges. Our goal: lifelong change and self-regulation!

The clinical team is at the center of that work. Comprising licensed school social workers, a school psychologist, and the school nurse, the team provides ongoing support services and care to students and their families.

Westbridge is unique in that every student works with two members of the clinical team: one who serves as the student's case manager and another who serves as the student's counselor. The case manager is the liaison between the school, home, and other stakeholders; the counselor provides counseling at school.

Counseling lets students work through experiences that may have prevented them from being successful in other settings. The clinical team uses cognitive behavioral therapy, play therapy, and other modalities to help students learn to control their behavior, regulate emotions, develop positive coping skills and executive functioning skills, and express their feelings appropriately.

Always ready for a crisis, each member of the clinical team is highly trained to calm a situation and stabilize a student in crisis until they are able to de-escalate. The clinical team is highly visible and approachable to students all day, every day, from arrival to dismissal.



Because the school is small and offers intensive treatment, students have access to their counselors and case managers throughout the day; they never have to wait.

Case managers provide ongoing support to families, and help them access community-based services and family support agencies such as Perform Care, mobile crisis intervention, and outpatient counseling/psychiatric services. They maintain home, school, and community partnerships and host "Bridges to Home" nights, designed to foster a sense of cohesion and a culture of caring within the school community.

The school nurse is an important part of the clinical team. She attends clinical team meetings, collaborates

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Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis

*From the Executive Director's Desk*

## Celebrating 50 Years of Excellence

This year, Westbridge Academy will mark our Golden Anniversary: 50 years of excellence in the delivery of educational and therapeutic services to students in northern and central New Jersey.

A Golden Anniversary celebrates meaningful partnerships rooted in strength, prosperity, wisdom, and lifelong love. Here at Westbridge Academy, there are many important partners who helped to get us to where we are today.

It started with our founder, Clara Litovsky. She had a vision for a school that could serve students with social, emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges in ways that no other school could. From the Academy's earliest days with a single classroom of seven children to a vibrant, multifaceted program that has served thousands of students and families over the years, Clara's vision has remained at the foundation of our work.

Our most visible partners are our staff. We celebrate the excellence, hope, wisdom, and compassion they bring through our doors every day, giving their very best as clinicians, educators, and people. We celebrate our parents, who are our partners outside of school. Every day, they plan and coordinate care and work to support their child at school. We celebrate our volunteer board members, who offer guidance, stability, and leadership. Our friends and donors are partners who share our dream and support our vision in tangible ways so that we may grow and offer cutting edge programs. Our Child Study Team partners at local school districts share their ongoing trust in Westbridge Academy by placing complex students in our program, allowing us to do our work and change lives.

And, of course, our most important partners of all - our students. Their hard work, courage, and willingness to learn is a daily inspiration. You are the reason we are all here!

Thank you.

Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis,  
Executive Director

### **The Clinical Program** *cont. from page 1*

with case managers and counselors, helps families find medical professionals in their communities, maintains communication with doctors/psychiatrists and educates families on medication(s) their child is taking.

Teamwork makes the dream work!!! The clinical team meets several times a week to assess each student's needs and life stressors that may impact performance and impede functioning. Case managers update instructional staff decreasing the number of behavior incidents among our students.

The diverse student body is our pride at Westbridge. We provide bilingual services to Spanish-speaking families and students. Having bilingual clinicians enables us to bridge the gap between Spanish-speaking families and mental health services. Families feel heard and understood when they can connect and communicate their concerns and needs. In turn, families are more receptive to treatment and interventions that may be recommended. ■



# Welcome Back!

Students wasted no time getting back into the swing of learning this fall.

“The last two years, our ‘back to school’ routines have been interrupted by COVID-19,” said Abraham Mathew, Assistant Director. “This year, it was wonderful to simply return to learning and celebrate being together again.”



Students used the scientific method to formulate a hypothesis on what happens when you mix dishwashing soap with hand soap

## Summer Learning

This summer, students enjoyed four weeks of hands-on lesson plans aimed at solidifying academic skills while building social and emotional skills. Our STEM-based program introduced students to curriculum around geology (we grew crystals); the environment (we learned about beach formations, animals, and erosion), and other areas.



## Oh, the Places They Will Go!

Graduation is often called “commencement” for a good reason. It is the beginning of something new—life outside of school. Last spring, four of our students threw their caps into the air to celebrate taking the next step. We applaud each one of them, recognize the work they put in to get to this day, and reflect on the things they learned at Westbridge to help them launch.

**Tahir** had been at Westbridge for 10 years. He is compassionate and devoted to helping others. While here, he developed a passion for basketball, music, and exercising. He found confidence and perseverance. Tahir will be working and studying to earn his learner’s permit to drive.

**Justin** started at Westbridge when he was just 11 years old. Smart and empathic, he formed easy relationships with staff and peers. He worked multiple jobs to save for college and to get a place of his own. Here, he found his love for science, medicine, and helping others. Justin is attending Union County College and plans to work in the medical field.

**Christopher** had been at Westbridge for more than 10 years. He developed a love of music through our music program. He is a gifted artist and creative “maker.” Here, he found a love of working with his hands. Christopher will continue his education at the Ho-Ho-Kus School working in the construction field.

**Carlos** started at Westbridge 5½ years ago. Polite, honest, and very smart, he loves his family and is very insightful. Admired by all his peers and teachers, he focused on his schoolwork and found a love for technology. Carlos is attending the PC AGE Computer School. ■



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## 2022-2023 Virtual Workshop Series



**Domestic Violence: Coercive Control**  
featuring *Cynthia Lischick, PhD, LPC, DVS*  
Fri., December 2, 2022  
from 9AM–12 noon



**Coping and Accountability: Tools for Classroom and Schoolwide Management**  
featuring *Dr. "Buzz" Mingin*  
Fri., March 3, 2023  
from 9AM–12 noon

**Learn more and register: [www.westbridgeacademy.org](http://www.westbridgeacademy.org)**

## About Westbridge Academy:



Created in a culture of caring, **WESTBRIDGE ACADEMY** is a unique special needs school in which students with behavioral and emotional disabilities are taught to face their issues so that they can have productive, fulfilling lives.

**WESTBRIDGE ACADEMY'S** progressive approach maintains a structured environment that is warm and nurturing – one day and one student at a time – to support each student's well-being. **WESTBRIDGE ACADEMY** is accredited by the state of New Jersey. Students are placed by their local public schools and attend at no cost to parents.



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### FAST FACTS:

#### STUDENT PROFILE:

Students in grades K-12 with emotional, behavioral and learning challenges. Many are bilingual.

#### APPROACH:

Combining individualized academics with therapeutic support.

#### PROGRAMS:

Elementary, Middle and High School;  
Transition Services; Extended School Year.

#### STUDENT TEACHER RATIO: 6:1

#### AREAS SERVED:

Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris,  
Passaic, Somerset, and Union Counties.