



WESTBRIDGE
ACADEMY

NEWS



HONORING AND RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

Welcoming Students on the Autism Spectrum



“Autism is a spectrum disorder, and as such, students with autism will need different levels of support. Our climate and culture of caring, and our school-wide emphasis on social learning make us a perfect fit for students on the spectrum who are ready for a more typical school setting, but still need structured support,” said Abraham Mathew, Assistant Director.

The curriculum meets each student’s academic and social/behavioral needs so that intensive academic learning and social skills training can take place every day. The speech/language staff help students with common language and conversation challenges around pragmatics, modulation and pitch, rhythms and figurative speech.

When a student on the spectrum needs more than a public program can offer, or has outgrown a more traditional “autism school,” districts and parents are increasingly turning to Westbridge Academy for the next step.

“We strongly believe that parents are our partners,” added Mathew. “We help them to increase their understanding of child’s behaviors which can lead to a more satisfying relationship.” ■

Student Profile: Jayden H.

“This is the first place I have had real friends!” -Jayden H

Jayden H. became a student at Westbridge Academy in the fall of 2022 after he “outgrew” another specialized school. Already a leader, Jayden is regularly in the running for Student of the Week and Student of the Month - distinctions he has earned several times this year. Jayden has been developing positive relationships with his classmates throughout the school year.

“Jayden is a great addition to the school and my classroom,” said John Smith, Jayden’s teacher. “The small class structure offered at Westbridge has helped Jayden focus on his academic and behavioral goals. Jayden exemplifies the meaning of being a good neighbor and has a positive impact on his peers.”



From the Executive Director's Desk



Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis

Assessment Matters

Teachers spend a lot of time on assessments and grades in an effort to develop a concrete description of a student's achievements. While a letter grade in math or science is useful for understanding a student's

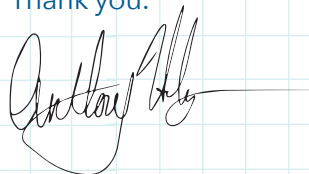
level of knowledge relative to other students, letter grades cannot capture a student's sense of self-worth or well-being, their desire to learn, or their emotional and social challenges, which are so critical to success in school.

At Westbridge Academy, we use a Student Passport. This comprehensive assessment approach is used by instructional, clinical and support staff, including teachers, social workers, parents, and representatives from the school district. The Student Passport includes five sections that provide a comprehensive assessment of the student's progress and emotional make-up. We look at learning styles, student interests, behavioral progress and goals, academic progress, discipline and remediation issues, along with state test scores and work samples.

If a report card is a snapshot, the Student Passport is a feature film that tells a rich and complex story. And because the Student Passport is useful for showing the school districts how the child has improved, it plays a crucial role in IEP meetings. It offers a robust and comprehensive assessment of present levels of performance that can help shape a successful path forward for the student.

At this time of year when we are making important decisions about program, placement, goals for the coming school year, our methods help to ensure that we are looking at the whole child, and not just numbers.

Thank you.



Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis,
Executive Director

Check Mate



Chess is a game of strategy, reasoning, and patience. It teaches planning and concentration. This spring, Westbridge Academy hosted an un-timed, single-elimination chess tournament for students of all skill levels. Students showed good sportsmanship and camaraderie!

Extended School Year

Now more than ever, it is critical for students with social, emotional, and learning disabilities to keep pace with grade level learning. ESY at Westbridge is about more than preventing regression and battling academic learning



loss. Students need to maintain critical behavioral, social, and mental health gains as well. Westbridge Academy's ESY program can provide a seamless continuation of each child's IEP goals.

Creative lesson plans will focus on core academic skills: reading, math, and college prep course work. Teachers will engage students in fun, hands-on learning opportunities and plenty of outdoor activities. ■



REACH for the Future

A new transition initiative at Westbridge Academy is opening minds and doors to new possibilities. REACH-Ready for Education, Achievement and Career Hopes-is designed for students ages 14 and older. It helps them explore, consider, and prepare for a wide range of post-secondary options, including higher education.

“We help our students dream a little, then introduce them to what it takes to make those dreams happen,” said Nicole Miranda, a Social Worker at Westbridge.

“REACH is all about helping students turn ideas into action.”

REACH helps students use their strengths and interests as a springboard for the future. The curriculum teaches core skills like interview skills, resume writing, and job searching.

It also builds important soft skills: communication, listening, organizational skills, and time management. For older students ready to explore higher education, REACH offers travel training, campus-based experiences, meetings with admissions counselors, assistance with application and registration, awareness of accommodations, and financial aid.

“Most of our students expect to graduate and get a job - any job. But no one has ever encouraged them to explore their strengths, interests and passions, then get the education or business skills they need,” concluded Miranda. “REACH is all about helping students turn ideas into action.” ■



Basketball Program is a Slam Dunk!



Assistant Director. “Students count on each other to earn enough points to be eligible for the team, so they encourage friends to be their best, both on the court and in the classroom. It offers a layer of social connection.” ■

Middle and high school students now have the opportunity to shoot some hoops at competitive basketball games. The program, linked to Westridge’s schoolwide behavior incentive system, allows eligible students to play full court competitive games at the JCC in West Orange. Points earned through the behavior incentive program are directly correlated to the social emotional and executive function goals in each student’s IEP.

“The games are a great incentive for our students, and it gets them out into the community” said program creator Abraham Mathew,





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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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Refer a Student
973-429-8110



Ask a Question
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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.