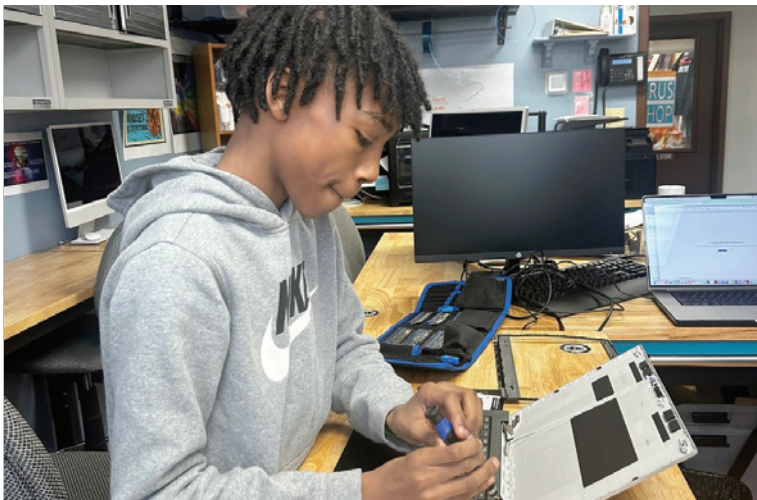


NEWS

HONORING AND RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

Curriculum Developments

Engaging Students in Ways That Matter



What we teach and how we teach it has been at the heart of Westbridge's success over the past 50 years. Understanding how to engage and reach students, while supporting them therapeutically, enables the learning and personal growth they need to become responsible for their own progress and achievements.

This year we are further developing our curriculum to include an enhanced selection of electives designed to engage students in activities they find personally interesting and rewarding. Some, like Home Economics, Culinary Arts, and Computer Tech, are familiar. Others, like Music Production, Social Media, Event Planning, Entrepreneurship and Hydroponics, and REACH Transition relate to more contemporary vocations available to students today. All purposefully teach specific skills students can apply in their lives and work.

Each elective subject area employs three problem-based learning units. For example, the Entrepreneurship elective poses the following challenges:

1. **"Ready for This?"** – Students will embark on a journey to explore the essential qualities, values, and elements that contribute to entrepreneurial success. They will explore and examine diverse entrepreneurs to develop a "Profile of an Entrepreneur" that can be used to guide them in their future endeavors. (5 weeks)
2. **"Let's Go to Market"** – Students will learn about financing options, market analysis, and marketing strategies to develop their own unique business plan. (5 weeks)
3. **"Time for Takeoff"** – Students will continue to develop their entrepreneurial skills by pitching their business plan, complete with a compelling mission statement and a captivating logo. (5 weeks)

By their nature, each of the units require a cross-curricular approach to complete. Students will be using research, reading and literacy, math and computing, public speaking, creativity, and other skills to reach their objectives.

The curriculum's Music Production elective, leverages Westbridge Academy's newly refitted Music Production Studio. From our very first curriculum developed 50 years by founder Clara Litovsky, the arts have been central to helping students find and develop their creative voice. Comprised of units on songwriting, digital sound creation, audio mixing and editing, and video production, this curriculum area continues that legacy of learning and growth through personal expression.

Used in select classrooms already, we expect the new curriculum should be available school wide this coming Fall. Combined with our historical commitment to supporting our students therapeutically, we're excited about the potential for these new elective opportunities to engage and challenge our students. ■

From the Executive Director's Desk



Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis

Celebrating a Legacy and Building for the Future

This year is Westbridge Academy's Golden Anniversary, celebrating 50 years of providing high quality educational and therapeutic services to

thousands of students for whom we went the "extra mile."

Moments like this give us the opportunity to reflect, and ask, what happens in that extra mile? We can look to the "above-and-beyond" dedication and professionalism of our staff; our continuous commitment to offering robust programs, developed, and refined over years; and our efforts at customizing support and interventions to ensure the success of our students. Most notably, we've made it our business to truly understand each student and provide them with the acceptance and appreciation they need.

We aren't simply looking backwards and resting on past efforts and commitments. We're looking forward as a community and are energized by continued opportunities for growth. At the halfway point of this "golden" year, we are building broad new curriculum elements and integrating them in our teaching plans. We're renovating and re-equipping classrooms, including our Art & Technology, and Music studios. These and other new initiatives further enhance our ability to engage our students and support their journeys.

As I look to our next 50 years, I am confident that together we will continue to provide our own unique combination of compassion, excellence, responsiveness, and academic challenge to our students while they're here, so that when they leave us, they will be ready for the next chapter of their lives and have the skills and confidence they need to succeed.

Thank you,

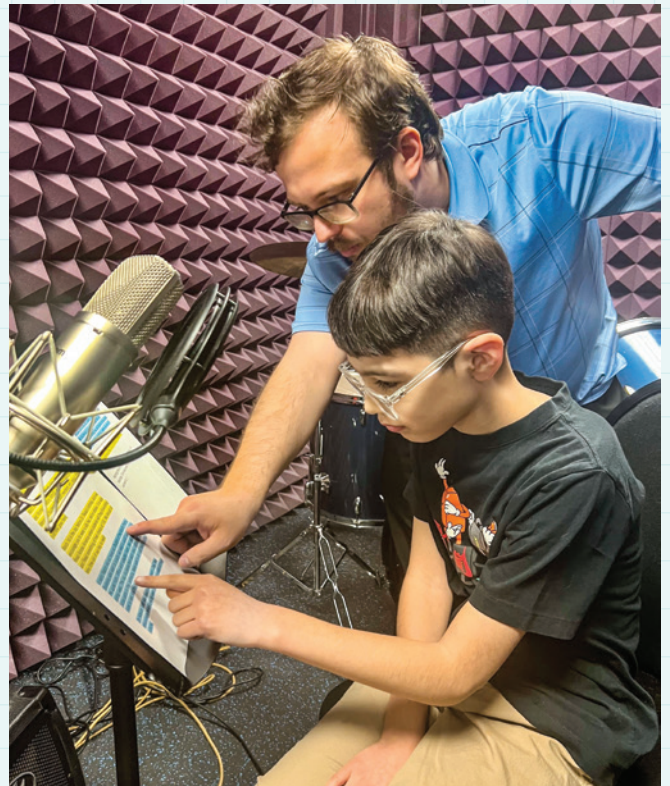
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Hadzimichalis".

Dr. Anthony Hadzimichalis,
Executive Director

New Student Podcast Makes News

Westbridge Academy students are making their own news! A group of students and teacher Griffin Charyn are producing a monthly podcast of coming happenings around the school and publishing it for the Westbridge community. Students write the news, read the news, edit audio tracks and music, and produce the entire podcast, from start to finish.

"The students are picking up story ideas and school happenings and making their own decisions about how to present them. In the end they're owning their instruction, and owning their activities."



An important part of the instruction involves students listening closely and analyzing other news and media for the presenter's tone of voice and then learning to modulate and control their own presentation.

Each edition also includes a question of the month, in which students are interviewed for their answers. The March edition featured the question "What woman in history inspires you?"

You can always hear the most recent edition of the Westbridge News podcast, on our website:

<https://westbridgeacademy.org/#wba-news>

50th Anniversary Gala

Our 50th Anniversary fundraising event was a huge success. Thanks to our fabulous host iHeartRadio's very own Xen Sams, remarkable singer songwriter (and The Voice contestant!) Julia Roome, Mentalist Mike Kirschner, and Dr. Buzz Mignan for entertaining and enlightening us, our sponsors, our wonderful Board, volunteers, and each and every one of our guests!



Thank you to all!



What's Happening in Speech Therapy?

Speech Therapist Cheryl Jones is constantly on the lookout for new and novel ways to engage Westbridge students and families in activities that increase learning. Cheryl's February newsletter provides ideas and resources to help families take advantage of the winter months to spend more time with their kids, building deeper connections and keeping spirits up. Here are some examples:

Themes of the month:

- **Reading & Literacy** - Read *When the Snow Falls* by Linda Booth Sweeny
- **Valentine's Day** - Making friendship hearts.
- **President's Day** - Crossword Puzzle

Things to do at home:

- Plan a nightly story time ritual,
- Make a snowman craft out of marshmallows, pretzel sticks and M&M's, and
- Play a game of cards or a boardgame with your child.

Books

- *Go Away Winter* - by Martha Dinsdale
- *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Snow* - by Allison Jackson
- *The Cat in the Hat - A Long Winters Nap* by - Tish Rabe

Suggested Vocabulary:

Frigid, Dreary, Blizzard, Arctic, Snowbound, Avalanche

Look for an archive of Cheryl's Speech & Language Newsletters under the "programs" menu on our website.



WESTBRIDGE ACADEMY

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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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info@westbridgeacademy.org



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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.