



An Illinois State Board of Education Approved Facility

Offering services to students with Autism, Other Health Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Specific Learning Disabilities, Speech/Language Impairment, Social/Emotional Disorder, and Developmental Delay.

Program Description

Guiding Light Academy (Woodridge Campus)

1051 Internationale Parkway

Woodridge, Illinois 60517

Guiding Light Academy West (Shorewood Campus)

247 Brook Forest Drive

Shorewood, Illinois 60404

Website: www.guidinglightacademy.org

1.1 Program History

In 2014 Guiding Light Autism Academy was opened to service students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Social Emotional Disorders, Speech/Language Impairment, Intellectual Disability and Other Health Impairments. This program provided educational services that included Academic, Counseling Speech/Language, Behavioral Interventions and Occupational Therapy services for students 5-21 years of age. In September of 2015 Guiding Light Autism Academy became Guiding Light Academy and continued to service the same population of students.

Guiding Light Academy West is responding to the need for comprehensive special education and therapeutic support for students with exceptional needs in the Western Suburbs of Chicago. As the growth of the region has continued to climb so has the need for quality therapeutic educational services to students requiring more intensive individualized special educational services. Guiding Light Academy West will fill the service delivery gap for students ages 5-21 with disabilities by providing a scientifically based and outcome focused educational and therapeutic services.

1.2 Mission Statement

To provide an academic environment for students with special needs that supports their individual strengths and learning styles, while utilizing empirically based methodology in order to create life-long learners through active participation between the student's home, school, and community.

Vision

- Provide academic, functional and social skills to students in order to enable them to function in the least restrictive environment.
- Reduce or eliminate the maladaptive behaviors, which prohibit students from progressing to a least restrictive environment.
- Provide educational services in conjunction with therapeutic services to increase the student's successful participation in school, home and community activities.
- Teach individualized academic and therapeutic skills to maximize a student's ability to effectively function both socially and scholastically.

1.3 Purpose/Scope

Guiding Light Academy West is responding to the need for comprehensive special education and therapeutic support for students with exceptional needs in the Western Suburbs of Chicago. It is our mission to provide an academic environment for students with special needs that supports their individual strengths and learning styles, while utilizing empirically based methodology in order to create lifelong learners through active participation between the student's home, school, and community. Each student's program is individualized and driven by the goals developed in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The day is divided into multiple academic and therapeutic sessions based on each student's IEP. Academic sessions are provided in three formats: student to teacher, student to aide, and group settings. Movement or sensory breaks are incorporated into each academic session to help students maintain focus and achieve academic success. Life and self-help skills are taught from a pragmatic view point allowing students to have experiences in a natural context. Students work with teachers, aides, and therapists in order to develop the daily living, vocational skills, career planning or college placement that are crucial to adulthood and leading productive and active lives.

1.4 Program Overview

Guiding Light Academy West is a therapeutic day program that provides intensive academic and therapeutic services to students 5 to 21 years of age that are eligible for special Education under the Illinois State Board of Education Programs for Autism, Intellectual Disability, OHI, Learning Disability, Speech Impairment, Social/Emotional Disorder, Developmental Delay and Multiple Disabilities.

Guiding Light Academy West has one certified teacher and at least one classroom program assistant per every ten students. 1:1 assistance is provided based on the individual needs of the student. An innovative and integrated curriculum and high staff-to-student ratio supports students so they can achieve success. Based on each student's IEP (Individualized Education Program), an individual instructional plan is designed to maximize each student's learning style.

Guiding Light Academy West utilizes interventions and methodologies such as TEACCH, Natural Environment Teaching, Direct Instruction and Group Instruction. In addition, Applied Behavioral Analysis is used in order to teach academics (English / Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), functional skills and social skills. Curriculum is tailored around each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in order to meet their specific needs and learning style. GLA West offers a comprehensive array of services and opportunities, including but not limited to:

- A Direct Instruction Model using a rigorous scientifically based High School Curriculum
- Systematic, explicit instruction and practice
- Effective Task Analysis
- Use of scaffolding and guided practice
- Rapid instructional pacing
- Teaching to Mastery
- Teaching to generalized and pragmatic strategies
- Communicative review and re-teaching
- Continuous progress monitoring for academic outcomes based on education evaluations and the clinical and medical profile of each student
- Differentiated Instruction based on the characteristics of the disability category served

Direct Instruction (DI) is based on the premise that all students can learn if instructional communications are presented logically, unambiguously and clearly. Application of DI at Guiding Light West includes academics, social behavior and functional skills. Through the use of DI model, the instruction and related services staff of GLAW carefully craft and adapt curriculum materials and efficient instructional methods that insure access to the rigors of a scientifically based curriculum. Central to the use of Direct Instruction is the comprehensive analysis of the instructional content. Students are taught explicit, generalizable strategies that can be applied to a range of curriculum, reducing the need for memorization of discrete skills or information. For students at Guiding Light Academy the embedding of logical sequencing and the application of strategic approaches to curriculum content is critical.

The evidenced based delivery features of DI address the inefficient and inconsistent learning characteristics of our students. Using a consistent and well-rehearsed instructional routine our teachers provide an atmosphere for education where errorless learning and systematic corrective feedback allow our students to flourish. The Direct Instruction procedures required for each student are customized based on the youth's neuropsychological profile and the academic/behavioral needs that are articulated in their IEP.

Communication and collaboration is an integral part of our program and helps to facilitate coordination with other professionals who are working with the student and family. Our teachers recognize and appreciate the individual needs of each student, and encourage them to develop their interests and talents. Through small group interaction and individual attention, each student's day is filled with learning opportunities that are interactive and stimulating. Student's self-esteem flourishes and creativity blossoms when they feel that their intellectual and emotional experiences are valuable.

Family involvement is a central component of the program. Parents are respected as active partners in their student's education through observation, training, classroom visits and coaching to support parent/student interaction. GLA maintains an open door policy for parents in order to support generalization of skills and behavior management techniques between home and school. Through this process parents are supported in understanding their student's strengths and challenges to bridge the home and school environment.

Guiding Light Academy's behavior policies and procedures promotes a proactive approach and a continuum of interventions which emphasize the student's capacity to self-regulate and calm themselves. An Individualized Behavior Intervention Plan and general strategies are developed for each student based on their individual needs. GLA does not use any behavior intervention strategies that would jeopardize the safety and/or security of students and staff. We place a strong emphasis on working through behaviors or situations which may be difficult, in order to teach our students how to learn to self-regulate and to avoid aberrant behaviors.

1.5 Related Services

Rate & Frequency of Services: Each student's program is individualized and driven by the goals developed in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Related service minutes are provided through direct, group or a consultative model, based on the individual needs of the student.

Behavioral Therapy: Applied behavioral analysis in an academic setting is used to promote positive behavior intervention strategies.

Occupational Therapy: Helping students develop the necessary gross and fine motor skills to participate as independently as possible in activities in all environments.

Individual/Milieu Therapy: Students will receive professional services from counselors trained in providing mental health and dual diagnosis treatment to help them identify their strengths in order to help them move forward with their life goals.

Speech/Language Therapy: Helping students develop functional and appropriate receptive, expressive and pragmatic language skills.

Counseling/Therapy: Students will receive professional services from counselors trained in providing mental health and dual diagnosis treatment to help them identify their strengths in order to help them move forward with their life goals.

One on One Student Aides: Students who qualify will receive a one on one aide for the following; behavior management, instructional support, activities of daily living (i.e. toileting, dressing, hygiene, etc.), social skill training, task redirection, etc.

1.6 Academic Curriculum

Our academic curriculum is enhanced by our highly trained staff and diverse teaching methods to ensure continuity in all subject areas. We actuate a combination of IEP goals, utilization of the Common Core and

Illinois State Standards, as well as additional academic, social skills and life skills curriculum to facilitate our instructional design. Teachers make modifications and adaptations to lessons to accommodate each student's needs. The use of manipulatives and hands-on experiences are integrated into lessons whenever possible to make learning more exciting and interactive.

Elementary Education (K-8)

The Elementary Education Program at GLA provides individualized programming for students in grades K-8. This program provides academic and therapeutic programming that draws from a variety of treatment approaches. Each student receives specially designed instruction and support services in areas of specific need as indicated in his or her Individual Education Program (IEP). Services may include instruction in reading, mathematics and written language, support with emotional and social development and development of organization and study skills utilizing small group and individualized instruction. Students also receive individual and/or group pull-out and/or push-in therapy sessions for Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Social/Emotion Therapy. Systems of motivation and reinforcement are used across all educational and therapeutic areas. Sensory diets are implemented and followed as needed. Close communication and consultation with parents is encouraged and supported.

This is a program that supports GLA students in accessing appropriate educational or social opportunities within their home school district. Once a student has made gains in skill areas that affected their ability to successfully participate within district programming, our staff can partner with families and the home school district to look at opportunities for GLA students to participate in a less restrictive environment with GLA support.

Secondary Education (9-12)

The Secondary Education Program at GLA provides programming for students in the grade levels of High School, and Transition. This program provides individualized programming focusing on functionality and independence through the integration of functional academics, life skills, vocational skill development, community readiness, and leisure/recreational development. Programming may include direct and/or consultative therapeutic services such as Social/Emotional Therapy, Speech and Occupational Therapy. Classroom structure is based upon academic and or functioning level of the students in addition to students' individual learning accommodations and support structure. Instruction may include group and individual instruction as well as community outings to actualize the instruction from the classroom.

Reading and Language Arts

GLA utilizes a range of curriculum materials to support learning in literacy dependent on their developmental level. All of the components of the literacy curriculum focus on meaningful learning of foundational skills in integrated ways. All activities are experience based and multi-sensory learning is facilitated. Comprehension of all literacy text is a central component to each literacy activity. The Literacy program is for students ranging from pre-kindergarten through high school transition. The curriculum is correlated to the Common Core: English and Language Arts Standards. Curriculum includes (but not limited to): Reading A to Z, Lexia Reading, Writing A-Z, Complete Curriculum K-6th, Creative Writing, English 9 and 10, English 11 and 12, and Speech.

Mathematics

The math program is a research-based approach that utilizes best practices, differentiated instruction, and technology tools that are directly correlated to Common Core Mathematics Standards for kindergarten through high school transition. It offers a strong emphasis on skill building, problem solving,

and concepts mastery for all levels. The math curriculum uses conceptually based instruction to teach math principles. Math instruction is a hands-on, activity centered, multisensory approach that supports symbolic learning. Students are encouraged to experience math concepts kinesthetically, auditory and visually. The math curriculum includes (but not limited to): Touch Math, Touch Money, common core math curriculum, applied math, Algebra, Geometry, and Advance Algebra.

Science

The science curriculum is a comprehensive hands-on, inquiry-based program that aligns with the Illinois Learning Standards, which includes knowledge and applications of concepts, principles, and processes of scientific inquiry; below are science concepts we will include on our program:

- Technological design
- Life
- Physical
- Earth/space sciences
- How living things function
- Adapt/change
- How living things interact with each other and with their environment
- Properties and interactions of matter and energy
- Force and motion; Earth and the resources
- Composition and structure of the universe and its relationship to Earth
- The relationship between science, technology, and society over time

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum is utilized to facilitate student understanding of community and political systems, economic systems, events, trends, individuals and movements shaping history at the state, national and international level. This also includes world geography and its impact on society, and social systems. The emphasis on development of civic competence through motivating issues and development of critical thinking skills is paramount in the curriculum. Social Studies classes offered include (but not limited to): World History, United States History, Government and Economics.

Fine Arts and Music

A wide variety of materials are utilized within the art program to promote self-expression, hand-eye coordination, manipulation, building and imagination. Experiences will offer exposure to a variety of artistic tools and technologies in the art realm. Historical and cultural aspects of art will be incorporated into the learning experience. Using art and dance, this program transforms the classroom environment into a positive and reinforcing sensory experience. Our students are exposed to different rhythms, textures, and tools to help them expand their vision. As a part of the creative process, our students have the opportunity to express themselves without feeling self-conscious.

Technology

Students are taught functional skills that are developmentally appropriate which may include various skills such as keyboarding, word processing, use of the internet for learning and research purposes and internet safety. Programming is created with the goal of reaching all students with varying capacities and making learning accessible and meaningful. All curriculum materials support experiential learning and multi-modalities when teaching. This allows students to interact with curriculum materials in ways that support many modalities of learning. It is our goal is to reach every type of learner through the use of technology. We also use online curriculum and courses through VIZZLE and Edgenuity.

School-Wide Social Skills

At Guiding Light Academy, we acknowledge that a vital component to a student's daily routine is socialization with his or her peers and adults at school, home, and in the community. Students with various diagnoses, including, but not limited to, Developmental Disorders often demonstrate poor social skills. Many of our students need to learn the fundamental skills necessary to appropriately interact with others. GLA staff facilitates the development of social skills through daily and weekly activities. Our teachers and classroom staff encourage students to interact with peers through class-wide activities. In order to prepare our students for the community, each class participates in field trips to local events and community outings that allow them to practice social interactions outside of school.

School-Wide Therapeutic Services

At GLA, we acknowledge that a vital component to a student's daily routine is the socialization with his or her peers and adults at school, home, and in the community. Many of our students need to learn the fundamental skills necessary to appropriately interact with others and how to deal with stressors in their lives. Milieu based behavioral interventions address these student deficits. Guiding Light implements a social and emotional curriculum that integrates with current Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) behavioral programs. Staff utilizes Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Based Mindfulness. Additional behavioral interventions include processing in the behavior stabilization room (BSR) and implementation of individualized behavior contracts.

GLA staff facilitates the development of mindfulness through group and individual therapy. Student participants will be exposed to topics in group therapy such as: Anger Management, Substance Abuse, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Art Therapy, Conflict Resolution, Weekend Planning and Impulse Management. Students role play, discuss and attend guest speaker presentations relevant to group topics.

Physical Education

Our Physical Education classes are specially designed to work on movement and fitness activities and facilitate social skills through group games and activities that allow students to have fun while learning how to appropriately interact with their peers.

Additional Educational Resources

The developmental and academic needs of our students will be highly varied and will subsequently require varied resources and tools to support a comprehensive approach to fostering our students' growth within our curriculum model. A wide variety of classes are offered in the area of electives. Students are given the opportunity to explore an assortment of classes to investigate possible career opportunities and tools students can learn to become marketable employees. Students are exposed to opportunities to experience and learn skills that may not experience otherwise. Classes offered in this area included (but not limited to): Spanish, Home Economics, Fine Arts, and Computer Applications: Microsoft Office, Career Exploration and Psychology

Transition (18-21 years of age)

The transition program at GLA individualizes programming to meet the specific needs of each student based on their transition plan (starting at 14 1/2 years). The goal of the program is independent functioning towards successful adult programming that can be used later in life. The Transition Program serves our adult students as they approach transition time in their academic career. The educational team and parents discuss planning for the student's transition into adulthood and determine realistic post-

secondary goals. Curriculum is adapted to each student's interests, developmental levels, academic and therapeutic goals while also supporting functional life skills and vocational job skills.

Students may participate in the following subjects based on their IEP:

- **Pre-Vocational / Vocational Teaching:** Students will learn independent work skills and explore possible interests and skills to help them choose a career path later in life.
- **Physical Education:** Students will focus on sensory, gross motor, fine motor, structured game activities, and overall health and exercise.
- **Leisure/Recreational Teaching:** Student will be exposed various activities in order to help students explore and participate in new activities that may serve as lifelong hobbies.
- **Language Arts:** The focus of this class surrounds continued language development. Students will focus on receptive and expressive language, grammar, sentence structure, as well as functional reading, writing and communication activities.
- **Science:** The focus of this class will be on functional science concepts that students can apply to their everyday life.
- **Social Studies/Social Skills:** The focus of this class is to help students learn about themselves and the world around them. A strong emphasis will be placed on peer relationship development and appropriate social skills.
- **Reading:** The focus of this class will be on functional reading skills which may include phonics, decoding, and comprehension skills.
- **Math:** This class will have a strong focus on functional math skills that students can apply to everyday life.
- **Music & Movement:** Students will learn the art of music appreciation, participation, dance, musical instruments and singing skills. Themes and lessons will focus on age appropriate student interests.
- **Arts & Crafts:** Students will learn concepts of art, and arts and crafts that could later be used as a leisure skill and/or hobbies as adults.
- **Independent Living:** Students are taught everyday skills needed to be an independent and functional member of society (i.e. balancing checkbook, managing money, filling out applications and forms, making a bed, doing laundry, cooking, etc.)
- **Community Based Instruction:** Students explore the opportunity to generalize the skills they have learned into the community. Including, reading, math, language, social skills, behavior, and independent living skills.
- **Related Services:** Speech, OT, Counseling, and Music Therapy

Related service minutes will be provided to each student based on the individual needs of the students driven by the IEP.

Students in the transition program may work on goals that build their independence and job readiness skills through participating in student jobs such as cleaning, stocking, collecting attendance, recycling, and cafe cart. The transition students also may participate in weekly community outings such as walks, general shopping and restaurant dining. In addition, they may work on cooking and meal preparation, personal hygiene, health and safety skills.

1.7 Clinical Model

Guiding Light Academy utilizes a variety of scientifically based clinical interventions and methodologies in providing behavioral intervention to students.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children)

TEACCH, is an array of teaching or treatment principles and strategies based on the learning characteristics of individuals with ASD, including strengths in visual information processing, and difficulties with social communication, attention, and executive function. In response to this profile of strengths and challenges, Structured TEACCH includes:

- External organizational supports to address challenges with attention and executive function
- Visual and/or written information to supplement verbal communication
- Structured support for social communication

Structured TEACCH is not a curriculum, but instead is a framework to support achievement of educational and therapeutic goals. This framework includes:

- Physical organization
- Individualized schedules
- Work (Activity) systems
- Visual structure of materials in tasks and activities

The goal of Structured TEACCH is to promote meaningful engagement in activities, flexibility, independence, and self-efficacy. We integrate Structured TEACCH strategies into other evidenced-based practices.

Applied Behavior Analysis

Behavior analysis is a scientifically validated approach to understanding behavior and how it is affected by the environment. In this context, "behavior" refers to actions and skills. "Environment" includes any influence – physical or social – that might change or be changed by one's behavior.

Behavior analysis focuses on the principles that explain how learning takes place. Positive reinforcement is one such principle. When a behavior is followed by some sort of reward, the behavior is more likely to be repeated. Through decades of research, the field of behavior analysis has developed many techniques for increasing useful behaviors and reducing those that may cause harm or interfere with learning.

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the use of these techniques and principles to bring about meaningful and positive change in behavior.

Verbal Behavior Therapy

Verbal Behavior Therapy teaches communication using the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis and the theories of behaviorist B.F. Skinner. By design, Verbal Behavior Therapy motivates a child to learn language by connecting words with their purposes. The student learns that words can help obtain desired objects or other results.

Therapy avoids focusing on words as mere labels (cat, car, etc.) Rather, the student learns how to use language to make requests and communicate ideas. To put it another way, this intervention focuses on understanding *why* we use words.

1.8 Programmatic Outcomes/Data Collection

Goal #1- By August 2019, Guiding Light students in the HS and transition program will increase their access to the community by participating in community based instruction, outings, and /or volunteer

opportunities in 80% of the opportunities provided when given direct instruction, preparatory activities and visuals to support comprehension.

Instructional strategies will include but not limited to:

- Pre-teaching methods utilized for each activity measuring level of support with maximum supports, moderate supports, minimal supports up to independence
- Successful completion of in-house simulation of the activity or skill
- Successful completion of the skill or activity in the community setting
- Appropriate behavior

Data Collection Procedure:

Data collection will be ongoing to assess a student's strengths and weaknesses as it pertains to community based instruction. A life skills checklist assessment will be used as a tool both formally and informally to assess a student's successful completion of the identified task.

- Ongoing formal data collection
- Observation
- Work Sample

Strategy 1

Staff will provide access to social activities monthly for students to participate in utilizing community-based instruction, outings, and volunteer opportunities in the community. Students will participate in 80% of the opportunities provided.

Strategy 2

Staff will provide access to daily living activities monthly for students to participate in utilizing community-based instruction, outings, and volunteer opportunities in the community. Students will participate in 80% of the opportunities provided.

Strategy 3

Staff will provide access to volunteer activities monthly for students to participate in utilizing community-based instruction, outings, and volunteer opportunities in the community. Students will participate in 80% of the opportunities provided.

Strategy 4

Staff will provide access to job exploration and/or visiting higher learning education facilities monthly for students to participate in utilizing community-based instruction, outings, and volunteer opportunities in the community. Students will participate in 80% of the opportunities provided.

Goal #2- By August 2019, GLA will decrease the use of physical restraints by 5% through working to increase student's acquisition of socially appropriate behaviors by teaching and utilizing the ZONES of Regulation program. Additionally, supports are provided by the behavior analyst on individual behavior management techniques as identified in a student's Behavior Intervention Plan. Lastly, Safety Care de-escalation techniques are also utilized to teach students' appropriate coping skills.

Data Collection Procedure:

Target behavior data will be collected using a paper based system and/or an online system for data storage, management, graphing and analysis measuring:

- Frequency
- Intensity/Severity
- Duration

Strategy 1:

Data collection will be taken daily by teachers, paraprofessional and related service providers on the individual student's target behaviors and the use of physical restraints. The data collected will be analyzed by the behavior analyst. Teachers and the behavior analyst will meet as needed to identify students who require physical restraint most frequently to create and develop interventions designed to reduce the need for physical restraint.

Strategy 2:

Staff will attend in-service trainings throughout the school year that will include specific trainings on behavior modification techniques and interventions approved by counselors and behavior analyst.

Strategy 3:

Counselors and teachers will work together to provide weekly instruction on the Zones of Regulation program to all students in order to teach them to identify emotions and implement appropriate coping strategies prior to a crisis that would require physical intervention.

Goal #3- By August 2019, increase the percentage of students being reintegrated or participating in inclusion with their home district by 5%, through the use of reintegration procedures (including but not limited to; completion of reintegration form, team discussions on support levels and behavior data tracking).

Strategy 1:

Behavior data will be taken daily and reviewed by team as needed. Interventions will be discussed and implemented by the team in order to decrease aberrant behaviors and increase appropriate replacement.

Strategy 2:

Teachers/Therapist will meet quarterly and prior to each students IEP, to discuss any students who may be candidates for reintegration or inclusion. During these meetings behaviors data and current interventions will be review.

Strategy 3:

Teachers will complete a reintegration form to be discussed at the student's IEP annually for any students who are determined to possibly be ready for reintegration or inclusion. The reintegration form will provide the district with information pertaining to the level of support a student requires in the current therapeutic setting and what support may need to be carried over into the district setting. Student's behavior data will also be provided with this form.