



PREPARING ADOLESCENTS *for* ADULT LIFE

Transforming Possibilities into Abilities

PAAL POSITIVES

Particular points placing PAAL ahead of other programs

PROGRAMMING

- *Philosophy. PAAL addresses the core components of quality of life, to prepare the student for the next environment through intensive exposure to experiences within the community in work, life skills, leisure and community living. PAAL teaches only those skills that, without them, an individual would be dependent upon someone else. Data-based decision making, adaptations of the environment and education of the community surrounding us are core teaching strategies. With the assistance of the Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS), PAAL strives to make every moment an instructional moment.*
- *Implementation. PAAL operationally defines intensity and follows the research. In order to achieve meaningful progress sufficient to embed the task within one's behavioral make-up, at least three instructional opportunities per week at an eventual rate of sixty minutes within the environment in which the behavior is most likely to be displayed are provided. PAAL is located in the heart of the borough of Downingtown within walking distance of a variety of retail opportunities, public transportation and its own house where all life skill instruction takes place. Sufficient intensity is achieved by limiting the number of instructional goals at any one time. Additionally, although one-on-one instruction is available where necessary for skill acquisition or challenging circumstances, PAAL strives to deliver meaningful instruction at a minimum of one-to-two ratio (Dyads). Teaching in dyads not only promotes independence by demanding less reliance on teacher attention, but it prepares the student for the world of adult services (or lack thereof).*

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- *Through targeted and intensive community cultivation, PAAL has partnered with many local area businesses that have fully integrated and assimilated PAAL students into the work place. Students wear uniforms, interact with their peers in workplace locker and break rooms and work regular and consistent schedules. PAAL is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce and the local Merchants Association. PAAL also maintains a Business and Community Advisory Council comprised leaders county-wide.*
- *PAAL is also dedicated to assisting students with the development of micro-businesses wherein students may eventually be self-employed with supports. PAAL is currently in the process of developing (and has obtained contracts for) four separate micro-businesses.*

TRAINING AND ONGOING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- *PAAL staff attend the week long, nationally recognized National Autism Conference, COSAC and OAR each year. Attendance at these conferences is mandatory. Staff debrief following each conference day to ensure proper understanding of the material and to discuss specific applicability to our program. Following attendance at conferences, individualized professional development plans are devised to monitor the staff members ability to actually **apply** what has been learned. As part of the hiring process, potential staff are required to spend significant time at our program to observe and to be observed and are required to have previous experience serving older learners with autism in community settings utilizing the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis. Once an offer for a position is made, staff are administered an initial assessment in order to baseline their knowledge and develop a targeted training plan. Initial training is targeted to last approximately three weeks and includes didactic training as well as applied instruction. Staff must achieve mastery criteria with inter-observer agreement prior to assuming full responsibility as a member of the team.*

ADMISSIONS

- *PAAL has developed specific criteria for admission engineered to identify the existence or emergence of skills conducive to intensive community integration. Admission is a graduated process beginning with a comprehensive review of recent records including IEP, learning programs, data, treatment plans and other evaluations, an observation by PAAL's Educational Director of the student in the students current educational placement; an observation of the student at home by PAAL's Clinical Director and an observation of the student in the community by PAAL's Community Education Director. Following successful observations, the student is invited to spend at least half a day participating in our program. PAAL also requires a recent measure (within one year) of skills of independent behavior (Vineland or SIB-R).*

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- *The use of term "Assistive" Technology has historically only been linked to voice output devices or devices engineered to assist the visually or hearing impaired. The use of technology to "assist" (provide prompting) or "adapt" the environment (strategically placed mirrors) or "analyze" (take data) has broad applications in autism. The use of Blue Tooth technology to increase independence by increasing the distance between student and instructor in the community, the use of a PDA to independently follow a schedule or even a simple I-Pod to program transitions between stations in your workout routine, is just as valuable – probably more so – than the devices special education calls their own. PAAL is dedicated to identifying all resources that assist individuals with autism to increase their independent function in a manner that most typifies society at large. PAAL's innovative use of every-day technology is meeting this goal every day.*