



Chester County  
Intermediate Unit



## Aspire

Preparing Students for a Successful College  
Experience

# + Aspire

- Supporting transition to College life
- Students 17-21
- Autism spectrum or related mental health disorder such as anxiety, depression or bipolar, as well as individual' s with a Traumatic Brain Injury



# + Summer Program Highlights

- Preview day in June to alleviate anxiety
- Program runs in Post summer session at West Chester University, the first week in August.
- 5 Nights in College Dorm setting on West Chester University Campus
  - Co-Ed dorm, shared rooms, public bathrooms
- 1-credit College Course
  - Society and Social Reasoning
- Afternoon Seminars
- Supervised evenings and overnights



# + Society And Social Reasoning

## 1 Credit College Course

- Course offers a survey of the developmental process of adolescents and the challenges they may face as they transition from childhood into adulthood. Course is highly interactive.
- 3 hours, daily, 9-12
- Course work included:
  - Reading assignment prior to arrival to first class
  - In class group project
  - Written assignment
  - Final exam
- College Coach Support (BCBA) for Executive Functions Support

# + Seminars



- Assistive Technology
- Emotional Regulation – Mindfulness and Stress Reduction/  
Safety
- Transportation/Travel Safety
- Office of Services for Students with Disabilities
- Career Exploration and Portfolio development

# + Supervised Evenings/Overnights



- Supports provided by Home and Community Services
  - Planned social activities in the evening as a group
  - Reinforced independent completion of assignments
  - Provided support for social skills
  - Provided support for anxiety related issues
  - Monitored independent living skills
  - Data collection on student performance throughout the day

# + Peer Mentors



- West Chester University students volunteer hours to support students within the program
  - Traveling the campus safely
  - Time management related to study habits
  - Exploring career interests
  - Modeling appropriate social behavior



# Summer Program Data Collection

Summary Report provided by CCIU



- Setting up dorm room, making a bed, changing bed linens
- Independent living
  - Laundry
  - Purchasing meal and clean up
  - Showering, personal hygiene, medication management
  - Maintaining personal belongings and dorm room
  - Following schedule, timeliness with arrival
  - Street crossing and bus safety
- Emotional Control
- Group/Class Participation
- Academic assistance/Self advocacy
- Response to Authority Figures
- Time Management





# APPLICATION PROCESS



- SUMMER – 5 nights
  - District Referral
  - Application/Dates
  - Registration WCU
  - Doctor/Medical Releases
  - Confirmation
- SCHOOL YEAR (Fall/Spring)
  - District Referral
  - Application/Dates
  - Registration WCU
  - Self Administer Meds on campus
  - Confirmation from WCU and Aspire



## West Chester University Campus

Aspire program room is in the center of campus, close to the Church Street Septa bus stop, food trucks, Library, etc.



# + Traditional School Year Program Highlights

Piloted during the 2012-13 school year

## ■ Program Features:

- Located on WCU campus and surrounding community
- 3 credit college course of student's choice/interest, with option to take additional coursework up to 9 credits per semester.
- **College Coaching**
  - Support for college course work and planning
  - Self advocacy – connect with professors, Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Accommodations, Accessing tutors
  - Time Management – use of day planners other electronic devices
- Budget Profile- based on career choice and lifestyle expectations



# Traditional School Year Program



- Program Features (continued)
  - Support for social skills, executive functioning needs, self advocacy, and self regulation – making connections on campus (text, email, IM)
  - Conversational skills – supportive listening, compassionate feedback, acceptance and flexibility
  - Mindfulness Stress Reduction Seminars in collaboration with Director Of Stress Reduction Center at West Chester University, Dr. Donald McCown.

# + Traditional School Year Program

## ■ Program Features Continued

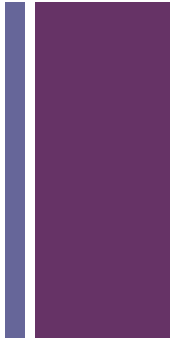
- Peer Mentoring by West Chester University student volunteers
- Healthy Eating and Exercise
  - Meal planning
  - On Campus Recreation Center access
- Career exploration
  - Post Secondary Education Exploration
  - College Search/Common Application Completion



# + Traditional School Year Program

## Additional Program Options:

- Discover Program
  - Work skills development in areas of interest including internships, volunteer opportunities, and paid employment supported by job coaching
  
- Transitional Living Program (TLP)
  - Independent living skills instruction –
    - meal prep and planning, budgeting
  
- Travel training instruction (screen for safety on campus)
  - On campus and community street safety and navigation
  - Public transit use



# + Traditional School year Program

- 1/2 Day Program – For students who need to fulfill high school credit requirements and would benefit from transition and post secondary education support.
- Full day program – For students who have fulfilled all credits for graduation, but benefit from additional transition support. Program continues for academic school year in Fall and Spring semesters.



# School Year Program Data Collection

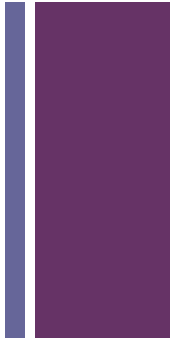


- Individualized IEP goals –  
Quarterly progress monitoring  
of goals
  - Self Advocacy
  - Time Management
  - Emotional Regulation
  - Social Skills/Group participation
  - Organization
  - Independent living
    - Self care
- Travel Training
  - Street Safety and navigation
  - Bus safety
- Discover Program Work Experience
  - Resume development
  - Interview Skills
  - Workplace etiquette



# + Summer Program Student Achievements

- ✓ Identify College Readiness
- ✓ Making Peer Connections
- ✓ Successful completion of a college course
- ✓ Increasing self awareness of one's abilities and needs
- ✓ Sharing a room and community showers
- ✓ Developing self advocacy
- ✓ Navigating on campus and off
- ✓ Managing their time and schedule
- ✓ Overcoming stressors



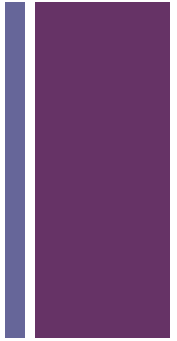
# + School Year Program Student Achievements



- ✓ Successful completion of college course(s)
- ✓ Learned strategies for accessing on campus support
- ✓ Independent public transit travel to University or work site
- ✓ Obtained paid employment
- ✓ Established lasting relationships with peers in University setting
- ✓ Multiple acceptances into Post Secondary Institutions including Universities and Community College
- ✓ Recipients of academic scholarships



# Bridging the process from Supported to Independence...



How is program funded?

- **Summer** – parent/guardian pay for 1 credit course Society and Social Reasoning, and related fees as well as course materials. Additionally, students will need to have a PA state issued ID or Passport in order to obtain the West Chester University student ID, which is an additional \$12 fee obtained upon completion of course registration process. This ID is needed for students to access classroom and other university buildings and their meal plan during the week long program.
- **Academic Year** - one 3-credit course fee is included in the program costs, however any additional course credits are the parent/guardian responsibility. Course materials are also the responsibility of the parent/guardian for all courses even one covered in initial program.
- **Partnerships and responsibilities need to be understood.**
  - Obtaining on campus supports
  - Communication between University and Student

# + Student Feedback

- “I can get along with someone when I am sharing a room with them.”
- “I learned I am more likely to seek help with work from an authority figure when I don’t have my parents to rely on to get help for me.”
- “I am better suited for college life than I thought.”
- “Experience is as important as intelligence.”
- “I learned that afternoon classes would be better for me.”
- “I learned I can work pass problems.”
- 87.5% of participants would recommend the program to their peers.





# Q and A