

Preparing Adolescents & Adults for Life

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Transforming Possibilities into Abilities

Preparing Adolescents & Adults for Life (PAAL) is an independent Education Program Sponsored by Mission for Educating Citizens with Autism (MECA).

About PAAL

Preparing Adolescents & Adults for Life (PAAL) was founded in 2006 by Mission for Educating Citizens with Autism (MECA). PAAL is a unique, community based program for adolescents with PAAL maintains a professional collaboration between the educational system, families, local businesses and the community at large to develop a vision for the student as they reach adulthood which includes friends, fun, choice and independence.

Overview of PAAL

PAAL allows students with autism to use the community as their classroom in order to prepare them for the transition from school into adult life. Best practices indicate that individuals with autism learn best in their natural surroundings. The PAAL program strives to combine traditional classroom instruction with real-life lesson in maintaining a home, caring for oneself, and living and working in the community. PAAL provides teens with autism with the skills necessary to lead a satisfying independent life. The program is individually tailored to meet the needs of each student.

The Educational Program

The PAAL Program Instructional Center is located in the heart of Downingtown, and is a short walking distance from stores, places of worship, and the Life Skills House. The Instructional Center is located in a newly renovated 3,500 square foot building. While here students are instructed in the areas of:

- Functional Math Skills
- Communication Skills
- Social Skills
- Fluency Instruction

The PAAL Program Life Skills House, sponsored by Mission for Educating Children with Autism (MECA), provides students with the opportunity to learn and practice daily living skills necessary to lead an independent lifestyle in a real-world environment. The Life Skills House is convenient to neighborhood grocery and drug stores, restaurants, the library, and public transportation; allowing students to participate in all aspects of living

in the community. Walking to and from the Life Skills House to other community experiences allows instruction in vital safety and navigation skills.

The Many Benefits of PAAL:

- Help to develop a positive work ethic
- Increase ability to independently navigate within the community
- Offers learning experiences that help the students function in a socially acceptable fashion
- Reduced reliance on adult assistance
- Self-monitoring/Self-reinforcement

The Result:

Individuals who are able to reach their full potential as productive, socially-connected, and personally fulfilled citizens.

PAAL Snapshot

PAAL is a unique, specialty education program for adolescents and adults with autism. It provides learning opportunities tailored to the student's vision of adult life

- Training in daily living activities
- Public transportation training
- Mainstream vocational opportunities
- Choice, competency and control at center of all instruction
- Transition plans to post-21 services
- Assessment of skills, proficiencies and preferences
- Natural environmental interventions
- Continuous high intensity instruction
- Dyad and Triad Instruction critical to participation in adult services
- Strict coordination between home and school for continuity or instruction

PAAL Features

- Life Skills and Social Training
- Community Support / Training
- Competency-based staff training
- Data-driven decision making
- Use of Research Based strategies
- Use of everyday technology (iPods, Cell phones, PDA's) to support students

Expertise Forms the Basis for Success

The PAAL program and philosophy is guided by our Professional Advisory Panel that includes some of the nation's finest experts in the field of autism. The Advisory Panel works to ensure that PAAL consistently provides quality programming.

In addition to his leadership of the Panel, nationally renowned expert on adolescents and adults with autism, and President of the Organization for Autism Research (OAR), Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D., works directly with PAAL to develop and enhance programming, monitors its implementation and oversees staff training.

A team of highly trained certified teachers, certified behavior analysts, consultants and support staff work closely with students, families and the community at large to provide multiple opportunities to practice skills in a way mastered skills will generalize across environments.

PAAL utilizes 1:1 intensive instruction to maximize skill acquisition thus systematically fades to dyad and triad instruction enabling the student to remain productive in the adult world where supports are limited. The PAAL program philosophy ensures instructional intensity by providing multiple opportunities to practice skills.

PAAL relies heavily upon strong communication with families, professionals, and community partners to ensure consistent instruction across environments and utilizes state of the art technology for easy access to information.

Every students program is completely and thoroughly reviewed during "analysis meetings" which take place every 3 weeks. Decisions to modify instruction are driven by data analysis and input from all team members.

Educational Facility

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Downingtown, PA 19335
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Life Skills House

318 Washington Ave
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