



## WESLEY SPECTRUM ACADEMY

Children and families with education, mental health and family support needs are searching for a better quality of life. Wesley Spectrum Services helps them to become independent, responsible and caring members of the community by providing an array of high quality specialized education, mental health and family services. These services give children and families the strength to learn, to live and to love, resulting in stronger families and stronger communities.

### Philosophy and Purpose

Students experiencing emotional or learning problems can have difficulty succeeding in traditional schools. Wesley Spectrum Academy is a Private Academic School that works to develop the potential of each student, regardless of past experience in the traditional school setting. With small classes, individualized instruction, a caring staff, and specialized counseling, we motivate each student to build a positive self-image, set goals, and achieve academic and personal success.

### Eligibility

Our small structured learning environment with therapeutic support helps students who have been identified by their parents, their school, or both, as being at risk for school failure. We welcome children and adolescents who are not successful in public school for a variety of reasons including a lack of motivation and purpose, school refusal or phobia, skill gaps, or emotional problems. About 90% of our students need special education emotional support. We can accommodate children with average to gifted intelligence, ADHD/learning disabilities, Pervasive Development Disorder and drug and alcohol issues.

### Availability

The Wesley Spectrum Academy is located in Upper St. Clair and is licensed for 156 students from average to gifted intelligence in grades 4 to 12 who need the same educational opportunities as other children, but a higher level of support and counseling. We are currently serving about 140 children at a 1:12 teacher/student ratio. If space is not available, we will work with the parents and district to find another program or facility that will meet the child's immediate needs. All eligible children and families are treated equitably without favoritism. Our counseling staff works in collaboration with a variety of outside services to ensure that mental health needs are being met.

### Referral

The student is referred to Wesley Spectrum Academy directly by a parent, a school district or outside agency. Participation is voluntary. We receive between 168 and 200 referrals a year.

### Intake

During the initial intake meeting, the student, family, school district, administrators, teachers and counselors, identify the needs of the student. After the interview, a decision is made as to whether Wesley Spectrum Academy can meet those needs.

### Funding

The Wesley Spectrum Academy is tuition based. We are supported by public school districts or private pay. The responsible party is invoiced as per the financial agreement signed upon admission.

### Accreditation and Licensure

Wesley Spectrum Academy is licensed by Pennsylvania Department of Education as a Private Academic School. All our therapists maintain current credentials through professional development and licensing.

### Treatment Approach

Wesley Spectrum Academy achieves the best outcomes for each child by basing our decisions – every step of the way – on what is best for this individual child. We call this Kid-Centered Decision Making and it encompasses Kid-Centered Planning, Kid-Centered Environment and Kid-Centered Measurement.

At Wesley Spectrum Academy Kid-Centered Decision Making integrates specialized education and counseling to offer each student what he or she needs, hour by hour, day by day. This gives each student an individualized program: a better plan, a better environment and better outcomes. We eliminate traditional grade separations in order to be more flexible in focusing programs around the needs of an individual child. Graduation is based on credits.

Kid-Centered Planning occurs in conjunction with parents, teachers, the student and a counselor, resulting in a plan that details the specific outcomes to be achieved for each child. Students are always involved in developing the outcomes they are working toward. We have the flexibility to help each student work toward a different goal.



## *Strength to learn, to live, to love*

A Kid-Centered Environment is one where all children and adolescents can be comfortable and secure. Since each student is working toward an individual goal, each requires a different experience. Few organizations are as flexible as Wesley Spectrum Academy to repeat this for 150 students. The key aspect of a Kid-Centered Environment is that it adapts to the needs of individual children, rather than requiring the children to fit into the confines of a single approach.

We expect all students to participate in the school-wide behavior management system, and develop an individualized plan to help them meet those behavior expectations. This includes individualized goals to be on time and prepared, follow directions, be respectful of self, others and all spaces by refraining from verbal and physical abuse toward others and to complete all assignments. When we provide a consistent environment and expectations from class to class, children know what is expected of them and strive to achieve those expectations.

Wesley Spectrum Academy uses Kid-Centered Measurement to gauge a student's progress, documenting students' behavior and academic performance and tracking their progress toward their individual goals. This is not to put limits on that student, but to create milestones which, once reached, allow for new planning and new goals. In addition, all staff members have individual goals to measure professional improvement.

### Services

The Academy has both special and regular education programs, led by nine regular education teachers, three special education teachers and four who are dually certified. Our seven therapeutic counselors work with teachers, families and outside agencies (as adjuncts to outside services). We also offer a monthly consultation with a psychiatrist to provide clinical perspective on various mental health issues. Each student meets with his or her assigned counselor as often as needed.

Elementary, middle and high school units meet from 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. during the regular school year. Our curriculum is aligned to PA state standards. We administer the PSSA test in accordance with state guidelines and the Terra Nova assessment to assist in determining student strengths and needs, which also helps improve programming.

Typical class size at Wesley Spectrum Academy is 12 students. This enables students and teachers to build very close relationships. If a child is in distress, involved in a conflict or being teased, we can identify it very quickly and address it. Our skilled counselors, teachers and administrators know each child very well.

Community is a big part of learning how to grow as an individual so our students have a high degree of collective input into the group school environment, guided by a professional staff that also understands how to create a positive atmosphere. Through their student representatives, children participate in town hall meetings and contribute to larger issues at the school.

Our newly updated industrial technology department gives students the skills they need to prepare for a variety of vocations. We have a full range of electives including music, drama, art, forensic science, and other classes that enhance the learning experience.

### Outcomes

The desired outcomes for every student are achievement of academic and behavioral goals and the completion of their high school degree. Annual data on the number of graduations, achievement of academic goals, and student and family satisfaction with the program is measured. This data is aggregated across all students and used for quality improvement.

### Discharge and Aftercare

When a student achieves his or her individual goals, the student's team meets to consider reintegration into the public school. This could be a gradual transition to meet the needs of the child. Other students complete their education here, which includes a traditional graduation ceremony for a senior class that averages about 30 students. A full-time transition coordinator provides support to all students, including higher education, technical education and career guidance.

### Follow Up

The Academy has begun using Life Tracks exit surveys to follow up with our children at one year and five years after discharge. This lets us know how our services helped change a student's life, confirming if he or she went on to college, to employment or to contribute to the community. Many students come back and visit and remain in contact with their teachers and counselors.

### Contact Information

#### **Amy Townsend**

Director

243 Johnston Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15241

**Phone:** 412-833-6444 x234

**Fax:** 412-308-0168

atownsend@wesleyspectrum.org

[www.wesleyspectrum.org](http://www.wesleyspectrum.org)

#### **Melissa Garvin**

Associate Director

243 Johnston Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15241

**Phone:** 412-833-6444 x228

**Fax:** 412-308-0168

mgarvin@wesleyspectrum.org