Celebrating Infinite Possibilities: Post-Secondary Education for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

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Who are we?

Student Intro Videos here for Sara, Michelle, Bernadette
Celebrating Your Gifts

“The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people think you cannot do.”

- Quote from the Boat
Warm Welcome!

Group Photo Here
Starting With the End In Sight

- Participants will walk away with explicit ideas and strategies to create post-secondary programs for students with significant cognitive disabilities in their own districts.
Our Objectives

- Participants will **gain** a broad understanding of our mission.
- Participants will **get** a look into a day in the lives of our sensational students.
- Participants will **glean** knowledge about the essential components of our precious programs.
Our Mission

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) believes that college and career readiness for students with significant cognitive disabilities includes capabilities necessary to be contributing and valued members in their communities. Our Post Secondary Functional Academic Learning Support (PSFALS) programs partner with area college campuses to provide challenging inclusive learning opportunities and share community transition resources for young adults, who are receiving certificates of completion. These programs facilitate the development of self-advocacy, self-determination, real-world learning, and social competence skills integrated into classroom, community and vocational experiences. In order for our students to thrive, we must broaden the understanding of human diversity, while teaching individuals to respect, honor, and celebrate the uniqueness of all people and to see the potential for their infinite possibilities.
OUR SENSATIONAL STUDENTS
Communicative Competence
Math
English Language Arts (ELA)
Social Competence

• Hug Problem Video Here
Social Competence

Hug Thoughts Video Here
Social Competence

Hug Solution Video Here
Independence!

- Students with significant cognitive disabilities may need supports to live and work as independently as possible throughout their adult lives. However, the level of those supports is expected to be lower for students who are prepared for college, career and community.

- Every step closer to independence enriches the quality of life for these students, all members of the college campus communities, and the broader communities at large.
“Can you design my new office with many entrances?
I want lots of doors for opportunity to knock on!”
Pertinent Program Pieces

• Getting your foot in the door and establishing partnerships.

• BCPS funds staffing, campus course fees, and transportation.

• What’s available on the campus and in the surrounding community?

• The individual and collective enthusiasm and energy create expansive opportunities.
Direct Classroom Instruction &
College Course Opportunities
Direct Classroom Instruction & College Course Opportunities

• CLEAN/Happy Video here
Direct Classroom Instruction & College Course Opportunities
Campus & Community Worksites
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Campus & Community Worksites

Eric Video Here
Transition Connections
Community Based Instruction (CBI) & Mobility Training
Campus Life
Community Service

“Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Community Service
Inter-Campus Collaboration
Thank you!

Yesterday's event was wonderful and it was really inspiring to see all the young men and women get up in front of the room and talk about their experiences. We are graced with the fruits of our collaboration each day. Also, speaking for the folks in facilities the students brighten their days and I know we all look forward to having them. It was very humbling for those of us who were able to attend yesterday as we drove back to the campuses. We each agreed that the students didn’t need to thank us but we believed it was us who should have been up there thanking them.

Thank you and the other wonderful people who work so hard to prepare the students for their future careers.

Paul Wingerd"
The following is a suggested eligibility criteria checklist for a student in the PSFALS program which is always considered on an individual basis.
A PSFALS Candidate:

• has successfully completed at least four years of a high school education.
• is working toward a Maryland High School Certificate of Completion.
• has a consistent attendance record.
• demonstrates safe and appropriate behaviors toward self and others.
• functions without consistent on-site school administrators, nurse and mental health providers (counselor, social worker, psychologist).
A PSFALS Candidate:

- exhibits socially responsible behavior and is capable of participating in a variety of community work experiences that may include internships/mentorships with BCPS or campus mentors; supported employment with small groups/job coaches; or independent with natural supports. (volunteer, competitive employment, stipends by pre-approved funds through BCPS).
- is capable of accessing mobility training to use public transportation for traveling, with or without supervision.
- practices behavior expectations identified in the BCPS Student Behavior Handbook and school codes of conduct appropriate for the Post Secondary setting.
A PSFALS Candidate:

- demonstrates communicative competence skills (with or without assistive technology). These include, but are not limited to:
  - expressing personal needs.
  - sharing information, ideas, questions, and comments about daily life, the world in which they live, and the academic content in their classes.
  - conversing with familiar and unfamiliar people.
A PSFALS Candidate:

- has documentation for employment eligibility and/or program participation (i.e. original Social Security card, birth certificate, passport, green card or Certificate of Naturalization, Maryland State ID, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Reduced Fare/Mobility card).
- has a long-term goal of supportive/competitive employment.
- is prepared and willing to work up to five days a week.
“Looks aren’t everything. It’s what’s inside you that really matters. A biology teacher told me that.”
CHALLENGES
Challenges

- Space on Campus
- Staffing
- Class Size
- Lack of consistent on-site administrator, nurse, mental health professionals
- A need for other levels of the program for students with higher and lower range of learning profiles
OUR FUTURE PLANS

"I bought you a graduation gift. It’s a compass that always points to success."
Growth

- The remarkable successes of the BCPS PSFALS programs, which have grown incrementally over the last 20 years, support future plans to expand classes on the existing campuses and on other local campuses.

- At this time, two other college campuses in Baltimore County are eager to host additional PSFALS programs.
Dream On

We want to embrace these concepts:

- that disability does not equal deficit; disability equals delightful differences.
- Uniqueness is to be treasured!
- Every person has giftedness inside of them.

Our hopes and dreams are:

- All people will be able to recognize this giftedness.
- All people will be able to use their potential in a productive way.
- All people will come from a place of unconditional love instead of fear.
- All people will be Possibilitarians!
“Never forget that you are one of a kind. Never forget that if there weren’t any need for you in all your uniqueness to be on this earth, you wouldn’t be here in the first place. And never forget, no matter how overwhelming life’s challenges and problems seem to be, that one person can make a difference in the world. In fact, it is always because of one person that all the changes that matter in the world come about. So, be that one person.” – Buckminster Fuller