

T H E

P L A Z

A A C A

D E M Y

**A Guide to Service**

## Child Development and the Adolescent

Developmental and child psychology provide the foundation upon which The Plaza Academy's curricula are built. Natural developmental phenomena dictate that teenagers behave in adult social environments; however, some teenagers acquire the skills associated with adulthood earlier than their peers; thus, they appear to outgrow some school environments. Other teenagers do not acquire adult skills as early as their peers; thus, they do not succeed in the same settings as their peers.

In developmental phenomena, the constructs of maturity and responsibility describe a set of skills associated with a teenager's appropriate adult responses, many of which can be subdivided under behaviors described as self-control. For our research and service purposes, we further subdivide self-control into the observation, recording, management, and evaluation of one's own behavior.

Not all teenagers' skill deficits manifest in the same manner; however, many teenagers demonstrate a tendency toward paradoxical, resistant, rebellious, or passive behaviors. Typically, these behaviors indicate a lack of social, emotional or academic skills. Although these teenagers can identify their symptoms, their concomitant emotional responses inhibit their ability to refer themselves for treatment. When they do seek help, they report they are depressed, bored, and unhappy in school. Often parents, school personnel, or practitioners refer them to The Plaza Academy because the teen has become unhappy and dissatisfied with school.

### Institutional Missions

The Plaza Academy is unique in that we have three institutional missions. We are an accredited high school, a social service agency, and a research institute. Our psychological and educational missions are fulfilled in the context of secondary education; psychological and educational services are delivered within an empirical research paradigm. The results of our endeavors are reported to school parents in daily written reports and weekly conferences. These same data are the foundation for research that guides our daily activity, the results of which are reported in the national scientific literature and at national professional conferences.

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- Teenagers learn best when they are happy and enthusiastic about school.
- The Plaza Academy staff must be sensitive to the developmental needs of adolescents.
- Parental involvement is an integral part of the teenager's education.
- To educate students with the greatest efficiency, we must systematically observe, measure, and remove some of the variables that elicit resistant and rebellious responses of teenagers.
- Teenagers must feel a sense of respect from their peers and teachers before they can become enthusiastic about school.
- The Plaza Academy provides a school environment wherein teenagers can achieve according to their ability.
- Upon graduation, The Plaza Academy teenagers will be academically and socially competitive with their peers.
- Teenagers learn best in a setting most like the one wherein they will apply their new skills.
- Teenagers need to learn to make informed decisions to be competitive in a free-market democratic republic.

- The Plaza Academy is an alternative high school for students whose needs are not met in traditional high schools.
- We serve the needs of: (1) gifted and talented students who have developmentally advanced beyond their peers and require a more adult academic and social environment, (2) learning disabled teenagers who require a specially designed curriculum and daily individual attention, and (3) teenagers who are dissatisfied in their peer and family relationships concomitant with their problems at school.
- We provide a high school in which parents and teenagers work together to achieve academic, social, and familial success.
- We help teenagers gain a better understanding of their roles in their family and community.
- Our therapeutic curriculum teaches teenagers to manage themselves rather than rely on others to manage them.
- We provide curricula that prepare teenagers for university life.
- Our academic curriculum and delivery system provides teenagers with tutorial support until they achieve mastery over subject matter.
- We provide an academic environment that encourages critical and creative thinking through verbal discourse and discursive prose.
- We seek to educate teenagers at or above the twelfth-grade skill level in all academic areas.
- We issue a high school diploma.
- We prepare teenagers for college and other post-high school environments.

Our treatment approach represents techniques along a continuum wherein the environment or the individual is responsible for behavior change; thus, the interventions used at The Plaza Academy represent a variety of theoretical assumptions from psychodynamic to learning-theory treatment modalities. For example, when teenagers first enroll, they encounter a number of interventions that are integrated into the curriculum that produce behavior change. One such technique is the delivery of our curriculum in an environment that is much like a university. Therefore, many of the daily academic demands of university life are part of The Plaza Academy's high school curriculum. As the students' enrollment continues, other interventions are systematically applied to teach them to be their own agents for behavior change. In these personalized endeavors, self-management, communication, and social skills are the foci for training.

## The Social Milieu

Although many teenagers do well in public-school environments, some resistant, rebellious, and paradoxical behavior can result in what they perceive to be restrictive and controlling environments. For these teens, such environments affront their natural disposition toward autonomy. Thus, our teenagers often seek educational and social environments wherein they can be more independent of adult control. This is a natural process of child development as teenagers imitate the autonomous behavior of adults.

The Plaza Academy social milieu is one manner in which we teach our teenagers to be academically and socially skilled. Our approach to training is based on the observation that people learn best in an environment most like that wherein their new skills will be applied. In this case, a social milieu like a college campus elicits enthusiasm and commitment from our teenagers.

To attend to our teenagers' developmental needs for independence, The Plaza Academy is more like a college than a high school. We have a number of policies that encourage our students to behave in an adult manner. For example, our students address their teachers by first name to encourage rapport. Also, we do not ring class bells; instead, we train our teenagers to be punctual. To further enrich the school environment, we operate an open school in order to teach our students to leave and return to campus in a timely manner, as they will soon do in college.

We provide many other opportunities for teenagers to behave in a socially and academically responsible manner, along with the skill training for the students to meet these demands. For these and many other reasons, our students are enthusiastic about their academic performances, their progress toward maturity and the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

## DELIVERY

### Classroom Delivery System:

Our classroom delivery system, born out of our research and the research of others, controls many intervening variables that are incompatible with a teenager's lesson production. This delivery system increases our students' attention to lectures, encourages critical thought and discussion about the lesson, provides classtime opportunity to complete a lesson, fosters and encourages rapport, and provides daily tutorial support.

## REQUIREMENTS

### Time Requirements:

- There are seven class sessions a day; the first six are occupied by core courses and the seventh session is a tutorial hour.
- The first six class sessions are 50 minutes and are divided in thirds: lecture, discussion and lesson practice, and tutorial.

## ACTIVITY

### Class Activity:

- The teacher's lecture in the first third of the class session provides our students with the content of the day's lesson, reviews the previous day's work, and is the foundation for the discussion and practice that follow.
- The second third of the class session includes the students' discussion, questions, and lesson practice.
- A tutorial is the last third of each class session. This is the time that the student completes the day's lesson with the teacher's tutorial support.

## SEVENTH HOUR

### Seventh Hour:

- During the seventh hour of each day, a teacher is available for 50 minutes of tutorial for any student who needs additional help.

# COLLECTION

## Data Collection:

- We keep all lessons completed by our teens for their parents' review and these lessons form part of our daily empirical data collection.
- We record attendance, punctuality, lesson completion, and a measure of deportment during each class.

# DELIVERY

## Parent Conferences

We conduct five parent conferences within the first eight weeks of school for all new families. Thereafter, parent conferences are by appointment at the discretion of staff or at the request of the family.

During parent conferences, new parents will meet their teen's teachers, review their schoolwork, receive a written report and data regarding the teen's weekly grades in percent correct; and his/her daily punctuality, lesson completion and classroom deportment.

Also during these conferences, our parents are taught how to make the goods and services that they provide their teen contingent on sound academic performance. Contingency Management Training© is the method by which we encourage school parents' participation in their teen's education.

On completing the five conferences, our parents are familiar with their teen's teachers, our curriculum content, the delivery system, and our incentive system. They also learn how to reward their teen based on the daily record of performance that we send home.

# GROUP

## Group

On Thursday mornings, students and staff meet in the student lounge. This is the time during the regular school week that our students are together in one classroom. These meetings are designed to teach good citizenship and encourage teenagers to be enthusiastic about school. Our goals in group process include content learning, improvement of students' public speaking skills, assertive behavior training, and instruction in how to argue effectively.

The director or a staff member opens the meeting, reads and analyzes the week's data, and provides other announcements. We then begin the topic for that day, introduce the guest speaker, or students present their own activities. The activities in this group are determined by the time of the year, current events, and the students' needs as expressed by them or observed by staff members. Whatever the topic, open dialogue and lively discussions encourage critical and creative thinking, teach debate skills, and promote school spirit.

Psychodynamic activities are held throughout the year and are determined by the needs of the group. All groups in this category are conducted in a similar manner. Usually, there is some type of initial activity to stimulate thought and discussion, followed by careful facilitation to ensure that all students have an opportunity to express their opinions. We teach teenagers alternatives to aggressive or timid behaviors, and conduct other social skills training.

Guest speakers who represent a variety of vocations, professions, universities and the military present their topics, which are followed by an open discussion. We are proud of our teenagers' maturity, group commitment, and their careful attention to our guest speakers.

Current events groups coincide with national or local events or holidays. Groups are planned to examine, for example, Veterans Day, Martin Luther King Day, or local and national elections. On a typical theme day such as Veterans Day, our students discuss the military, its purposes, its history, and current status. Often, these discussions widen the focus to include political and social issues.

Other business activities are discussed during group. An attitude of cooperation and good will prevails. Lively discussion about room cleanliness, use of school facilities, and discussions of their own behaviors occur in this group time. Throughout these discussions, our teenagers learn to build rapport with each other, and although teenagers naturally congregate according to their age and interests, our students enjoy school-wide camaraderie and unity.

## THE PLAZA ACADEMY'S RESEARCH PARADIGM FOR DELIVERY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Plaza Academy provides a rigorous, traditional liberal arts curriculum that prepares teenagers for college. Through the use of Contingency Management© and self-regulation training strategies, teenagers in this special education high school are motivated to complete daily lessons and otherwise behave appropriately. These therapeutic and educational interventions are delivered within a research paradigm and the effects of treatment are empirically determined.

### Population:

Our enrollment is comprised of teenagers who are gifted, others who have learning disabilities, and others from the general population. All of our students were dissatisfied in their previous schools. On average, our population is divided equally between girls and boys, Kansas and Missouri residents, and our students represent all social, economic, and cultural demographics.

The measured I.Q. of this population ranges from 99 to 140 with a mean I.Q. of 112. The achievement of these students ranges from a low of 3rd grade on subsets of the Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery to a high of the 23rd grade level.

### Methodology

#### Record and Data collection:

Students generate data daily for their attendance, punctuality, lesson completion, percent correct, and deportment in class. For each class a student can earn four (4) points for attendance, punctuality, lesson completion, and refraining from disruptive behaviors. A student can earn 24 points a day. The teachers record their observations on a "contingency slip" during each class session. At the end of the day, the student's class performance across classes and behaviors are summarized on this 3" x 6" piece of paper:

The Plaza Academy				NAME	DATE	PERCENTAGE	REMARKS
Math	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	92%	✓
Reading	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	78%	✓
Science	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	100%	CC
English	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	98%	✓
Art	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	98%	✓
History	✓	✓	4	100%	11-25	88%	✓

The contingency slip is the mechanism by which parents know of their teen's daily performance. From these daily reports, parents can manage the goods and services in their child's life to produce motivation at school and at home.

The parent's knowledge of their teen's academic progress is imperative for parents and students. Therefore, the teen's cumulative grades, recorded in percent correct, are recorded on the slip each Monday.

## DESIGN

Single subject design:

The data that each student generates daily (i.e.: lesson completion, punctuality, attendance) are displayed as a single subject design on a graph that depicts the effects of our interventions. In the example, a student's daily lesson completion is displayed across several interventions. Our ability to probe the value of stimuli, reverse, compare variables in multiple baselines, shape, and fade therapeutic effects are all possible with these data.

## RELIABILITY

Reliability:

A second observer who intermittently and randomly attends class to score the students on deportment achieves reliability measures on the Contingency Management Training© procedures.

The observer takes interval samples of the student's classroom behaviors with attention to whether the student is disruptive. The student is scored with a one (1) if engaged in behaviors that disrupt the class, scored with a zero (0) if the student is on task. Occurrence data for disruptive behaviors are scored by totaling observations and dividing by occurrences to yield a % of time the teen is disruptive.

Attendance and punctuality are similarly recorded at intermittent and random times wherein the observer attends the class at the beginning of the class time and leaves three minutes afterward. Students can be no more than three minutes late to class because the teachers lock their doors, and students are not permitted entry thereafter.

The clocks in the classrooms are checked for their synchronization periodically throughout the semester.

Every student's daily lessons are counted a second time by an independent observer to insure reliability on these permanent product data.

# DATA

## Collateral data:

Our written measures of consumer satisfaction are collected during each parent conference. We also record anecdotal comments from phone calls, other testimony, and consumer measures from our referral base. Data from teacher's anecdotal remarks that are written for parent conferences are also collected and analyzed.

# CLASSROOM

## Classroom delivery method:

Teachers deliver their daily lessons in the same manner across classes; the 50-minute class is divided into thirds. In the first third of the session, the teacher lectures. The second third of the class is divided between reading aloud, small work groups, and other practice of the day's lesson. The remaining third of the class culminates with a tutorial session as students complete their lessons during class.

# INCENTIVES

## Incentives for student performance:

The stimuli that function as incentives for our students are made contingent on individual and group performance, based at school and home, and comprise immediate, intermediate, and long-term delays.

### Short-term individual incentives:

Students earn the individual privilege of early class dismissal contingent on their punctual arrival to class, lesson completion, a minimum of 80% correct on the daily lesson, and for refraining from disturbing other students. Students can play in the gym, use the lounge, or go outside once they have met these criteria.

### Intermediate individual incentives:

When a student earns early dismissal privileges for all six classes, the student may leave the school without attending the seventh hour. The seventh class hour is reserved for students who do not complete their assignments throughout the day or students who need additional tutorial support.

### Long-term individual incentives:

Students can earn 24 points each day in 88 school days of a semester for a total of 2,112 points that can be traded for leisure time (see Data Collection, page 7). Throughout the semester, students can trade points for time off from school, or exchange points to buy final exams in classes wherein they have a "B" average or better.

# ENHANCEMENT

## Point value enhancement:

Students who have earned at least a 3.0 in a class can exchange the points they earned to buy the final exam and are excused from that portion of the school day. Furthermore, a student who can buy final exams does not have to attend the review days prior to the finals. Thus, contingency points double in value if a student holds them for exchange during finals week.

# GROUP

## Incentives earned by the group:

When the school-wide performance on daily contingency data is above 95% for the week, (24 points per day per student), the entire population enjoys an early dismissal on Friday. By removing all breaks between classes and the lunch break, we compress the school schedule to dismiss early; yet, we conduct a complete school day.

# CONTINGENCY

## Home-based contingency management:

In this intervention, we teach our parents how to write response definitions, which empirically describe their teenagers' behaviors. Next, we teach them to form a menu of the reinforcers that they control at home that is contingently based on their teen's performance. Typically, we disrupt the teen's disposable income and instruct parents to deliver that money in 20 equal units, a month of school days, based on the student's daily record of performance. Also, the parents are taught to graph their teenager's data to enhance their own discipline in the management of reinforcers. Contingent use of the car, other privileges, and some long-term reinforcers such as the acquisition of a driver's license are popular and manageable stimuli.

In these sessions we provide support, encouragement, as well as careful training in the home-based Contingency Management Training© procedure. For a complete explanation of this procedure, see Seabaugh and Schumaker (1981), available at the school office.

# SELF-MANAGEMENT

## Self-management training and self regulation:

A self-regulation training procedure is delivered to teenagers based on the staff's recommendations, parent's request, or the student's wishes. For a description of the treatment protocol of self-regulation training for academic behaviors, read Seabaugh and Schumaker, "Self-regulation training for Learning Disabled and Non-Learning Disabled Adolescents," 1981, 1994.

#### Our Role at Local Universities:

The Plaza Academy is a supervision site for the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Webster University, Rockhurst, Forrest Institute, Avila, and the University of Kansas Medical Center. We supervise university students who represent six departments from these universities. Our supervisory role helps us provide university students with valuable practicum and internship experience and our staff enjoys the opportunities to keep abreast of advances in education, psychology, and other disciplines that are relevant to the education of the adolescent. Also, because we work closely with professors at these universities, we have a continual resource for advice and support from other professionals. We have, over the years, recruited a number of our Board members from our friends at the University of Missouri at Kansas City and the University of Kansas Medical Center.

#### Our Service to the Community at Large:

From its inception, The Plaza Academy has served teenagers from the urban core. Our history of social service is replete with private philanthropy. From the early days, parents of Plaza Academy students provided scholarship for additional students. This tradition continues today. Within the past decade, institutional and corporate financial assistance has enhanced The Plaza Academy's ability to reach the exceptional child from the city's core.

Our population is diverse; it represents teenagers from all demographics. The teenager who is failing when they have the potential for exemplary success is found in all parts of the city. The Plaza Academy has specialized in reaching these students, wherever they live, through tuition reduction and scholarship programs.

The Plaza Academy enjoys relationships with a variety of school districts, professional organizations, and private practitioners. Twenty-five years of continued referrals from professionals are testimony to their satisfaction with the services we render to their clients.

#### Our Contribution to the Research Literature:

The science of Applied Behavior Analysis is the empirical analysis of behavior and provides the paradigm wherein the data our students generate are collected and analyzed. Since its inception, The Plaza Academy has been a working research institute wherein the staff writes, publishes, and presents data to national scientific audiences. The analysis of these data is completed and presented as single-subject designs, and some of these data are also grouped for analysis.

In 1981, Dr. Seabaugh won the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy's Award of Merit in New York City for his work in teaching learning-disabled teens how to manage their own academic behaviors. His research has been refined, expanded, and replicated for 20 years.

Some of the Academy's curriculum components have been systematically replicated and then integrated into academic and social skill training throughout the nation. Seabaugh continues his research today and is currently consolidating and analyzing epidemiological data from two decades of research. Seabaugh is also a guest presenter at national conferences each year.

## STAFF

### About the Director and Staff:

Teachers at The Plaza Academy are state certified and have completed internships and practicum training in special education. Our staff is selected from applicants who have expressed a desire to work with teenagers, and have demonstrated mastery in a major field of study and in two minor areas. Our teachers must demonstrate an empathic understanding of teenagers, demonstrate patience, restraint, and their loyalty and fidelity to our goals.

Gary O. Seabaugh, our Founder and Director, has a doctorate in Developmental and Child Psychology from the Department of Human Development and Family Life at the University of Kansas. Dr. Seabaugh is a graduate of Shawnee Mission East High School and a member of the first graduating class of Johnson County Community College. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and a Master of Arts degree in Education from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Dr. Seabaugh completed his research assistantship at the University of Kansas Medical Center where he was a family therapist and completed his counseling internship in the Shawnee Mission School District.

As a result of his scholarship and community service, Dr. Seabaugh has received recognition from the University of Missouri at Kansas City with receipt of the Alumnus Achievement Award. He was Johnson County Community College's Alumnus of the year on their 20th anniversary in 1989. Seabaugh was given the Award of Merit by the Association of Advancement of Behavior Therapy, has been honored by the Golden Key National Honor Society, and he is in Who's Who among outstanding Americans.

Dr. Seabaugh is a national speaker to professional, corporate, and civic audiences. He publishes and presents his research to scientific and educational audiences, is a corporate inspirational speaker and consultant, and a keynote speaker at citywide events.

Dr. Seabaugh is a frequent radio talk-show guest and has been the subject of several television profiles. He is a decorated Vietnam combat veteran who served with the Marine Corps in Hue City in 1968.

# REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for graduation

AREAS	UNITS	COURSES
Language Arts and English	4	Grammar, Composition and Literature or Reading,
Mathematics	3	General Mathematics, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Business Mathematics
Science	2	General Science, Biology Chemistry, or Physics
Social Studies	3	American History, World History, Current Events and American Government
Electives	12	Psychology, Sociology, Speech, Debate, Drama, Music, Business Management, Logic, Art, Physical Education
Total Credits for Graduation	24	

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