

# PROMISING PRACTICES



## Doing what's right in Pittsburgh

**A belief that every juvenile offender is capable of change and progress guides The Academy Schools' Integrated Program**

*"All their lives, our students have been caught doing something wrong. Our job is to catch them doing something right."®*

Samuel A. Costanzo's words have guided [The Academy Schools](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, since he founded the community-based juvenile rehabilitation program in partnership with the Allegheny County Juvenile Court in 1982. His concept to serve as an alternative to institutionalization of youthful offenders has developed into one of the most comprehensive and innovative community-based treatment programs for young men and women in the country.

When receiving its second three-year [CARE](#) accreditation, the CARF survey report commended the organization "for providing community-based services for delinquent youths, which include an array of services such as drug and alcohol, mental health, tutoring, a charter school, a residential facility, family counseling, and a transportation system, which meets the complex needs of its students. This is unique and may be a model that can continue to be shared throughout the nation and possibly be used as a presentation at national conferences."

During its 30 years of operation, The Academy Schools has steadily expanded its service offerings. In addition to instructing students and providing specialized counseling, staff members have added industrial trade training, academic tutoring, and GED preparation.

Brought to you by the  
Behavioral Health,  
Child and Youth Services, and  
Opioid Treatment Program  
customer service units at

**carf**

Volume 3, Issue 4  
December 2012

---

### Regional trainings

For information or to register for CARF trainings and events, visit [www.carf.org/events](http://www.carf.org/events)

---

### Back issues

To read past and current issues of the Promising Practices newsletter from CARF, please open [www.carf.org/bhpromisingpractices](http://www.carf.org/bhpromisingpractices)

To address substance abuse issues among juvenile offenders, The Academy Schools established an outpatient drug and alcohol program, and it began offering mental health services and dual-diagnosis counseling when the numbers of students with mental health diagnoses increased.

The Academy Schools' community-based program addresses the needs of students who are able to remain in their home and community while completing their court-ordered accountability. In addition, The Academy Schools provides short- and long-term residential treatment programs for male and female offenders.

### **School failure is a predictor of delinquency**

The critical importance of a high school education remains a cornerstone of The Academy Schools' philosophy that school failure is a stronger predictor of delinquency than variables such as economic class, race or ethnicity, or peer-group relations.

The Academy Charter School introduced the opportunity for students to not only achieve their educational objectives by attending high school but to also earn a diploma and a guaranteed scholarship to the postsecondary school of their choice.



*Above: The valedictorian of a graduating class at The Academy Schools presents flowers to his mother in appreciation of her support.*

The Academy Integrated Program incorporates an array of services designed to meet the complex needs of a population of juvenile offenders with significant disadvantages. Each student is assigned a schedule of academic classes and treatment services tailored to his or her specific needs and skills. A strengths-based model focuses on the individual student's strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences.

The Integrated Program is rooted in the concepts of accountability, community protection, and competency development. The program combines the benefits of the charter school with evidence-based treatment services. Students in this program may participate in services that include:

- **Licensed public school education.** Students benefit from a unique educational environment designed to specifically enhance their learning potential, develop social competencies, and bolster confidence in their ability to succeed.
- **Outpatient drug and alcohol treatment and mental health counseling.** Individual and group therapy provides a path to sobriety. Outpatient mental health services are provided to students who have been diagnosed with a need for co-occurring disorder treatment.
- **Aggression Replacement Training.** Group counseling helps children and adolescents who are chronically aggressive to improve social-skill competence and moral reasoning, better manage anger, and reduce violent behavior.
- **Victim Awareness curriculum.** This eight-phase group counseling curriculum is based on the principles of paying balanced attention to all parties, including the victim, the offender, and the community.
- **Life Skills Development.** Following an assessment of needs, this program provides students with a means of attaining the competencies necessary to achieve an independent lifestyle.
- **Industrial Trade Training.** In addition to basic trade skills, students learn a positive work ethic, which can pave the way to self-sufficiency and pride in their work. Students also have opportunities to complete certification programs that can improve their ability to obtain employment.
- **Community Service and Work Programs.** Participation in on- and off-campus work programs and community service projects helps students meet restitution requirements and develop a sense of independence, volunteerism, and achievement.

Students can leave The Academy Schools equipped with the experience, knowledge, and passion to make everywhere they go a place where they can do what's right.

---

For more information on The Academy Schools, visit [www.theacademyschools.com](http://www.theacademyschools.com).

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