



Educational Program Description

The Shafer Center for Early Intervention, located in the at 11500 Cronridge Drive Suite 130, Owings Mills, Maryland, phone number 410-517-1113, is operated under the legal authority of Shafer Center for Early Intervention, Inc. The Center was created in an effort to provide a rich and comprehensive learning experience for children on the autism spectrum. The program is focused on providing a challenging and multidisciplinary educational environment that seamlessly integrates academics, speech and language goals, sensory needs and social opportunities.

The Shafer Center is a mixed grade/mixed age, co-educational program, for children ages 2-14 years old, grades preschool- 5th grade. The program has an enrollment capacity of 40 children and accepts children on the autism spectrum, emotional disturbance, cognitive impairment, multiple disabilities, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and developmental delay.

The Shafer Center provides six mixed grade/mixed age classroom programs; Engage, Imagine, Believe, Dream, Inspire, and Envision.

The Engage classroom contains, no more than 6 children, meets 1.5 hours per day, 5 days per week. Whole group and small group instruction is 1.5 hours per day and taught by a Certified Special Educator and a teaching assistant. Children placed in Engage have needs in domains including communication, independence, classroom readiness, social skills, and pre-academic skills. Most students enrolled in Engage are attending as private-pay clients, ages 2 – 4, and are not enrolled as part of an MSDE program. However, MSDE students may be enrolled in Engage at any time.

The Imagine classroom contains no more than 4 children and meets for 6 hours per day, 5 days per week. Whole or small group instruction is 30-60 minutes per day and is taught by a Masters-Level Certified Special Educator, supported by a teaching assistant. A Speech-Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist push into the Imagine school day for 30-minute co-teaching sessions 2 – 3 times per week. Also, the Imagine classroom is monitored by a Behavior Consultant who assists in addressing behavior management strategies and Behavior Intervention Plans. The remaining 5.5 hours of the Imagine day consists of 1:1 Discrete Trial Instruction by an ABA therapist and is overseen by a Behavior Consultant. Children placed in Imagine are typically in Kindergarten through 2nd-grade, however older children may enroll in Imagine if their needs and skill levels align well with other students in the class. Students who are appropriate for the Imagine Class have intense communication needs, often including the use of Assistive Technology and/or Functional Communication Training. The Imagine Class curriculum consists of early academics and foundational learning skills aligned to Common Core Curriculum and pulls from the Baltimore County Curriculum.

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It is designed to support individual needs and functional priorities based on the student's home, school, and community life. During group instruction Imagine students work on skills needed for learning in a group setting, and they focus on practicing the routines and independent tasks typical of the classrooms of their neuro-typical peers. Other skills and domains addressed in Imagine throughout the school day include functional play skills, labeling, matching, joint attention, following directions, activities of daily living, behavior management, and early literacy and early mathematics skills. All students in Imagine have one-on-one ABA Specialist Providers assigned to them throughout the school day. Adapted Physical Education is also available as appropriate.

The Believe classroom contains no more than 5 children, meets for 6 hours per day and 5 per week. Whole and small group instruction is 3 hours per day, taught by a Certified Special Educator. An SLP pushes in for 30-minute co-teaching sessions daily, and an OT pushes in for 30-minute co-teaching sessions 2 – 3 times per week. The Believe students participate in a 30-minute session of adapted Physical Education once a week. They also receive ongoing consultation and monitoring by a Behavior Consultant who assists in addressing behavior management strategies and Behavior Intervention Plans. Along with 3 hours of whole- and small-group instruction, the Believe students participate in 3 hours of 1:1 Discrete Trial Teaching. These sessions are run by a one-on-one ABA Specialist Provider and are overseen by a Behavior Consultant. Children placed in Believe are usually in grades 1 - 3, but older or younger students may be placed in Believe if their needs and skill levels align well with other students in the class. The classroom is designed for students who have needs related to application of knowledge, generalization, and consistent demonstration of academic, functional, and school-readiness skills. Although they require monitoring and/or assistance with participation of daily routines and completion of independent tasks, the students placed in Believe are those who demonstrate readiness for or easy acquisition of management skills, and can perform a few daily tasks independently. The curriculum in Believe is aligned to the Common Core Curriculum and pulls from the Baltimore County Curriculum, with individualized grade-level and skill-level academic lessons including the accommodations and modifications designated on the students' IEPs. In addition to academics, the Believe class focuses on independence and readiness skills such as generalization of academic skills, acquisition of group learning skills and cooperative learning in dyads or very small groups, behavior management, opportunities to learn and practice functional life skills and activities of daily living as they apply to the school setting, social settings, and situations relevant to individual students. Believe students also work on increasing communication with adults and peers, social-pragmatic skills, self-initiation and self-structure regarding classroom tasks and academic activities, and following routines and daily schedules. The long-term goals for students placed in the Believe class include readiness for larger and more rigorous group-learning settings in



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TSC such as Dream or Inspire, and/or increasing the potential for enrollment in less-restrictive settings outside of TSC.

The Dream classroom contains no more than 8 children, and is offered 6 hours per day and 5 days per week. Dream is taught by a Certified Special Educator, a Bachelors-level teaching assistant, and an SLP and OT who each push in for 30-minute co-teaching sessions a minimum of 3 times per week. Dream students participate in weekly Specials classes including Art, Music, Media, and adapted Physical Education that they attend for 30 minutes each week. They also receive ongoing consultation and monitoring by a Behavior Consultant who assists in addressing behavior management strategies and Behavior Intervention Plans. After 5 hours of whole- and small-group instruction, the Dream students participate in 1 hour of intensive 1:1 or dyad instruction including Discrete Trial Teaching. These sessions are run by the teaching assistant and the ABA Specialist Providers, and they are overseen by a Behavior Consultant. Children placed in Dream are typically in 1st through 3rd grade, however younger or older children may enroll in Dream if their needs and skill levels align well with other students in the class. They are able to participate in simple conversations, (at least 2 exchanges,) can tolerate larger groups of peers and demonstrate emerging skills related to cooperative learning, and demonstrate mastery of at least 80% of the Common Core Curriculum objectives for Pre-K and K grade levels. They may or may not require a one-on-one ABA Specialist Provider. The curriculum in Dream is aligned to the Common Core Curriculum and pulls from the Baltimore County Curriculum, with individualized grade-level and skill-level academic lessons including the accommodations and modifications designated on the students' IEPs. In addition to academics, the Dream class focuses on independence and readiness skills such as generalization of academic skills, increase in exposure to group settings and cooperative learning, behavior management, and an increase in self-management and self-awareness. Dream students are exposed to opportunities to learn and practice functional life skills and activities of daily living as they apply to the school setting, social settings, and situations relevant to individual students, as well as opportunities to identify and pursue interests and hobbies. Dream students also work on increasing communication with adults and peers, social-pragmatic skills, self-initiation and self-structure regarding classroom tasks and academic activities, and following routines and daily schedules. The long-term goals for students placed in the Dream class include readiness for larger and more rigorous group-learning settings in and/or outside TSC.

The Envision classroom contains no more than 4 children and meets for 6 hours per day, 5 days per week. Whole or small group instruction comprises 1-1.5 hours of the day, is taught by a Certified Special Educator, and is supported by a teaching assistant. A Speech-Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist push into the Envision school day for 30-minute co-teaching sessions 2 – 3

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times per week. Also, the Envision classroom is monitored by a Behavior Consultant who assists in addressing behavior management strategies and Behavior Intervention Plans. The remaining 5 hours of the Envision day consists of 1:1 Discrete Trial and ADL Instruction conducted by a one-on-one ABA Specialist Provider and is overseen by a Behavior Consultant. Children placed in Envision are typically in grades 3 - 5, however younger children may sometimes enroll in Envision if it is the best class to meet their needs and skill levels. Students who are appropriate for the Envision Class have intense communication needs, often including the use of Assistive Technology and/or Functional Communication Training. The Envision Class curriculum consists of functional life skills and functional academics aligned to Common Core Curriculum and the Baltimore County Curriculum. It is designed to support individual needs and functional priorities based on the student's home, school, and community life. During group instruction, Envision students work on cooperative learning and functional interactions, and also on practice of the routines and independent tasks typical of the classrooms of their neuro-typical peers. Other skills and domains addressed in Envision throughout the school day include communication and social skills, joint attention, following directions, activities of daily living, behavior management, and independent living skills. All students in Envision have 1-on-1 ABA Specialist Providers assigned to them throughout the school day. Adapted Physical Education is available as appropriate.

The Inspire classroom contains no more than 10 children, and is offered 6 hours per day and 5 days per week. Inspire is taught by a Certified Special Educator, a Bachelors-level teaching assistant, and an SLP and OT who each push in for 30-minute co-teaching sessions a minimum of 3 times per week. Inspire students participate in weekly Specials classes including Art, Music, Media, and adapted Physical Education that they attend for 30 minutes each week. They also receive ongoing consultation and monitoring by a Behavior Consultant who assists in addressing behavior management strategies and Behavior Intervention Plans. Inspire students participate in a full 6 hours in a group setting. Whole and small group lessons are sometimes supplemented with 1:1 or dyad sessions as needed to increase rate of skill acquisition and clarify new information. These sessions are run by the teacher, teaching assistant, and/or the ABA Specialist Providers, and they are overseen by a Behavior Consultant. Children placed in Inspire are typically in 3rd through 5th grade, however younger children may enroll in Inspire if their needs and skill levels align well with other students in the class. Inspire students are able to participate in simple conversations, (at least 3 exchanges,) can tolerate larger groups of peers and demonstrate emerging skills related to cooperative learning, demonstrates mastery of at least 80% of the Common Core Curriculum objectives for Pre-K and K grade levels, and at least 25% of the 1st grade Common Core objectives. They may or may not require a one-on-one ABA Specialist Provider. The curriculum in Inspire is aligned to the Common Core Curriculum and pulls from the Baltimore County Curriculum, with



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individualized grade-level and skill-level academic lessons including the accommodations and modifications designated on the students' IEPs. In addition to academics, the Inspire class focuses on independence and readiness skills such as generalization of academic skills, increase in exposure to group settings and cooperative learning, behavior management, and an increase in self-management and self-awareness. Inspire students are exposed to opportunities to learn and practice functional life skills and activities of daily living as they apply to the school setting, social settings, and situations relevant to individual students, as well as opportunities to identify and pursue interests and hobbies. Inspire students also work on increasing communication with adults and peers, social-pragmatic skills, self-initiation and self-structure regarding classroom tasks and academic activities, and following routines and daily schedules. The long-term goal for students placed in the Inspire class is to develop skills that increase readiness for less-restrictive environments as they continue on an academic track to earn their high school diploma.

The Shafer Center employs certified Special Educators, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Bachelor-level teaching assistants, behavior therapists, and Occupational Therapists to implement the children's educational program or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The Center also provides individual Speech and Language therapy, Occupational Therapy and intensive one-on-one ABA therapy through our Resource Center. In addition, we contract licensed physical therapists, a licensed music therapist, and a certified Physical Education Teacher to provide services either through our Resource Center or as a related service as indicated on an IEP.

The Shafer Center's program is based on the child's current skill level and overall level of development. Prior to entry into The Shafer Center, each child receives an observation and file review. They are then matched with other children of the same level of development and skill. This allows us to focus on common and individual goals simultaneously while maximizing learning opportunities for each child.

The program provides a rich learning experience where each child can maximize their individual potential. To accomplish these goals, we specially design each classroom to create an environment where each learning activity focuses on increasing academic, social and language skills while increasing the child's independence, curiosity and love of learning.

Each child is treated as an individual who brings his or her own strengths to every classroom opportunity. While the program is designed on an overarching academic curriculum, children have individualized goals that utilize their strengths to support their unique needs. The curriculum and



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individualized goals are flexible to adjust modifications and expectations as each child progresses at their own rate.

Generalization and maintenance of skills is a main focus of The Shafer Center's program. It is essential that children not only acquire skills but that each skill is generalized to functional and natural situations as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our focus is on generalizing skills throughout every activity. We look for and create every possible learning opportunity throughout the day where skills are practiced. This is the optimum way to ensure skills are maintained, functional, and utilized in each child's everyday life.

Our facility offers five classrooms, large group therapy room/library, an occupational therapy room, multiple individual treatment rooms, and staff offices.

The Educational Program at The Shafer Center for Early Intervention is directly run by the Director of Education and overseen by the President and the Director of Clinical Services:

- President: **Helen Shafer** (Helen.Shafer@shafercenter.com)
- Director of Clinical Services: **Dr. Christine Accardo, Ph.D., BCBA – D, LBA**
(Christine.Accardo@shafercenter.com)
- Director of Education: **Layne Wells, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA** (Layne.wells@shafercenter.com)