

## Special Education for Students with Autism Ages 5 – 21



We are all born with great potential.  
Shouldn't we all have the chance to achieve it?

## Mission

At the Lifeskills and Education for Students with Autism and Pervasive Behavioral Challenges (LEAP) Program located on Kennedy Krieger's Greenspring Campus, our mission is to provide students with the opportunities to reach their highest potential. We emphasize the development of lifelong skills, and promote active participation and independence across all curriculum domains in the school, community, workplace, and home.

## Overview

Our specialized autism program is a nonpublic special education day program approved by the Maryland State Department of Education. We offer a range of educational and therapeutic services for students with complex academic, communication, social, and behavioral needs. Students are typically referred and funded by their local school system; however, privately placed out-of-state and international students can also be enrolled. Students work toward earning a Certificate of Completion.

Our program emphasizes the development of lifelong skills through an active approach to learning, including participation in community and work-based learning opportunities. At LEAP, our students thrive in our intimate and structured environment. We maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio, which allows our team to implement individualized education programs (IEPs) that meet the diverse needs of our students while offering the highest quality education. Our parents and families play a primary role in our team approach, which is a key component of all Kennedy Krieger School Programs and our students' success.

## Who We Serve

The LEAP program provides education and related services for students aged 5 to 21 with autism, intellectual disability, speech and language impairments, other health impairments, and multiple disabilities.



## Our Approach

Kennedy Krieger School Programs are organized around professional learning communities (PLCs), based on shared decision making by those working closest with the students each day, resulting in the creation of a vibrant and energized learning environment. These communities are structured to allow students to achieve their goals in the most appropriate educational setting possible. Our community design incorporates specialized instruction, classroom structure, and behavioral interventions. Students may transition between communities as their developmental needs change. Community classroom assignments are based on a team review of the academic, social, and behavioral needs of each student.

We maintain a strong interdisciplinary team approach within and across communities, allowing for planning at the programmatic and individual student levels. Interdisciplinary teams have regularly scheduled meetings to monitor progress and make appropriate modifications to ensure each student's success.

## Our Team

Our team includes highly trained special educators, curriculum specialists, related service providers, and paraprofessional staff who receive ongoing training in evidence-based practices, including instruction in the use of current technologies in the learning environment. Full-time related service providers are onsite daily to ensure comprehensive programming and collaboration with each student's educational team. Services provided may include:

- Aquatic instruction
- Art and music therapy
- Assistive technology
- Audiology
- Behavioral supports
- Counseling and mental health services
- Nursing
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Special education
- Speech-language pathology

## Instructional Program

Our curriculum focuses on building essential skills through access to standards and curricula identified by the Maryland State Department of Education. In addition, art, music, physical education, fitness, health, life, and social skills, with a focus on career exploration, development, and vocational skills, round out the course of study.

The twelve-month program is grounded in evidence-based methods that are supported by research and utilize the principles of Universal Design for Learning, along with accommodations, modifications, adaptations, and supplementary supports carefully chosen to meet each student's individual needs. Classrooms are well equipped with interactive technologies, including smart boards and iPads that support instruction. Our materials are carefully selected based on their proven effectiveness and motivational appeal for our students. When appropriate, materials are customized and created by teachers to address a wide variety of learning styles.



We recognize that students with autism and pervasive behavioral challenges may learn differently. Using the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to foster independence, our team addresses sensory, communication, and behavioral

needs by providing structured routines, visual supports, positive reinforcement, and technology designed to engage students with autism. Our small class size allows for flexibility in instructional delivery formats, including 1:1 instruction, small groups, and whole groups. In addition, our campus has a state-of-the-art multi-sensory environment designed to assist with access to instruction and regulate the sensory needs of our students.

## Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is incorporated into the school schedule through a variety of activities, beginning in the elementary grades. Instruction and training in core job skills are facilitated by our vocational teacher within the school and at off-site businesses. On-campus jobs have included working as a front office assistant, making deliveries, recycling, and participating in a student-run café. Off-campus sites have included a retirement community, a yoga studio, a farm, offices, and restaurants.

## Community-Based Instruction

Our students participate in regular community-based instruction, which provides opportunities to apply academic skills outside the classroom, and develop socialization and practical problem-solving skills in a more natural environment. Students learn to shop at local stores, dine in restaurants, take public transportation, and access other community services.



## Student Life

The LEAP program features a custom-designed playground that addresses social skill development and the unique motor and sensory needs of students with autism. There are quiet areas, such as a tunnel, for learners who are easily overstimulated, and structures that facilitate a wide variety of movements, including up and down, rotational, side to side, and angled equipment, for students who seek high amounts of movement stimulation. Throughout the year, students participate in various extracurricular activities designed to enhance their school experiences. Examples include musical performances, school-wide career days, community-based trips, and holiday or theme-related activities and assemblies.



## Assessment of Progress

Effective, timely, and targeted assessment of student progress is critical to our instructional program. Teachers and related service staff maintain ongoing systems for evaluating the progress of each child. Through this dynamic process of continuous assessment, we are able to make decisions about the direction and pace of instruction and the related service supports needed to facilitate progress.

All students participate in mandated state- and district-wide assessments. Students enrolled in our specialized autism program have been identified by their IEP teams as students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and therefore participate in the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. The goal of an alternate assessment is to ensure that students achieve improved higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options.

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

For many students, academic achievement may be compromised by their behavioral challenges and need for environmental support. We provide a continuum of positive behavioral supports that encourage students to maintain

their focus on cooperation, completion of tasks, and appropriate social interactions. Board-certified behavior analysts oversee a highly structured school-wide behavior management system with predictable routines, rewards, and consequences. This system includes highly individualized behavioral programming and extensive data collection to monitor progress with individual target behaviors, as well as universal expectations for cooperative and productive behavior.

For those students who need additional support, functional behavior assessment (FBA) and analysis is conducted to develop an individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP), which focuses on the development of adaptive skills that replace problem behaviors. Behavior specialists are assigned to each student to monitor treatment effectiveness. Crisis intervention is available to students who experience behavioral difficulties and need help returning to instruction or work-based learning activities. All school staff receive extensive training annually in positive behavior management techniques to provide support for students.

## Transition Planning

Students make many transitions throughout their education, from elementary to middle grades, from middle to high school, and from high school to post-secondary and post-school experiences. Transition planning begins as soon as a student enters the LEAP program. Transition teams, including school staff, parents, students (if appropriate), and representatives from workplace and community support agencies, approach each student's IEP with a focus on where the student is heading and the skills he or she will need to be successful.



“And, as always, thanks to you and the whole Kennedy Krieger team for saving my son’s life.”

–Father of LEAP graduate



## Admission and Contact Information

Tours of the LEAP Program are conducted by appointment.

For additional information, contact the Office of Admissions, Compliance, and Transition (ACT):

Kennedy Krieger School: **LEAP Program**

3825 Greenspring Ave

Baltimore, Maryland 21211

Main: **443-923-4576**

ACT: **443-923-4574**

[kennedykrieger.org/special-education](http://kennedykrieger.org/special-education)