Summer Fun and Games in Children’s Services

Highlights of our Cape Cod Summer Programming

By Brittni Kliment, Director of Program Marketing and Admissions

Latham Centers’ SummerTide Program is a hit amongst our students. Year-round programming is essential to the success of students with PWS, as it provides continued structure that meets our students’ expectations. In July and August, our summer programming looks a bit different than the traditional September to June school year; we embrace our beautiful surroundings on Cape Cod and incorporate outings into our students’ day.

The school day starts with breakfast and morning classes, where students continue to participate in academics such as Math, English/Language Arts, and Physical Education/Health. In the afternoon, after lunch, the fun really starts, and students are encouraged to join a variety of clubs. This year our clubs include Swimming, Science, Performing Arts, and Kaboodle. Students also participate in Puzzles and Games and Scrapbooking!

In Swimming, our students go to a variety of ponds, bays and beaches. Many of the staff that accompany the students are certified in Lifeguard training, and the students love to be outside enjoying Cape Cod’s special spots.

During Science Club, our students go on off-campus outings and explore the natural habitat around them, such as the Brewster Herring Run; the Chatham wildlife and vistas experienced on the Monomoy Island Seal Tours; and much more. Students fill out a field notebook, entering data about the weather, monitoring the water quality in different locations, and identifying birds, plants, and animals within different wetlands.

In Performing Arts, our students are currently studying different musical styles each week. Some weeks have included styles such as country, rap, and reggae! Lastly, Kaboodle, new to the students at Latham Centers and run by our Vocational team, incorporates a variety of skills and trades ranging from videography and filming to vocational tasks such as soap making, woodworking, and horticulture.

In Puzzles and Games, students learn to work collaboratively and interact appropriately by participating in fun board games, creative puzzles, and activities.

In an effort to engage all students in every one of the clubs, our Educational team has created a dynamic schedule rotating five groups throughout all activities Monday through Friday. If you ask around campus, most students will say one of their favorite things about Latham Centers is the off-campus outings and SummerTide clubs. We are proud to give our students the opportunity to participate in such a variety of activities!
Preparing for the School Year
Maintaining Focus, Transitions, and Snack Ideas

By Patrice Carroll, Director of PWS Services

Heading back to school after a summer of fun can be difficult for any student. For those with Prader-Willi syndrome, the structure a school day provides is essential to their success in an educational environment. However, the transition back into the structure can be a hardship for many. Here are some TIPS for helping the person in your life with PWS maintain focus:

- **Eliminate distractions.** It is often difficult for our kids to ignore distractions. When practicing focus techniques, be sure to keep external distractions to a minimum.

- **Make eye contact.** When you are asking them to do something, have them make eye contact and keep the instruction simple. Slowly add steps. Paying attention is an essential skill in school and later in life; it will be difficult to teach this if it is not started early.

- **Use what they like.** Our kids can often focus for long periods of time when it is something that they enjoy. Use that. Focus is something that needs to be practiced every day. Make “focus time” a daily activity.

- **Start small.** Be sure that activities are timed and not open-ended. Schedule activities for short amounts of time and slowly increase the time allotted.

- **Practice meditation.** Mindfulness and meditation are excellent tools for improving attention span. People with PWS are surprisingly very good at these activities and they have many benefits, including increasing focus.

Changing schools, teachers, and the introduction of new peers and new social expectations can take a toll on a child with PWS and, in turn, the whole family. Here are some ways to help make the transition a little less challenging.

- **Meet the school personnel ahead of time.** Teachers, coaches, administrators — anyone your child will be in frequent contact with. Most schools will allow for this opportunity.

- **Check out the environment.** Play on the playground or for older kids, go to the library, outdoor “hang out” spots, and let them explore before the introduction of social expectations is upon them.

- **Ask.** Find out what will be taught this year and start discussing it at home.

- **Communicate.** Use communication journals or ask for a daily email regarding your child’s day. Never solely rely on your child’s account of how their day went. It will also ease your child’s anxiety if he or she knows that everyone is on the same page and are communicating daily.

- **Calendars.** Make a calendar or a visual countdown to the first day of school.

- **If school hasn’t yet started, start the school routine now.** Wake up and have lunch at the times that they will be doing so when school starts.

A third difficulty when preparing for the school setting is, of course, food. Depending on the setting in which the person in your life with PWS spends his or her days, there may be more food accessibility than at home. Snack time is an important break in our kids’ day. With kids on fewer calories than their typical peers, it is important to use each calorie wisely. Most snacks should fall into the 100-300 calorie range. Here are some good lunch-time snack ideas that we hope your child will love:

- One cup of high-fiber cereal. Be sure to couple this with at least 6 ounces of fluid to avoid constipation,

- One ounce of almonds (about 25),

- 12-15 grapes (for an at-home after-school snack, freeze grapes for a sweeter taste and more appealing texture for tactile sensitive kids),

- Berries mixed with one serving of yogurt,

- Two-ounce serving of tuna, chicken, or salmon. Extra protein is a great way to ward off the afternoon fatigue so frequently seen in our kids,

- 12 mini pretzels with a tablespoon of almond or sun-butter,

- 10 multi-grain crackers with a tablespoon of light ricotta cheese,

- Three cups of air popped popcorn (you can make this more interesting with very few added calories by adding unsweetened cocoa powder),

- Two small oranges and a small handful of walnuts,

- Vita top chocolate muffin tops. These are a huge hit with the kids as they have a great chocolate taste. They also have the added benefit of nine grams of fiber.

LathamCenters.org
Celebrating Mastery

Two students earn awards at Year-End Celebration

By Dawn Dinnan, Director of Communications

At Latham’s June “Year-End Celebration” focusing on Mastery, two students were surprised and delighted to receive awards for their mastery. Excerpts from the presentation of our Athlete of the Year Award and Vocational Achievement Award follow:

Latham School’s Physical Education teacher Ron Goguen presented the Special Olympics Athlete of the Year Award to Evan, noting “This student-athlete has exemplified all the characteristics that make up the award’s parameters. The core values at Latham Centers have given this student a pathway to succeed. Mastery, Belonging, Independence, and Generosity are shown daily by this year’s recipient. A complete team-player, he would often rather see his peers succeed over himself – all the while, showing you his great big smile.

You, Evan K., have the heart of a champion, and since your arrival here at Latham, you have made us all better than yesterday. Thank you for that, and congratulations, you are this year’s Special Olympics ATHLETE OF THE YEAR!”

Director of Program Marketing and Admissions Brittni Kliment said she was thrilled to present the 2019 President’s Award for Outstanding Vocational Achievement to one of our hardworking Latham Works students, Aidan. “This student works at numerous positions within Latham Works... cleaning, working in the garden, making soaps, and assisting in both the packaging and delivery process. This student also has their hand in woodworking and is involved in almost every wood project here on campus! Throughout the work in the Vocational Program, they have grown into being a true team player. They are encouraging to their peers, and at times will demonstrate how to use a tool or skill and then immediately encourage others to “try it.”

Although this student is highly motivated to complete all vocational tasks, their real love is within the Fiber Arts program here on campus. This individual started out a few years ago tearing fabric for rag rugs and dog toys, moving up very quickly to helping assemble them. When the Vocational Team asked if this student would like to learn how to make rope mats, they dove head first and wanted to know everything they could about ropes and knots! I have witnessed firsthand the skills it takes to complete these mats, and I am VERY impressed!

The Vocational Team has seen tremendous growth in this student mastering skills, their overall generosity to others, gaining independence within their projects, and a sense of belonging within the Latham community.”

Photo in header of page 1: Students perform on stage at Latham Centers’ Year-End Celebration of Mastery

Athlete of the Year Evan with Ron Goguen

Vocational Achievement Award recipient Aidan with Brittni Kliment and Educational Team members Fred Walters and Patricia Thomas.
Individual Education Plan: PWS-Specific Language

By Katrina Fryklund, Director of National Outreach

Your child’s Individual Education Plan, or IEP, is the document detailing the services, supports, and specialized instruction he or she will receive in school. Sometimes, parents face challenges in articulating the needs of the child and getting those needs met. Latham Centers hopes that the language below, separated into food safety, clinical and behavioral, and staff support, will help you think through the specific needs of your child with PWS. Always feel free to contact us at admissions@lathamcenters.org if we can be of help.

Food Safety

- Food secure environment, no food visible on-site, no food as incentive or reward; pre-planning required for holidays and special occasions
- Student requires a food-secure environment with close monitoring and supervision throughout the entirety of his/her day
- Food arrives to student pre-measured at all meals during the school day
- Provide information to all staff and promote Food Safety Plan regarding: access to food, food aroma; and require assistance from staff to make appropriate menu selections based on medically directed calorie count
- Specific limit of calories per day at school, to ensure student is not exceeding daily caloric intake
- Staff training that includes Food Security, PWS
- Provided with monitored food security while in vocational placements

Clinical and Behavioral

- Comprehensive Treatment Plan (clinical report)
- Health Care Report monitored quarterly
- Access to clinician
- Prompts to utilize coping skills
- Use of sensory room/tools
- Sensory strategies as needed (including sensory hand-held items)

Staff Support

- Must always be within “Eye Shot” and/or “Ear Shot” of staff
- Constant close monitoring during all parts of the school day, including lunch, recess, and all transitions – no food accessible or visible
- Support in navigating difficult peer interactions
- Support from staff before entering the community
- Small group setting
- Frequent checks for understanding of expectations
- Frequent physical movement breaks
- Redirect back to topic if Student wants to talk about food
- Support to ensure safety and personal hygiene, assist with problem-solving
- Strong weight / health management program with direct supervision

If you have any questions or would like to contact the Admissions Team for a tour, please email admissions@lathamcenters.org or call (774) 353-9237.

https://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/resources/articles/iep/standardsbasediepwriting/index.php
A Student’s Perspective:  
Two new student interviews

By Brittni Kliment and Katrina Fryklund

In welcoming students to our Latham community, two members of our Admissions Team, Brittni Kliment and Katrina Fryklund, interviewed two of our newest students. In their conversations, they discuss some of their favorite things about Latham Centers so far, and advice they would give someone thinking about coming to Latham. (Please see future student spotlight interviews online at LathamCenters.org/blog).

Bella’s interview with Brittni:

What is your favorite thing about Latham so far?  
I really like the menu, the outings, and the classroom!

What fun activities at Latham do you enjoy so far?  
Hiking with Tomas on the science outings. We saw a snake once in the water and we even get to go on a seal watch at the end of the summer!

What advice would you give someone who was thinking of coming to Latham?  
It is really fun here, there are lots of fun activities and everyone is really nice.

What advice would you give to family members who were thinking about sending their student/child to Latham?  
It’s a good place, everyone is nice, and you learn a lot. I am safe here and people really care about me!

What at Latham has helped you be successful so far?  
Katie has helped me with my reading. The food has helped me too, I know what to expect with the menu.

What do you like about the staff here?  
They are all really nice, a lot of fun, and helpful!

What are some goals you have here?  
I want to get better at reading.

What’s a fun fact about yourself you want people to know?  
I like pets, especially dogs.

I did know that about you, do you want to share your favorite question to ask me?  
Can we go get a dog for the school?

Reflections from Brittni:

It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know Bella and having her join the Latham Community. She is witty, charismatic, and inquisitive! She has already begun to build lasting friendships and continues to grow each and every day. Welcome to the Latham Community, Bella and Family, we’re so pleased to have you!

Annie’s interview with Katrina:

What is your favorite thing about Latham so far?  
I like Math Class. It’s a little hard but I can do it.

What fun activities at Latham do you enjoy the most?  
I like playing Wii, and living in the North Wing. I really like my friends Annika, Davi, and Chloe!

What advice would you give someone who was thinking of coming to Latham?  
I’d tell them that all the staff are REALLY nice, and that you get used to being here, in a different place.

What do you like about the staff here?  
I like the activities they plan for us and I really like my teacher Curtis. The packets he puts together are cool!

What is something fun that you did in class recently?  
I had to read a whole story and then write a paragraph and answer questions about it. I researched this story on my own and then did one of Curtis’ packets after. I learned about a dog named Rascal who was trying to find bones!

What are some goals you have here?  
My goals are to keep good friends, be safe, and be healthy. I’ve already lost about 15 pounds and am proud of myself!

What’s a fun fact about yourself you want people to know?  
I love to color and I am a talented artist. I have lots of different markers and things to draw with.

Reflections from Katrina:

We have truly enjoyed getting to know Annie! She is very funny and has an amazing sense of humor. Annie is always cracking jokes and making others laugh around her, and uses her humor as a positive coping tool. I have also learned that she is kind, caring, and compassionate and welcoming to new students! Additionally, she has been a great suitemate to all her new friends in the dormitory’s North Wing. Welcome, Annie, to Latham Centers! We are so proud of your growth in the short period of time that you’ve been in our program.
Preparing for the Fall 2019 PWS Conference Season

Our Latham Centers Admissions Team looks forward to attending the following Fall Conferences as presenters and/or sponsors, and we hope to see you there! If you have any questions, or would like to schedule a time to talk with attendees, please contact admissions@lathamcenters.org.

October 3-5, 2019
New Orleans, LA
Foundation for Prader-Willi Research (FPWR)

October 22-23, 2019
Falmouth, MA
National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs – New England (NATSAP NE)

October 23-26, 2019
Orlando, FL
2019 Prader-Willi Syndrome Association (USA) National Convention (PWSA (USA))

November 1-2, 2019
Los Angeles, CA
Prader-Willi California Foundation (PWCF)

(left) Dr. Deepan Singh, MD, presents at June, 2019 “A Bright Future” Conference, co-hosted by Latham Centers and the Mac Pact.

Warren’s Incredible Garden
Latham Centers adults and their community impact

By Patrice Carroll, Director of PWS Services

For many years, the individuals at one of our group residences have enjoyed fresh vegetables and herbs all summer and fall, thanks to their housemate Warren. Warren has cultivated a backyard garden full of seasonal vegetables and herbs that are not only added to our menu recipes but that he also sells at local farmers markets. I recently sat down with Warren to find out the secret to his horticultural success.

Patrice: What benefits do you get from gardening?
Warren: Oh, so many. First, I know exactly where my food is coming from. Right down to the organic fertilizer. I know I’m not eating chemicals because this food was grown by me the whole time. Second, it’s relaxing. I can meditate while I pull weeds and pick the vegetables. Third, I can give back to my friends by adding some extra spice to their lives with all of my herbs.

Patrice: Well those are some pretty great benefits. What got you into gardening the first place?
Warren: It’s just an idea I had. I like to get my own food. I eat the fish that I catch I eat the crab and other shellfish that I catch. I like whole food and I like to know where it came from. I like being self-sufficient and it gives me a good sense of accomplishment and a really good self-esteem knowing that what I’m eating started from a little seed and I took care of it the whole time.

Patrice: How do you decide what to grow?
Warren: I grow whatever feels right each season. Like this summer I got really into peppers, poblano peppers, jalapeño peppers and Anaheim peppers. For herbs this season I grew coriander, parsley, thyme, tarragon and verbena. I also grew tomatoes, squash and cucumbers. I don’t plan it I just get what feels right at the time.

Patrice: It’s a very impressive garden.
Warren: Yes, it is.

Patrice: What advice would you give to people who want to start their own garden?
Warren: Be creative and be patient. If something doesn’t grow don’t stop trying. Be proud that you tried and try again. Something will grow eventually. And share what you grow. It feels good I promise.