



# The Matthew Reardon CENTER FOR AUTISM

*for the love of children*

## **ADVANCE ACADEMY – Application Guidelines and Procedures**

At Advance Academy, we use a multi-therapeutic approach to education where speech, occupational, physical, and music therapies are part of every student's curriculum, with emphasis on academic and social skills development. Using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), we have created a unique environment in which our small student-teacher ratio allows intense and specialized instruction for every student, fostering the best possible outcome for each individual. The school term at Advance Academy runs year-round, from August through July.

The Advance Academy application is comprehensive so are able to make the best assessment of MRCA's capacity to meet the needs of your child. We ask that you submit the entire application at one time, acknowledging that the Physician Recommendation Form may be submitted separately by the physician and that the Teacher Questionnaires are to be submitted separately by the teacher. Please feel free to submit any additional assessment results, reports, etc., that you feel may be of value. Your completed application should be submitted along with a non-refundable application fee of \$50.

Once a complete application packet including all required documentation (the most current IEP, Physician's Recommendation, etc.) has been received, the Admissions Committee is notified, and a meeting is scheduled to review and assess the current application(s).

The committee will review all information to determine if the student appears to qualify for admission and to determine if Advance Academy is an appropriate placement for the student. If it is determined that an applicant meets admission guidelines and an opening is available, a classroom observation is scheduled to allow school personnel an opportunity to observe the student in his or her current classroom setting. This can be dictated by time of year, as observations cannot generally be done during the summer months. This observation in many cases confirms whether the student and Advance Academy are an appropriate match for one another. An in-house observation is often requested as well.

Admission to Advance Academy does not occur on a first-come, first-serve basis. The school is small and openings occur infrequently. Due to this

infrequency, when there are two or more applicants for a single opening, the Admissions Committee will seek to determine the *most* appropriate candidate(s) through the review and observation process seek to determine the *most* appropriate candidate(s). Qualifying applicants who are not initially admitted are added to our 9-month waiting list.

### **Wait List**

Because things can change quickly in the academic and behavioral realms of students on the autism spectrum, and because openings are not routine, an application is considered active for only **nine (9) months**. If an opening occurs within the nine month time frame, the parent will be notified and any updates to the student's application can be made at that time. The parents will decide whether to accept the opening or not.

Applications of students who qualify for admission but for whom no opening is available at time of application will remain on file and "active" for nine months. If after that time no opening has come available, the student would need to re-apply for admission the next year.

Applications no longer considered active and older than nine months are disposed of by shredding. Applications from students who are not admitted are shredded after informing the parent(s) of the Admissions Committee's decision.

### **Post-Application Communications**

Once the Admissions Committee has reached a decision concerning your child's placement, you will be notified via phone and/or email, followed by a formal written notification. If placement at Advance Academy is offered, the invitation must be accepted or declined by child's parent/legal guardian within two weeks of the date of notification. Acceptance may be verbal or written but must be accompanied by a *non-refundable \$100 placement deposit*. Your child's position in our student body is not guaranteed until the placement deposit is received. If an invitation for placement has not been accepted within two (2) weeks of offer, the placement opening may be released to another applicant. MRCA has no obligation to initiate further communication with the applicant or their family when the two-week period expires without notice to accept or decline by the applicant's parent/legal guardian.

### **Tuition – Annual tuition for the 2020-2021 Academic Year is \$14,000.**

MRCA is a provider for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship program. For information about GSNS, please visit the GA Dept. of Education web site, <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Special-Needs-Scholarship-Program.aspx> . To view your child's scholarship award, click on *Scholarship Calculator* on the right-hand side of the web page. Additional

needs-based assistance is available to families and may be applied for using the 2020-2021 Tuition Assistance Request form. **MRCA's Board of Directors is committed that every child who will benefit from enrollment at Advance Academy is able to do so, regardless of a family's financial position.**

Tuition may be Paid-in-Full at the beginning of the year (3% discount), or over the course of the year as determined at the time of initial invoicing. A parent must furnish the appropriate credit card information by which tuition can be charged monthly unless alternate arrangements have been made. Tuition is due the first day of each month. If tuition is not received at the school by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month the student may not be permitted to attend classes until all tuition and fees are brought up to date, or unless other arrangements have been agreed to by the President and CEO of the Matthew Reardon Center for Autism.

Failure to pay tuition and fees in a timely and appropriate manner may result in the dismissal of a student from Advance Academy program and appropriate measures taken by the Center to collect the tuition owed.

**NOTE: *There will be no waiver of tuition or fees, and there is no refund or abdication of responsibility to pay full tuition balance in the event of voluntary withdrawal.*** Should extenuating circumstances occur that would require a long-term absence or involuntary withdrawal of a student (medical treatment, transfer of parent, "Ineligible by Exclusion", etc.), these circumstances will be reviewed by the President/CEO for the appropriate disposition.

### **Georgia Special Needs Scholarship - (GSNS/SB10)**

If a student's voucher under the GSNS program fails to cover the entire amount of the annual tuition, the parent or guardian is responsible for any outstanding balance. Should a parent voluntarily withdraw the student leaving an outstanding balance against the tuition, *the parent assumes responsibility for the entire tuition balance since GSNS will not pay for a student who is no longer enrolled.*

### **Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship – (Apogee)**

MRCA participates in the GA Tax Credit Scholarship program. Needs-based tuition assistance may be obtained by completing and submitting MRCA's Tuition Assistance Request form.

## **Admission/Eligibility Criteria**

1. Student is between the ages of 5 and 21 as of August 1, 2020.
2. Student has been diagnosed with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, or a related developmental disorder. A physician recommendation form is required to document the diagnosis and any other relevant health information.
3. Child shows delays affecting at least two of the following areas (in addition to communication/speech and language): Behavior, Communication, Socialization, Fine/Gross Motor, and/or Academic.
4. Based on the Physician's Recommendation Form, students must demonstrate the ability to learn and be at risk for academic, social, behavioral, and communicative regression without a year-round structured individualized educational program.
5. The Matthew Reardon Center for Autism's Advance Academy admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.
6. The Admissions Committee reserves the right to require a classroom observation. If an observation is so required, all parties involved must agree that said observation will take place under normal classroom conditions. Additionally, we often ask that an applicant spend time in one of our classrooms so that staff may have an opportunity to work directly with the student. These visits typically last between 60 and 90 minutes.
7. Students who attend Advance Academy must continue to meet eligibility criteria throughout the period of their enrollment. This includes family participation and volunteer commitments outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook.

## **Admission Criteria Exclusions**

1. Documented evidence that the student is at risk for physically injuring himself or others and/or is at risk for engaging in destructive behaviors that require frequent intervention by multiple staff members.

- 2.** Documented evidence that the student's physical/medical condition prohibits reasonable school attendance, or his/her medical condition requires professional medical care during the school day.
- 3.** Determination that student will require a dedicated support person in the classroom.
- 4.** Students enrolling in Advance Academy must be toilet trained.