

# ***GAIN***

*Skills, Confidence & Pride*

## **Mission Statement**

The social and emotional wellness of our students is our first priority. *GAIN* transforms the school lives of children who are facing complex emotional, behavioral, and other challenges that have served as impediments to their learning. In the therapeutic milieu of *GAIN*, students will gain confidence, skills, and pride so that they may be included with their peers to the maximum extent possible.

## **Core Values**

Student Centered	The wellness of our students is the foundation of all decisions
Safety	The safety of our students drives the day-to-day operation of <i>GAIN</i>
Respect	We serve as role models by showing our students and all members of the school community respect every moment of every day
Relationships	We see our relationships with our students as deciding factors in their success
Inclusion	We seek opportunities for our students to return to the mainstreamed learning setting
Individualization	Individual plans for learning and safety are a key component of <i>GAIN</i>

## **5 Components of a Successful Therapeutic Program**

1. *Leadership and Administrative Support* – Our Central Office administrators and School Principal are fully informed and supportive of our crisis management and prevention system. *GAIN* is provided with sufficient resources including adequate and qualified staff in an organizational culture that puts the safety and wellness of students first.
2. *Social Work and Clinical Services Participation* – Social work and clinical services play an important role in *GAIN*. Every student in *GAIN* receives at minimum weekly individual, goals based counseling services and group counseling to focus on age appropriate, pro-social behavior and skills.

3. *Supervision and Post Crisis Response* – Reflective and supportive supervision is built into *GAIN*. The Principal along with *GAIN* staff are fully trained in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools System (TCIS) as administered by Cornell University. Our post-crisis response system ensures that all students and staff members receive immediate support and debriefing following a crisis along with a medical assessment, if necessary. Once a crisis has ended all staff involved deconstruct the incident to develop strategies for intervening in the future via the Individual Crisis Management Plan (ICMP).
4. *Training and Competency Standards* – *GAIN* faculty and staff are fully trained in TCIS. This 28-hour training is among the most comprehensive school crisis intervention and prevention programs in the world. *GAIN* social workers are fully licensed and further trained in the implementation of MATCH – ADTC, a modular approach to therapy for anxiety, depression, trauma, and conduct disorders. This research based program has been extensively tested and is proven to be effective in providing promising outcomes for students.
5. *Data Driven Incident Monitoring and Feedback* – Via the ICMP, every stressful incident is reviewed and changes in how adults prepare for and respond to student behavior are considered. *GAIN* students are also monitored hourly for their ability to be respectful of their peers, follow directions, complete tasks, and be respectful to adults. Students can earn up to 24 points each day, and this data when aggregated shows individual student and class growth over time.

### **Typical Student Served by *GAIN***

*GAIN* students present with a wide range of diagnostic criteria. The most important concern is their inability to access the curriculum as a result of their social/emotional needs and/or struggles with self-regulation and communication. Students are cognitively and behaviorally capable of accessing the curriculum and making effective progress within the support and structure of the program. Some characteristics of students referred to *GAIN* are:

1. Complex trauma
2. Mood instability
3. Impulsivity
4. Lagging academic skills as a result of social, emotional, or behavioral issues
5. Executive functioning challenges
6. Anxiety
7. Depression
8. Conduct disorders
9. Inappropriate and ineffective responses to real-life situations

## ***GAIN* Referral Checklist**

To ensure that students will have the best chance of success and growth in *GAIN* and so *GAIN* faculty and staff can properly prepare for student entry, it is imperative that documentation is carefully evaluated. Further, observations of the student and interviews with the student are important. Information gathered from this process will help administrators and staff learn if *GAIN* is the best option and/or prepare for thoughtful transition into the program.

- Observations by *GAIN* faculty and/or social worker
  
- Data collection check-list
  
- BASC – 3 and/or Conners – 3 assessments
  
- Any recent evaluations (from both internal and external sources)
  
- Preference Assessment

## **Entry and Exit Criteria for *GAIN***

*GAIN* is a special education program. Students enter the program in substantially-separate status via the Individualized Education Program. As students learn skills and obtain confidence they are integrated into mainstreamed settings slowly – usually starting with a 15 minute interval. Through thoughtful transition planning student time in the mainstreamed learning environment is gradually increased until such time as he/she is considered to be partially included, and then fully included in the mainstreamed learning environment. Upon reaching full-inclusion status the *GAIN* team will consider and make recommendations for students to remain at the Goodyear Elementary School or return to their home school with a thoughtful transition plan.

## **Staffing Pattern**

Each *GAIN* classroom is staffed with a full-time, fully licensed special education teacher as well as a full-time classroom paraprofessional. Two full-time fully licensed social-workers are also dedicated to *GAIN* for the implementation of goals based individual and group counseling as well as triage counseling services when needed. Students in *GAIN* benefit from a ratio of approximately one adult for every three students.

## **Academic Program Components**

*GAIN* is comprised of three classrooms in which students are grouped according to age, grade, and/or ability level, all within the 48- month age span as stated in Massachusetts Special Education Regulations. The school day is six hours, fifteen minutes in duration with academic instruction that focuses on reading, writing, and mathematical skills. In addition to core academics students may also participate in art, music, health, library, and physical education. *GAIN* students will be integrated into specials in accordance with their individual preferences, and ability to succeed in each environment. Related services personnel such as Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists provide individual and group support as it is outlined in student IEPs. The classrooms use a multi-modal approach of visual, verbal and kinesthetic supports, movement breaks, sensory diets and individualized behavior plans. Daily reports review each student's performance in class and are shared daily with parents/guardians.

## **Clinical Services**

*GAIN* provides individual, strength based services, including one individual weekly session with a licensed clinician, as well as weekly socialization groups. *GAIN* students learn skills that focus on the recognition of feelings, reasons for feelings, and how to better manage responses to those feelings. Two approaches are weaved into therapy sessions. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an evidence based practice, which focuses on how thoughts lead to certain (sometimes maladaptive) behaviors. MATCH - ADTC is evidence based practice which focuses on enhancing flexibility that will teach students how to handle emotional roadblocks as they arise. In addition, during weekly group sessions, *GAIN* works to develop skills that will help students better navigate the tricky world of developing and maintaining healthy friendships with peers. Ongoing support in the classroom is also provided, as *GAIN* clinicians are integrated into classroom life and are at the student's side as they face challenges throughout the day.

## **Clinical Supervision**

To ensure *GAIN* students have opportunities to be engaged with the most promising clinical practices and methods, *GAIN* social workers will participate in bi-weekly clinical supervision. Clinical supervision is a formal and structured working partnership that is generally, but not necessarily, between a more experienced and a less experienced clinician. During this supervision, *GAIN* clinicians work with students is reviewed and reflected upon. The aims of this work are improving the *GAIN* clinicians work with students, ensuring student welfare, supporting the *GAIN* clinicians in relation to their work, and supporting their professional development.

## **The Life Space Interview**

*GAIN* seeks to develop an atmosphere where teaching and learning can occur. Students have a right to learn and teach others, to be listened to and have their ideas heard without mockery or put-downs. Building this type of community takes commitment from all participants to respect each other, take responsibility for their actions and participate in problem solving.

The Life Space Interview is a process in which any crisis can be turned into an opportunity for learning. This seven step process as spelled out in TCIS is a regular part of *GAIN*. In an effort to bring harmony into the lives of our students, parents and guardians interested in learning how to conduct Life Space Interviews at home will be provided with opportunities to learn this method.

## **Thoughtful Transitions**

Change can be a difficult process for any student. *GAIN* makes every effort to make this process as smooth as possible to reduce student anxiety and help ensure successful transitions.

Thoughtful transition planning will take place for any student entering *GAIN*, gradually being included in the mainstreamed learning environment, or departing *GAIN* to the full inclusion setting.

*GAIN* is committed to the following:

- Transition planning is an ongoing process with discussions occurring on a regular basis
- Plans must be developed with proper resources and time for implementation
- Meetings will occur as often as needed to ensure that all parts of the plan will be discussed, agreed to, and implemented
- Student entry to *GAIN* may include visits to the program without students, then with students present
- Student entry to *GAIN* may also entail partial day visits, gradually increasing time until a full school day is reached