

## WASC Executive Summary

The self-study process for Center for Learning Unlimited (CLU) began in spring 2006. But the real story begins in 2002, when Dr. Virginia Erxleben and a group of like-minded professionals felt that there was a need for a school where complex (i.e. Asperger's Syndrome, Bipolar Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), ADHD, etc.) children could receive an education, while having their emotional and psychological issues addressed, concurrently. The relationship-based model is the foundation for all that CLU does.

CLU is truly a unique school; it does not fit any standard educational mode. Given the intensity of the relationship model, the school is intentionally small – staff includes 3 credentialed special education teachers, one for each level: Lower School (grades 3-5), Middle School (grades 6-8), and Upper School (grades 9-12). Teachers teach all academic subjects. The school's open enrollment policy means that students are accepted throughout the year. However, students are initially placed in a 30 day R.E.A.D observational period, where staff informally observes the learning style, academics, motor-movement, and behavior, etc. CLU paraprofessionals do not fit the traditional mold either. They are highly trained (receiving training up to 3 hours a wk) to work with complex children in the relationship-based model.

The Professional Services staff consists of a clinical psychologist, an educational psychologist, a psychiatrist, a speech/language pathologist, a neuropsychologist, and a marriage and family therapist. These consultants arrange their daily schedules to meet with students throughout the week and as a group with staff members, every Thursday in our Staffing.

The Parent Care Group is nascent. It is not uncommon for families to land at CLU, battered and bruised by their personal journeys. Many do not trust the systems they have had to navigate and thus may not be willing to engage in dialogue with other parents, initially. With time and encouragement, parents become a part of the Parent Care Group.

The self study process began in 2006-2007 school year, with initial candidacy being awarded in summer 2007. In May 2009, CLU moved to its current location and increased its school population by 15%. The new school site was a welcome move, as the original site was in a commercial building which offered no outdoor area for students to explore and play. The new site has a 3500 sq. foot playground. With this growth, CLU had had to add 5 more paraprofessionals to its staff.

Once CLU received candidacy status, two members of the staff were selected to attend WASC training: The Assistant Director and the Admissions and Testing Coordinator. One or both have attended all training sessions. The Assistant Director served on a WASC Visiting Committee in April 2008.

As a result of the WASC process, the staff felt the need to have specific days set aside for WASC. Thus every Monday, school begins at 9:30, with staff attending WASC in-service at 8:30. A three year schedule/plan was created and staff began to work through the WASC process.

Given the school's small size, CLU staff decided to by-pass the WASC Focus groups in favor of 'Committees of the Whole' and our Groups are as follows:

**School Group** - teachers, paraprofessionals, business manager, assistant director, and director.

**Professional Staff Group** - clinical psychologist, educational psychologist, psychiatrist, speech/language pathologist, neuropsychologist, and MFT

**Parent Group** - 1 parent representative

**Student Group** - students, one MS and US



**Leadership Group** - Director, Virginia Mathews; Assistant Director, Cara Furman, and 2 Board Members, Claudia and Tom Gryzwacz

CLU groups relied heavily on technology during the WASC self-study. Staff employed Google documents to gather data, Google calendar to keep key dates in mind, and email as a means of group discussion.