

# specialized education



## ► THE CHALLENGE

A student's emotional and behavioral disabilities often make it difficult for them to make up these deficits in a typical public-school environment. Children often come to JGW two to three years behind grade level in academic achievement. Rarely does a public school have the capacity like JGW to serve a range of behaviors that include significant social-emotional deficits, poor impulse control, emotional disturbances, and excessive hyperactivity. Due to the trauma our students have experienced, they require a great deal of individualized attention and specialized accommodations.

Multiple placement disruptions re-traumatize young people and increase the likelihood of youth developing long-term social, emotional, behavioral, and psychological disorders. Young people in states of transition need to be in a trauma-informed, least restrictive environment that keeps them safe, addresses their mental health needs, and allows them to interact with the community and 'natural supports' as much as possible.

There are few programs in the region that serve this vulnerable population with trauma-informed education practices. It is based on the philosophy that youth can best succeed where there is concern for the total individual.

## ► THE SOLUTION

VHBG's John G. Wood School (JGW) is a fully-accredited specialized day school for students in grades K- 12 who struggle to be successful in public school. We've been serving children in the Richmond community since 1974. JGW serves as a public-private partnership to school systems to help them fill the gap in services required by students with emotional and behavioral health challenges usually caused by trauma or special circumstances. While we are a nonprofit, we are not a private school in comparison to traditional private schools where participants have the luxury of attending without mandates. However, fees paid by localities only begin to cover the real cost of providing specialized care. Philanthropy helps the locality cover the true costs which include extensive staff training, specialized staff, and repairs to destroyed equipment and facilities caused by students with uncontrollable outbursts. Our highly-trained staff provide trauma-informed care in a facility that keeps the students and staff safe. JGW is set up to support these children with the goal that they can either transition back to public school when their own personal goals are met or graduate from JGW ready for their young adult lives.

## ► WHO WE SERVE

VHBG is well-equipped to serve students who have experienced multiple disruptions, losses, traumatic events and who may be struggling with associated Post-Traumatic Stress, living in poverty, and unstable home environments. Some residents of VHBG's Transitional Living programs attend JGW in addition to students who commute from multiple localities in the Richmond region. JGW mostly accepts students whose public school has determined through an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) that the services the student needs can only be provided by a specialized school like JGW.

**We serve students from kindergarten-12th grade with psychological disorders including but not limited to:**

- **Autism**
- **Emotional Disability**
- **Intellectual Disability**
- **Other Health Impairment**
- **Specific Learning Disability**
- **Speech or Language Impairment**

## ▶ HOW WE HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED

- JGW includes a broad range of elementary, middle, and high school courses for children in kindergarten through grade 12.
- The school year coincides with the Henrico County public school calendar and Extended School Year (ESY) services are available during the summer.
- Each classroom has a lead teacher and a behavioral coach who work as a team to provide academic and behavioral support using a data-informed Positive Behavior support program.
- A school-based therapist is on-site for individual and group counseling as needed. A full-time nurse ensures students are receiving the medical care they need.
- Our creative arts program offers students opportunities to explore their interests in art as a way of processing thoughts and emotions. Our on-site art teacher incorporates painting, drawing, craft, and clay into the program.
- A reading specialist provides support and instruction to students who are below grade-level in reading skills.
- Students get physical activity every day. JGW is part of a therapeutic neighborhood located on 30+ park-like acres that includes a full gymnasium, jungle gym equipment, an indoor recreation room with weight equipment and game tables, playing fields for multiple sports, and a cookout shelter. Students can also learn to swim in our outdoor pool.
- Students supplement their lessons by going on educational outings and help the community with volunteer projects.
- As the vast majority of students at JGW live in poverty, good nutrition is provided to every student with free lunch and snacks. Any child who needs groceries to take home can get food from our food bank operated by volunteers. Each child receives the tools they need to be successful including school supplies and in-kind donations of clothes and toiletries.

### JOHN G. WOOD I

#### Elementary School (Kindergarten - Grade 5)

- 5:1 Student-teacher ratio is small and accommodates individual learning styles.
- Daily communication with parents/guardians ensures continuity of students' progress.
- Multi-purpose room creates a calm, relaxed, sensory experience.
- Warm and inviting home-like classrooms with modern Promethean board.
- Incorporation of weekly cooperative learning activities centered around social-emotional leadership to support interpersonal skills.
- Outdoor and indoor tactile exercises encompass multiple learning styles and allow students to be physically active while learning.

### JOHN G. WOOD II

#### Self-Contained Classrooms (Grades 6-12)

- 5:1 Student-teacher ratio is small and accommodates individual learning styles.
- Separate classrooms designed to meet students' individual needs requiring more intensive social, emotional, behavioral, and academic support.

#### Middle and High School (Grades 6-12)

- 8:1 Student-teacher ratio is small and accommodates individual learning styles.
- Programs are designed with practices addressing behavioral, social, emotional, and academic needs.
- Full academic curriculum with ability to earn or work toward a Standard, Alternative, or General Education Diploma (GED). Career and Technical Education (CTE)-Woodworking and Culinary Arts ServSafe Certificate, when available.
- Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)/GED program.
- Blended learning in core academic and elective classes via Edgenuity allows for more differentiation of instruction.
- Richmond Alternative School Sports League available.
- Individual counseling as needed to support social and emotional growth.
- Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) instruction provided.

## ▶ STATE LICENSE ACCREDITATION

JGW is licensed by the Virginia DOE, accredited by VAISEF, and aligned with Virginia SOLs. Teachers and trained behavior coaches incorporate the Teaching-Family model into the curriculum. This evidence based, trauma-informed care model is facilitated by a VHBG practitioner and is characterized by the belief that children in crisis benefit from nurturing, family-style environments. Students take a range of academic courses with the ability to earn or work toward a Standard, Alternative, or General Education Diploma (GED).

For referrals or more information, call (804) 270-6566 ext. 1680 or visit [vhbg.org/programs-services/specialized-education](http://vhbg.org/programs-services/specialized-education)

VHBG is a nonprofit organization that has been serving children in crisis since 1846. VHBG has remained agile and able to respond to the ever-changing needs of our community and we have never strayed from our core belief that all children deserve to grow up surrounded by a loving, nurturing family in a safe, supportive community. While we began as an orphanage, we have evolved into an organization with three core program areas: Transitional Living (Group Care Services (GCS) and Independent Living (IL)); Specialized Education (John G. Wood School); and Therapeutic Resources to support the mental health needs of the young people we serve at VHBG.

