

Rising Star Camp Is A Beacon For Teaching & Learning

The Rising Star Camp has been a shining star on the Grand Valley State University campus for six weeks every summer since 1983.

The Rising Star Camp is a six-week program that gives special needs students the option of staying on GVSU's Allendale campus or commuting. More than 2,000 children and 550 graduate students have gone through the program during its 18 years of existence.

It is the only program of its type for learning disabled children offered in Michigan.

"The graduate students are working in a clinical setting where they can implement the strategies their professors taught in the classes while benefiting the students who attend," says School of Education professor Jim Grant, who has coordinated the endeavor since its inception. "We have a lot of kids who come back year after year."

Among the activities in which the students participate on a daily basis



Beth Waligorski keeps a close watch on campers getting ready for field hockey action.

include Odyssey of the Mind, geography, social studies, art, physical education and people skills. The residential campers -- who reside on campus from Sundays to Thursdays -- are taken to the beach at Lake Michigan on Wednesday evenings.

"It's the only summer camp/clinic in the midwest that combines recreation and academics," Grant said. "There are a lot of them on the east coast and west coast, but not a lot in the Midwest."

The cost for commuter students is \$600 for the six-week program. Residential students pay \$1,100.

"The first year, we had 36 students, but we have had as many as 132 students in one summer," Grant said. "We average about 100 students per summer, but it depends on how many graduate students we have working the program."

Graduate students working the camp are earning credit toward their endorsements in learning disabilities.

"The students that attend leave with a renewed sense of self confidence, and the graduate students seem to appreciate the fact that they have demonstrated mastery in some specific interventions," Grant said.



Jennifer Mills, left, works with a student on an art project.

Colleagues

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