Students at Cedars participate in individual and group psychotherapy and, I was told, therapists are closely involved in all aspects of the residential and recreational program. Most individual therapy utilizes a CBT model, as do most groups. However, much of the focus of the all-important social skills aspect of Cedars is on in-the-moment interventions during the course of the day, rather than on social skills training in designated groups. This in-the-moment model is, in my opinion, often an effective way to address the social interaction problems of students with Asperger's Disorder and NVLD.

Parent involvement is also an important component of the Cedars treatment program; weekly family phone sessions are held, if indicated, and parents must participate in three required family visits on campus. There is a full-time nurse at the school and a psychiatrist who is available to meet with each student on a monthly basis. Unlike many other schools for students with Asperger's or NVLD, Cedars will consider for admission a child with a significant co-morbid psychiatric disorder in addition to Asperger's or NVLD.

The middle and high school programs at Cedars Academy operate on a 12-month schedule. There are six full-time teachers, one of whom is certified in special education. There is a daily study hall until 6:30 pm, and participation in after-school athletics is required of all students. The school, which follows the Delaware state curriculum, offers college counseling and a Cedars Academy diploma to its graduates.

During my visit to Cedars, I spent over an hour with John Singleton, the executive director of the school. John, who has been at Cedars Academy for over two years, was formerly at New Leaf Academy of North Carolina. He came across as a very enthusiastic leader who, like the students and staff that I met, was proud of the school. He pointed out the small staff-to-student ratio at Cedars, and some recent or upcoming developments designed specifically for those with Asperger's or NVLD.

Among the latter are broad spectrum lighting in the dorms (meant to be less upsetting and distracting to the students) and a quiet solitude room that will soon be available for those students whose sensory problems dictate the need for such a temporary respite from everyday over-stimulation. I came away from my meeting with John and my visit to the school with the impression that the combination of his enthusiasm and the school's small size (allowing for much individual attention) would probably make Cedars a good fit for many students with Aspergers or NVLD.

Cedars Academy, which is about a two-hour drive from Baltimore-Washington International Airport, is licensed by the State of Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families as a Residential Child Care Facility. The school is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and by the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation. Cedars Academy is a member program of the Aspen Education Group.

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American educators need to ask whether, in moving away from skills and drills, phonics, teacher-led discussions, competition, and same-sex classes, they have not inadvertently been moving away from what works for boys.

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