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The Parent Empowerment Handbook™ is designed to empower parents seeking positive solutions for teen behavior problems.

The Parent Empowerment Handbook™ is prescreened by independent educational consultants nationwide for reputation, and specifically created for parents and professionals working with struggling teens. This publication offers parents a significant opportunity to find the best residential schools and programs available. We conduct annual surveys with the best-known independent educational consultants in the country to compile the most complete and current information available on each school or program. The Handbook is a valuable resource for parents and their children when local interventions fail, and the children continue to make poor decisions such as skipping school, drugs, rebellion, etc. With over 100 of the best private therapeutic, emotional growth, LD, wilderness schools and programs nationwide, the Handbook also includes numerous essays, visit reports, and current information on experienced educational consultants and transport agents. In order to maintain an objective publication, advertising is not allowed in the Parent Empowerment Handbook.

**19th Edition
Now Available**



CEDARS ACADEMY

Bridgeville, DE
Admissions Director: Dottie Lank
302 337-3200
www.cedarsacademy.com

Visit By: Stephen Migden, Ph.D., ABPP, November 4, 2008

Cedars Academy, located in rural Bridgeville, DE, is a co-educational boarding school and young adult transitional program for students who have been diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disorder (NVLD) and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), either the hyperactive-impulsive or the inattentive type. Cedars provides a college preparatory curriculum to a group of about 40 middle and high school students who live on campus.

There is also a smaller group of young adults living off campus in nearby community-based group residences who participate in a Life Skills curriculum involving independent living skills, vocational training and/or college classes. The students range in age from about 12 to 18 or 19 in the middle and high school program, and from about 18 to 21 in the young adult transitional program.

I visited Cedars Academy in mid-fall. At that time, I had the opportunity to be led on a tour of the compact campus by a group of four students, two boys and two girls. The group seemed like a fairly representative mix of older and younger students at the school; a couple of them had been at the school for about a year and a couple of them were newer to the program. The kids were eager tour guides, and all of them seemed to be pleased with their placement at Cedars.

They showed me administrative, residential and educational buildings on the campus, including the dormitories and the small school, which was in session. At the school, I also had the opportunity to meet with some of the other students, as well as a group of teachers and social workers, who, just like my tour guides, seemed very enthusiastic about their program. The students I observed and interacted with seemed to represent a wide range of abilities from well above average to well below average; nevertheless, the atmosphere among the students was consistently accepting and supportive, so that none of them seemed to be treated as an outcast or undesirable.

The campus buildings are unremarkable, though the setting is pleasant enough. Middle and high school students live in small dormitories, with two or three to a room. They share housekeeping chores and learn to do their own laundry. Computers are allowed in dorm rooms, although I was told that the only internet access is through the school's computer lab (an important issue among this type of student, who may often have problems with over-focusing on the computer.)

The students in the young adult post-secondary program live in two off-campus houses, one for boys and one for girls. I visited the boys' house, which was a lovely, well-maintained home in a nearby development that looked just like the other houses on the block. The kitchen, in which the young adults learn basic cooking skills, was spacious and modern. One of the residents of the house who takes classes at a local college happened to be in the house. Through the kitchen window, he proudly showed me the backyard where there was a wooden skateboard ramp he and some other residents had recently built. (I declined his offer to try it out!) There is 24-hour awake-staff for both the campus and young adult programs.

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.

About the author: Stephen Migden, Ph.D., ABPP is a licensed psychologist and educational consultant who specializes in the needs of adolescents and young adults with learning, developmental or behavioral problems. He is the East Coast Liaison for Woodbury Reports. His office is located in Roslyn Heights, NY, and he can be reached at drmigden@verizon.net. His website is www.psychologicalandeducationalservices.com.



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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.

~ Christina Hoffer Sommers



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