Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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Academics in a Therapeutic Setting



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This episode of Parent Choices for Struggling Teens, hosted by Lon Woodbury, was a discussion with guest Bryan Tomes, Executive Director of Asheville Academy for Girls, about Academics in a Therapeutic Setting. To begin the discussion Lon shared his opinion that in the past academics at therapeutic boarding schools have generally "taken a backseat" or been somewhat mediocre at best, with the exception of a few. Bryan rebutted that, "there has been an historic shift in therapeutic schools and programs offering more sophisticated academics, in addition to seeing that "school" is one of the many areas in which the student's behaviors arise."

"A school or program needs to identify a mission or vision for learning," continued Bryan. "In addition to looking at class schedules, curriculum, and the accreditation process, a therapeutic setting looks at a student's broad range of issues and their social and behavioral differences." He also discussed the importance of the size of the school and number of students per class in a therapeutic school because therapy and healing are built on relationship building.

Bryan went on to explain the importance of proper staff training in both academics and therapy as well. "It is so important to make sure the academic staff receives therapeutic training and are included in the therapeutic team meetings. They hear the goals for each child and can utilize interventions and skill building techniques in those areas of their classrooms. The students receive continuity in all areas and it normalizes the process."

Sharing a bit further, Bryan included, "Students need to see success in their academics as well as in relationships with their families and peers for a smooth successful transition after they leave a therapeutic school."

Lon added, "Sounds like a conductor of an orchestra, synchronizing all the factors, needs, textbooks, sports, arts and therapy needs."

Parents and Educational Consultants can help find the proper placement for a student needing the small or specialized classes that some students need to obtain academic success. With homework being a major problem in creating a dysfunction in families, smaller classes often allow more time for students to complete their work. Also, in a therapeutic setting, students are usually assessed to determine what kind of "learner" they are and an academic plan is created utilizing their strengths and weaknesses. Students learn organizational skills that often carry over to their next program, whether home at school or off to college.

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