ASAH

The Private School Option *for Students with Disabilities*

WHAT PARENTS **NEED** TO KNOW

Letter from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

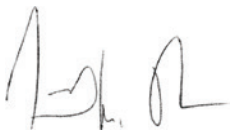
IF YOU ARE LIKE MOST OTHER PARENTS that are considering a private special education school for your child with a disability, you are worried and wondering: Is it the right decision?

You know that most students with disabilities can and should learn alongside typical peers at their local public school. In order to succeed, these students should receive all necessary services, supports, modifications and accommodations to help them learn and meet their IEP goals.

In some situations, however, public schools are simply not able to do this. That is why the federal law requires your local school district to consider a full range of options – including private schools – when determining a child's placement.

Your child – and every child – has the right to maximize his or her full potential. If that cannot occur in your local school, you have the right to have your child educated – at no cost to you – in another setting.

We developed this guide to help you learn more about one of your options - private schools for students with disabilities.



Gerry Thiers,
Executive Director, ASAH

© Copyright 2016, ASAH

A History of **SUCCESS**

SINCE 1895, PRIVATE SPECIAL education schools have been providing high quality special education services and supports to students with disabilities in New Jersey. Many private schools were started by parents just like you who were frustrated by a lack of appropriate, effective options, and who wanted a unique environment for their child which could offer highly specialized instruction and services.

Today, there are nearly 175 private schools serving more than 12,000 students with a wide range of disabilities including learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, mental health and behavioral disabilities, and intellectual disabilities, such as Down syndrome.

"I had a **dream** for my son, and I wanted him to go to a **school with others** who could believe in him!"

One of your **OPTIONS**

"My Child Study Team and I looked at a number of **options**, both public and private for my daughter. It was **clear** that the **only** place that could meet her needs was **a private school**."

FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS REQUIRE THAT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL district offer all students with disabilities a full continuum of options including placement in a private school. If you and your school district determine that a private school is the appropriate setting for your child, your local school district pays the tuition and provides transportation to and from the school.

Exceeding Parents' **EXPECTATIONS**

IF YOU ARE LIKE MOST PARENTS, YOU ARE LOOKING FOR:

- A school with a positive history of educating children with disabilities like your son or daughter.
- A school that recognizes your child for who he or she is, with unique talents and strengths, and unique challenges.
- A school that can implement your child's IEP and can meet all of your child's educational needs.
- A school with staff that are well trained and well supervised to educate children and youth with disabilities, and which is accountable for your child's progress.
- A school in which your child feels safe and valued.
- A school that will use the technologies and research-based teaching strategies that can make a difference.
- A school with a network of community referrals to support your family and your child beyond the school day, and after graduation.
- A school that values parent participation and recognizes it as essential to the success of a child.
- A school that offers the same Core Curriculum Content Standards as those required in public schools.
- A school in which students are fully included in all aspects of school life, from assemblies and field trips to school teams, proms, and the school play.

"Here, **my input** is sought out and **valued**. I am part of a team! The teachers, the therapists, the director – they actually **WANT parents** to come to the school, observe and get **involved**."

Meeting Students' **NEEDS**

PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXIST FOR one reason - to serve children with disabilities. They are creative, flexible environments that can truly individualize their educational program to meet the unique needs of each child. Many offer a full range of related services, such as speech, physical and occupational therapies, and assistive technology. Many serve children who have not succeeded in other settings, and who may have a history of challenging behavior. And because they are small, the entire staff at a private school can really get to know each child.

"Here, everyone knows **my son**. He does not **stand out** because of his disabilities. He stands out **because of who he is!**"

The Teachers Make the **DIFFERENCE**

THE TEACHERS AT A PRIVATE SCHOOL ARE UNIQUELY QUALIFIED, energetic and motivated. They became teachers because they love children – they remain teachers because they know that working at a private school allows them to truly make a difference in the life of a child. At a private school they get to teach smaller classes with students who they know personally. They are encouraged by other teachers and administrators who value their commitment, skill and talent. The internal network of support at a private school, and the high morale it generates, helps to create an environment of success for all.

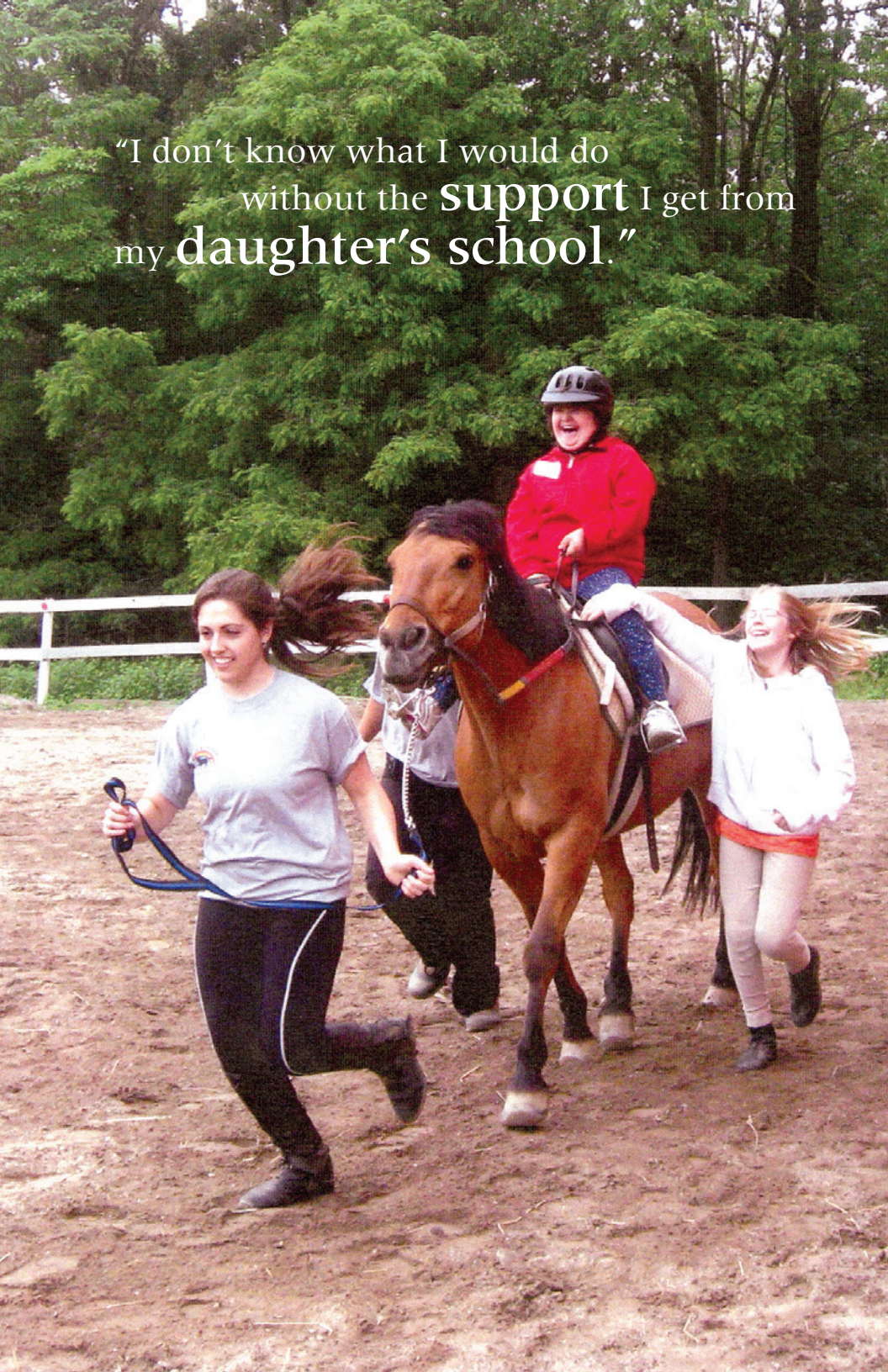
They must meet the same rigorous certification and credentialing standards as their public school colleagues.

"Since my daughter has been attending a **private school**, the most amazingly **gifted** and dedicated **teachers** have been part of her life."

Offering Specialized **SERVICES**

Private schools can provide a full range of supports and services designed to prepare students with disabilities to be fully participating members of their families and communities.

- Community integration and community-based instruction
- A full range of therapies and related services
- School-wide and individualized positive behavioral support
- Parent education programs, parent support groups, and sibling groups
- Extended school year instruction
- Smaller classes with individualized instruction
- Low student/staff ratios
- Unique transition services that guide a student from school to adult life
- College preparation for students who will pursue post-secondary education
- Community-based work experiences
- Formal and informal "linkages" to adult service providers for students who will likely need on-going support and services into their adult years
- Camp and recreational experiences


"I don't know what I would do without the support I get from my daughter's school."

Supporting Students' **TRANSITIONS**

MANY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES NEED PRIVATE SPECIAL education for a period of time, and then make the transition to another setting - often the local public school. In fact, a recent research study found that 49 percent of the students who transferred from a private school returned to district educational programs. Private schools can provide highly individualized training, technical assistance and support to ensure that this transition goes smoothly and successfully, for the student, the family and the new teacher.

"When we agreed that my **son** was **ready** to come back to our local school, the staff at the **private school** worked in close consultation with his **new teachers** and staff to provide training and **support**."

Measuring **SUCCESS**

PRIVATE SCHOOLS MEASURE THEIR SUCCESS NOT JUST BY THE NUMBER of graduates, but also by what those graduates can do with their lives. For some students, that may mean going on to college or technical training. For others it means getting a job or a community volunteer experience, perhaps securing adult day services and supports. Whatever the desired outcome, private schools are setting the pace. A recent research study found that only four percent of the students graduating from private schools did not have plans for further education, training employment or community programs.

Chefwear
Chefwear

Making the **DECISION**

IF YOU BELIEVE A PRIVATE SCHOOL is the right choice for your child, call ASAH for help getting started. We can guide you through the process and provide information and support to help you. Our advocates can help you understand your rights and your child's rights.

Call **1-877-287-ASAH**

2015-2016 **ASAH Member Schools** by County

ATLANTIC COUNTY

Coastal Learning Center - Atlantic

Y.A.L.E. School Northfield

BERGEN COUNTY

Alpine Learning Group, Inc.

Bergen Center for Child Development, Inc.

The CTC Academy, Inc.

The CTC Academy, Inc. Upper School

Community High School

Community School Inc.

ECLC of New Jersey (Ho-Ho-Kus Campus)

Educational Partnership for Instructing Children (EPIC)

Felician School for Exceptional Children, Inc.

The Forum School

The High Point School of Bergen County

Holmstead School

Institute for Educational Achievement

JCC Therapeutic Nursery

REED Academy

Sage Day Lower and Middle School

Sage Day at Rochelle Park

Windsor Bergen Academy

Windsor Preparatory High School

YCS - Fort Lee Education Center

YCS - George Washington School

BURLINGTON COUNTY

Garfield Park Academy

Kingsway Learning Center – David J. Panner Campus at Moorestown

Legacy Treatment Services – Mary A. Dobbins School

Y.A.L.E. School Medford

CAMDEN COUNTY

Bancroft School

Bancroft School at Voorhees Pediatric Facility

Bancroft School Early Education Program

Bancroft School Early Intervention Program

Brookfield Schools

Kingsway Learning Center – Haddonfield Campus

Larc School, Inc.

Y.A.L.E. School Cherry Hill

Y.A.L.E. School Voorhees

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Pineland Learning Center, Inc.

ESSEX COUNTY

ARC of Essex - Stepping Stones School

Banyan School

The Children's Institute

The Children's Institute High School and Young Adult Program

Deron School of New Jersey, Inc. (II)

Essex Valley School

Garden Academy

Horizon High School - CPNJ

Horizon School - CPNJ

Mt. Carmel Guild Academy

Northwest Essex Community Healthcare Network - Therapeutic School & Preschool

Phoenix Center, Inc.

Westbridge Academy

YCS - Independence High School

YCS - Sawtelle Learning Center North

YCS - Therapeutic Learning Center

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Durand Academy and Community Services

HollyDELL School

St. John of God Community Services -

Archbishop Damiano School, Early Intervention Program, Vocational Rehabilitation/Adult Services

Y.A.L.E. School Williamstown

HUDSON COUNTY

St. Joseph's School for the Blind

YCS - Ernest M. May Academy

YCS - Sawtelle Learning Center – Kearny Annex

HUNTERDON COUNTY

Hunterdon Preparatory School

Spring Run School

MERCER COUNTY

Bridge Academy

Children's Day School of Family Guidance Center

Eden A.C.R.E.s

Eden School

Eden W.E.R.C.s

Newgrange Education Center

Newgrange School

MERCER COUNTY (CONTINUED)

Princeton Child Development Institute

Sage Day at Princeton

The Titusville Academy

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Gateway School

Lakeview School – New Jersey Institute for Disabilities

New Road School of Parlin

You & Me School

MONMOUTH COUNTY

Children's Center of Monmouth County

Coastal Learning Center - Monmouth

Collier High School

Collier Middle School

CPC Behavioral Healthcare - High Point Schools

Harbor School

Hawkswood School

LADACIN Network – Schroth School

Oakwood School

The Rugby School at Woodfield

SEARCH Day Program, Inc.

SEARCH Day Program - Marlboro

OCEAN COUNTY

Alpha School

The Education Academy

LADACIN Network – Lehmann School

New Road School of Ocean County

School for Children with Hidden Intelligence (SCHI)

MORRIS COUNTY

Allegro School, Inc.

The Calais School

Celebrate the Children

Chancellor Academy

Chapel Hill Academy

Daytop NJ Academy

ECLC of New Jersey (Chatham Campus)

P.G. Chambers School

Sage Day at Boonton

Shepard School

Shepard Preparatory High School

PASSAIC COUNTY

Banyan Upper School

Benway School

Lakeview Learning Center

Learning Center for Exceptional Children, Inc.

North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency (NJEDDA) Elementary School

North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency (NJEDDA) High School

Windsor Learning Center

Windsor School

SALEM COUNTY

HollyDELL School

St. John of God Community Services - The Damian O'Shea Children's Center

SOMERSET COUNTY

Bonnie Brae School

The Center School

East Mountain School (Carrier)

Green Brook Academy

Honor Ridge Academy

Lord Stirling School

The Matheny School at the Matheny Medical and Educational Center

The Midland School

Montgomery Academy

New Road School of Somerset

Rock Brook School

Somerset Hills Learning Institute

SUSSEX COUNTY

Lakeland-Andover School

Willowglen Academy

UNION COUNTY

ARC of Union - Kohler School

Cerebral Palsy League – Come Play and Learn Early Childhood Ctr.

Cerebral Palsy League – CPL Adult Services

Cerebral Palsy League – Jardine Academy – Cranford Campus

Cerebral Palsy League – Kaleidoscope Early Intervention Program

Deron School of New Jersey, Inc. (I)

The Newmark School & High School

Summit Speech School

WARREN COUNTY

Stepping Stone School

The following guide is produced by ASAH to help parents as they make decisions about their child's special education program.

A Guide for Parents as They Consider Special Education **Placement**

Parents are an important part of the IEP team and are entitled to visit proposed placements. This guide is designed to help you assess and compare placements so that you can make informed decisions about the appropriateness of a program for your son or daughter with disabilities.

GETTING STARTED

Before your visit

Ask for copies of the school's handbook and brochure to familiarize yourself with the program.

If the school has a website, visit it to learn as much as you can.

On the day of your visit

Use this guide to help structure your visit. Highlight questions or areas that are particularly important to you. Bear in mind that some of the services listed will be more or less relevant to your child's needs. For example, if your child does not use a wheelchair, mobility and positioning services may not be important to your child's program.

Ask to observe instructional time in the classroom where your child might be placed.

Keep an open mind throughout your visit and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

SCHOOL FACILITY

One of the first things most parents notice about a school is the facility:

Classrooms

Do classrooms reflect the needs of the students who learn there? Are they conducive to the ways in which your child learns? Are they part of the school building, or set off, either in a basement, trailer or remote part of the building? If they are set off, is it for instructional reasons, such as limiting noise and distractions?

Therapy Areas & Adaptive Equipment

Are therapy services offered at the program? If yes, are they offered in the classroom, or in separate rooms? Does equipment appear to be clean and well-maintained?

Outdoor Areas

Are outdoor areas secure? Do they offer age-appropriate activities? Are they safe and well-maintained? Are they accessible?

Computers & Technology

Are computers and other technology appropriate and readily available to students? Is it current? How is it being used as part of the curriculum?

Restrooms

Are restrooms in or near the classroom? Are they clean and safe? Is there a place for privacy if support with personal care is needed?

Security

How are students and teachers kept safe at all times? Does the school have a system or written plan in place to deal with emergencies? Are

parking, pick-up, and drop-off areas safe and well-supervised? How are visitors handled?

Recreation

Is there space for physical education? Is it clean, safe, and well-lit?

Daily Living Skills

If the students are learning activities of daily living, is there a kitchen, bedroom, or laundry area?

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

It is important that program characteristics be *observed*, as well as described to you by staff or administration.

Mission & Philosophy

What is the mission of the program? Can you see elements of the mission or philosophy in action?

History

How long has the program been in operation? Does the program have a "track record?"

Curriculum

Curriculum refers to *what* is being taught. All programs are required to use the State of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Do you see evidence of this? In what ways is the curriculum adapted for the needs of the students? What subjects are offered at each grade level? Are other areas of instruction offered, such as:

- Behavior & Social Skills
- Transition to Adult Life
- Life Skills
- Career Training & Awareness
- Community-Based Instruction
- Recreation

Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies refer to *how* the curriculum is taught.

Does the school use evidenced-based 'best practices' for the students they serve? Does the school use specific methods of instruction (i.e., Applied Behavior Analysis for students with autism; Orton-Gillingham-based reading instruction; or American Sign Language) if appropriate? Are staff appropriately supervised and credentialed? Does the school offer one-to-one or small group instruction? How does the program individualize instruction to meet the unique needs of each student?

Assessment

How is student progress monitored and assessed? Do students participate in state assessments? How are testing modifications and accommodations provided?

Class types

How many classes are in the program? What is the male to female ratio? Does the school serve a wide range of special needs, or a specific population? Is there more than one class per grade level? How are class assignments made? What is the age range in the class?

Class Size & Configuration

What is the student to teacher ratio? What is the role of paraprofessionals? Do students work with several teachers, or just one? Who has primary responsibility for each student's instruction?

Schoolwide Programs

Does the program offer schoolwide programs such as a prom, sports, leadership opportunities, student government, performing arts programs, community service, after school clubs, or overnight trips? How are all students meaningfully included as participants in school wide programs? What supports are available to allow students to actively participate?

Homework

What is the school policy toward homework? How much should the student expect? What is the role of parents in homework?

RELATED SERVICES

Related services are an important part of the special education program for many students.

Does the program offer the related services your child needs in order to benefit from special education? Are the services offered in the classroom, or in a separate room? Are the services offered at the school, or do students leave the school? Are the related services professionals members of the school staff or are they consultants? How often and when are they at the program? Below is a checklist to help you organize information on related services provision.

Related Services	Individual	Group
Speech/Language Services	☐	☐
Occupational Therapy	☐	☐
Physical Therapy	☐	☐
Audiology	☐	☐
Social Work	☐	☐
Counseling	☐	☐
Psychological	☐	☐
Positioning & Mobility	☐	☐
School Health Services	☐	☐
Personal Care Attendant	☐	☐
Behavior Specialist	☐	☐
Assistive Technology	☐	☐
Nursing Services	☐	☐
Transition	☐	☐
Psychiatric Services	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐

Nursing Services

For some students, access to nursing and health services is vital. Is there a school nurse? Can he/she administer medication? Does he/she have nursing experience that matches the needs of your child? How are other health issues (seizures, insulin injections, etc.) managed? Ask about the specific health services your child needs.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

For many students with disabilities, special education services are needed to reduce challenging behavior and replace them with more appropriate behavior.

How does the program plan for and manage challenging behavior? Is the behavior system utilized on a school-wide basis, or is it limited to particular students and/or classrooms? Does the school use a system of rewards and privileges for appropriate behavior? How is data collected and used to make decisions?

Does the school use specific procedures to reduce inappropriate behavior? Does the school use restraint procedures or time-out procedures? How is the use of these procedures monitored and reported to parents? How are staff trained and supervised? Are certifications maintained? How are parents involved in the decision-making about behavior management? What is the program's policy for suspension and expulsion?

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parent participation can be an important part of a special education program.

Formal Role for Parents: Is there a PTO or PTA? What is its role?

Parent Involvement: Are parent volunteers welcome at school? In the classroom? What is the school's policy on parental visits and observations?

Home-School Communication: How is home-school communication handled?

Parent Support/Parent Education: Is there a support group for parents? Is parent training or parent education part of the program? Is there in-home support, if needed? Are parents encouraged to network with one another? Are there parent references you can call?

STAFF & ADMINISTRATION

All staff should be appropriately credentialed for the positions they hold, and should be certified and experienced.

What is the rate of staff turnover? What is the mix of new staff and experienced staff? Are program supervisors and clinical staff on-site and available to answer questions?

STUDENTS

What is the age range of students accepted at the program? At what age do students "age out?" Where do most students go when they leave? Are students' disabilities similar to your child's? How far do most students travel to come to school? How long do most students remain at the program?

LICENSURE & ACCREDITATION

Is the school affiliated with, approved, or accredited by an independent source?

Approval

☐ New Jersey Department of Education ☐ Other State department

☐ Other approval or accreditation _____

Affiliations

- ☐ ASAH membership
- ☐ Middle States
- ☐ National Association of Private Special Education Centers
- ☐ National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES)
- ☐ Other _____

After your visit

What was your general feeling about the program and the people you met?

Did you feel welcomed and were your questions answered?

Are the people you met knowledgeable about your child's disability?

ABOUT **ASAH**

ASAH is a non-profit organization of over 150 state-approved private special education schools serving over 12,000 children and adults with disabilities. ASAH provides resources and referral, parent and student advocacy, legislative initiative and technical assistance.

For more information or assistance, please contact us:

2125 Route 33
Lexington Square
Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

Phone: (609) 890-1400
Toll free in New Jersey 1(877) 287-ASAH
Fax: (609) 890-8860
E-mail: info@asah.org
Visit us online at www.asah.org

Like us on Facebook