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## Autistic Residential Schools Vs Day Schools

By Rachel Evans

It's difficult for any parent to get used to the idea of sending their children away to school, and

perhaps even harder for parents of special needs children, such as those who suffer from autism, to do so. Is your child getting a good education? Are other children treating him or her fairly? Will your child enjoy this new situation? Many schools are now set in place to put these fears to rest by solely devoting their attention towards special needs children, and the concept of sending an autistic child to residential school for autistic children instead of a day school program is becoming more popular among parents. Although it may be difficult to adjust to your child living away from home, this may be where the best care and education is available for you child, so carefully consider the advantages before dismissing the idea of residential school for your autistic child.

Residential school programs are often no different than day school programs, but here the student has the opportunity to interact with others outside of a classroom setting. This is sometimes exactly what an autistic child needs to learn socialization skills with people outside of the family. These schools are also very safe and organized in a way that is conducive to learning. For example, Franklin Academy in Connecticut, which specializes in teaching non-verbal students, has a three to one student to teacher ratio and an average class size of six students. They also plan small-group field trips to public places, so your child has an opportunity to interact in public places. This is as opposed to day schools, which typically have larger class sizes and therefore cannot handle public outings. Even if the day school specializes in teaching autistic children, they simply may not have the resources and time during the school day for field trips.

Another advantage over day schools, whether public or private, is the living aspect. Although the students who attend these schools are greatly supervised, they learn living skills that they will need in an adult world. Whereas you may feel obligated or want to do things for your child at home, at a residential school, your child will be encouraged to live more independently. At Brehm Preparatory School in Illinois, students learn time and money management and are in charge of simple home maintenance (chores), study time, and recreational activities. Here also, the emphasis is on family.

Family is an important thing to consider with any type of residential school. While your child is learning valuable social skills, he or she may become more distant from his or her immediate family. At schools

like Brehm, including Hampshire Country School in New Hampshire, have parents' weekend often to so parents can visit their children. Consider also the stress this may relieve for you and your family. Since you will need to spend less time helping your autistic child with learning everyday life skills, you can devote more time to enjoying their company when you see them. Spend time on your marriage and with your other children, activities that would normally be hard to achieve or ignored with an autistic child at home.

However, it is important to note that residential schooling is not for everyone. Typically, your child needs to be high functioning to handle this school atmosphere. You will need to consider cost, since tuition, room, and board for residential schools can be quite expensive. Remember, residential school is not for everyone, but you should definitely consider the option. Research this type of program so that you can make the best decisions possible for your child's education.

Rachel Evans has an interest in Autism. For further information on Autism please visit

### **Baltimore Schools Lose In Court -- Ruling Favored Charter Schools**

**By Patricia Hawke**

In 2005, City Neighbors and Patterson Park Public, two charter schools in Baltimore, appealed the Baltimore schools' per student funding formula to the state board. The board ruled in their favor, and the Baltimore schools appealed the board's decision in the Court of Special Appeals, Maryland's second highest court. Early this month, the court ruled in favor of the charter schools, requiring Maryland school systems to spend as much money per student at charter schools as they spend at their traditional schools.

Charter schools are publicly funded, but they operate independently under contracts with local school boards. Of the 24 charter schools in the state of Maryland, 17 are located in the Baltimore schools system.

The Baltimore schools' per student funding formula differs between their traditional schools and charter schools. Traditional schools receive the equivalent of approximately \$11,000 per student. Charter schools receive \$5,859 per student in cash, with the remainder received in services provided to the schools by the Baltimore schools system, such as special education and food. City Neighbors and Patterson Park Public contend that this formula limits their ability to choose how to provide services to their students, and the court agreed.

After the court handed down its ruling, the Baltimore schools board met in executive session, issuing a vaguely worded statement. It reiterated that the Baltimore schools remain a strong supporter of charters schools, but believe the recent court ruling will hurt the traditional schools by imposing a financial hardship on the vast majority of them. The statement further noted that the ruling could result in traditional schools receiving less per student funding than the charter schools. Additionally, the statement said that the board is fully committed to complying with the law, but it leaves open the possibility of an appeal by stating that the Baltimore schools board "feels obligated to fully consider its legal options."

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After the statement was released, City Neighbors board President Bobbi Macdonald stated that they were not asking for more money, only equity within the Baltimore schools system. City Neighbors attorney Will DuBois underscored the fact that both the state board and the court agreed on a funding model that achieves the parity sought by the two charter schools.

The charter schools hope to meet with the Baltimore schools to discuss the court's ruling. They would like to move forward with the Baltimore schools board toward the interest of all Baltimore schools students. Meanwhile, the Baltimore schools board Chairman Brian D. Morris stated that the Baltimore schools currently is analyzing the financial impact of the court's ruling.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Baltimore schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/Maryland/Baltimore/index.html>



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