

# Inside TSA

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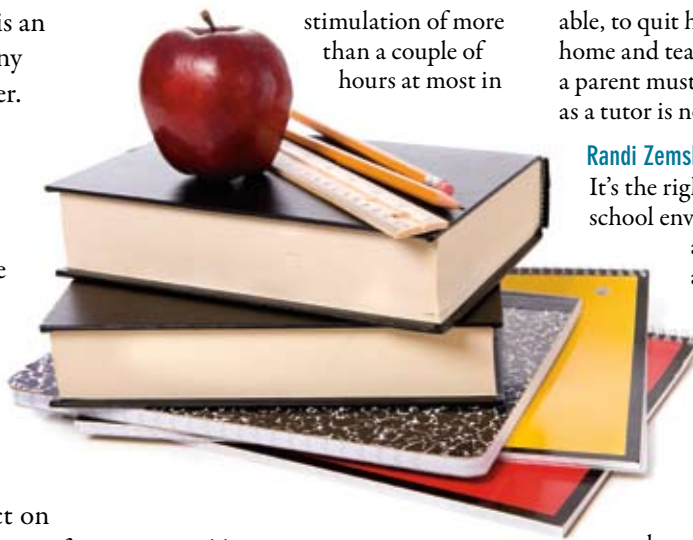
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## Home Schooling for Students with Tourette Syndrome

**H**ome schooling is an option that many families consider. In general, it is not a simple decision and expert opinions vary widely. We've asked knowledgeable individuals to offer their thoughts on when home schooling is appropriate, the resources available, the impact on the social development of children and related issues. We invite you to weigh in with your family's experiences and hope to continue to discuss this critical subject.

### When is Home Schooling Appropriate?

**Sandra Hollis, TSA Board Member.** I believe that a child whose needs cannot be best met with the public school may be a good candidate. Some children with TS have difficulty with 'warming up' to their day. This is not uncommon in children with neurological disorders. Their 'window of learning opportunity' may not be as long as other children. Our son required a late start in his school day and was not able to handle the



stimulation of more than a couple of hours at most in

able, to quit his or her job to stay home and teach? If tutors are used, a parent must still be available, as a tutor is not a babysitter.

#### **Randi Zemsky, TSA Board Member.**

It's the right choice when the school environment precludes a child from getting an education. It's

the right choice when being in the school environment causes the child to feel worse about himself and others. It's the right choice

when the child feels so negative about school that he

or she begins to dislike learning. The downside of home schooling is the lack of socialization, so it is important that they have that piece in another area of their lives. My son is in college now, but I home schooled him throughout his high school years. The decision to do so was at his request following what can only be described as a brutal middle school experience, during which he was constantly punished. When he arrived at high school he was overwhelmed at the thought of having to once again educate a whole new group of educators and administrators with, what he feared would be, the same negative results. He spent the first two weeks in school having a nonstop anxiety attack while simultaneously begging me to teach

a public setting.

**Brenda Klauss, educator.** Social skills are important for children to learn and learning to rise above adversity is important. But if a child is using all of his or her mental energy to suppress tics for fear of possible punishment from a teacher or teasing from students, that child isn't learning social skills or getting an education. That child is just getting through the day.

#### **Rovena Schirling, TSA Board Member.**

Decisions like this one must be made on a 'case by case' basis. Does the child learn better by lecturing or by more hands on approaches? Are the child's symptoms so severe that being in a school environment puts undue pressure on them? The temperament of the parent must also be taken into consideration. Is the parent willing, and financially

him at home. I agreed and it was the best decision we ever made.

Other experts believe that the downside of home schooling is too great a cost to the development of the child. The social aspects of school—making friends, learning to work as a team, participating in sports and exposure to the arts—are almost as important as academics, and home schooling rarely offers the variety of social interactions available in a school setting.

#### **Judy Peterson, member of the TSA Education Committee.**

I've found there are more than a few families where the child (with or without TS) resists attending school because he wants to avoid dealing with social interaction. The situations she does find herself in are 'safer' and 'protected' because the parent is right there. At the other end of the spectrum is the child who becomes the entire focus of their family, with mom or dad devoting all their free time to that child. These children really don't learn as many social skills just because they live in an extraordinary situation. I feel the problem with home schooling when it comes to social skills is that it is very much dependent upon the judgment of the parent, who in a lot of cases is not fully aware of the needs of their own child. Each interaction in a classroom full of students, and various teachers,

*continued on page 13...*

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