



The School Solution Newsletter

the source for supportive schools

The School Solution

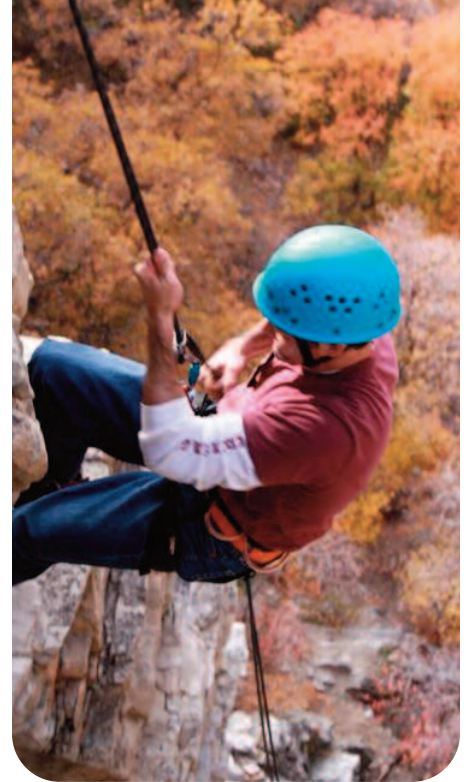
The School Solution is the educational consulting practice owned by Karen Mabie. Karen works with families whose child (age 11 to 26) is still struggling despite the best efforts of the family, including intense therapeutic and academic supports at home. At this point the family may feel exhausted, frightened and hopeless, but it is not time to give up. There are so many residential options with unique therapeutic and educational approaches, somewhere there is a place for every child to succeed, Karen can find that place. She visits over 80 schools and programs every year. She has personally and professionally evaluated each placement to assess the specific therapeutic and educational supports they provide. She continues to stay in touch with her client and their programs for at least one year.

When making this critical decision it is NOT the time to rely on the internet or word of mouth. These children are too vulnerable. Karen professionally interviews the family, teachers and treating professionals in order to develop a thorough understanding of the child's vulnerabilities and strengths. She is uniquely qualified to find the specific milieu and treatment team where that child and family can begin to heal and thrive.

Contact me anytime.
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Travelogue

In 2009 I traveled to: Utah, California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida, Missouri and Arkansas to tour schools and programs. The highlight of my visits were the two nights I spent in the field at 2 different wilderness programs in Utah this fall. I see these same kids in my office right before their parents make the decision to send them—they are so angry, and/or sad, so quiet and defended. When I see them in the field they are much dirtier © but they are smiling and able to speak so honestly about their feelings and their relationships. I saw the boys playing with their guides, like the young boys they really are, recapturing their youth with the guidance of some gifted mentors. It was an absolutely beautiful landscape, the stars were unending and we all huddled by the fire sharing food and stories. It was not easy, it was cold and there were some challenging rappels that the kids helped me through, but I cannot wait to go back.



I wish more children had the opportunity to go to the wilderness, spend time in quiet reflection and decide what kind of adult they want to become with the wise and knowledgeable guidance of the therapists I know.



Karen Mabie, Ed.S., NCSP, CEP



So, what do all those letters mean? Ed.S. is Educational Specialist, a post master's degree in Educational Psychology. NCSP is Nationally Certified School Psychologist, which qualifies me to assess children and young adults for cognitive, and emotional issues and to plan the appropriate educational and social supports for them. CEP is Certified Educational Planner only available after an advanced degree and 5 years of experience. It represents the highest level of professional and ethical standards in educational consulting.

I am available to discuss any questions you have about therapeutic boarding schools, boarding schools, residential treatment or wilderness programs. In addition, I am available to speak to your group about the scope of residential options and what client families they serve—just call or email.

“Karen Mabie stepped into our lives and saved the life of our daughter. We were at a critical point and so close to the problem and emotionally involved we couldn’t tell if the decisions we were making were right or wrong. We called Karen and within a week our daughter was placed in highly specialized program with a therapist that was probably the very best person in the country. Within 4 months due to the progress our daughter made at this program Karen advised us to place our daughter at a residential treatment center. Again, this placement was excellent and our daughter was healing and growing, based on the advice of Karen in conjunction with the professionals at the treatment center our daughter was able to advance again to a boarding school. All of the treatment centers and schools recommended by Karen have worked out for our family. The child we have now has become strong and gained back her sobriety, her self esteem, her faith, her courage and her life. This catalog of events sounds so cut and dried but what was done by Mrs. Mabie went beyond just the placement of our child. There were the many calls we had with her at unbelievably critical and painful moments when her sound psychological counseling and compassion went above and beyond the call of duty. There are many educational consultants out there as I have learned from meeting other parents at the schools but few of them have been as fortunate as we have in working with someone this knowledgeable, professional and compassionate.” *Parents 2009*

An Unchanged Mind, The Problem of Immaturity in Adolescence
by John A. McKinnon, MD

A great overview of the recent history of adolescent development and psychiatric care in the U.S. from the perspective of a psychiatrist who opened a therapeutic boarding school as his answer to what is missing in the current treatment of adolescents.

We have all seen the growth of problematic gaming in adolescents. Sixty-six million people in the U.S. play online games at least 20 hours per week. When someone loses their sense of time, their mood is altered while playing, and they continue to game despite serious consequences (flunking school, loss of sleep, lost relationships) professionals are treating this as an addiction. The gaming addict can also display increasing tolerance through progressive gaming levels and withdrawal symptoms (rage, restlessness, and obsessive behaviors). When assessing whether the gaming is problematic it is important to understand the vocabulary of the gamer. Most problematic gamers are playing role-playing games such as; Call of Duty, World of Warcraft, and Halo. It is important to ask what game they play, when and how long they play, what their avatar is and when their guild meets. In addition, ask them to tell you about their guild. General consensus is that if the client is playing 4 to 5 hours a day their use is problematic.



The important defining characteristic of most gaming addicts is rigid thinking patterns rooted in anxiety or cognitive issues. They have a compulsion towards order, norm and predictability and by controlling the computer they can control their home and their world. Their rigid thinking has important implications for treatment especially in contrast to typical addiction treatment. They have a difficult time internalizing metaphors and are not usually motivated by repairing their relationships. It is best to avoid logic arguments, and long-term perspectives. Instead, it is best to focus on small, manageable steps, psycho-education, mentoring from students in gaming recovery and gaming specific groups. If they are anxious, they will benefit from developing alternative coping strategies.

Of course, there are also unique issues for the family. Usually it takes time for the family to realize how serious the problem is because the child was previously very compliant. Also, in general, it is a socially acceptable and safe activity. However, when computer use becomes the dominant issue in the family the client can thrive on the conflict and the power his computer use has in the family. The family will need education and support in establishing new firm and extremely consistent boundaries. The parents must manage the recovery, by removing the computer from the child’s room and installing time tracking software (www.timesupkidz.com, www.wooglabs.com). The goal of treatment is to remove computers from the center of the client’s social and family life. One helpful method is to create a weekly calendar including pro-social out of home activities and family bonding in-home activities.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has added new schools and programs to its list of approved residential placements. There are now a range of options available to families that are dependent on financial support from their school system. Of course, reimbursement is dependent on many factors The School Solution can help assess the possibility of reimbursement and refer to appropriate additional professionals. Most importantly, I have visited all of the schools and programs on the list and can give professional guidance about which program will be the best fit.

Why Gender Matters, What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about The Emerging Science of Sex Differences
by Leonard Sax, M.D, Ph.D.

A very thought provoking book reviewing the innate sex differences in children and asking for a corresponding understanding of those differences by schools, teachers and parents so that the differences do not become limitations.

“Orchid Children”
by David Dobbs from The Atlantic
www.theatlantic.com/doc/200912/dobbs-orchid-gene

An important article summarizing recent research redefining the theory that certain genetic variants predispose a person to behavioral, psychiatric or personality disorders. Instead Dobbs reviews new research proposing the “Orchid” theory; depending on how the children are raised the genes can either be expressed as unique temperamental gifts or deficits.