

Our school is a real sanctuary for me. It is a welcome escape from the stress of the outside world and has greatly enriched my love of learning in the past few months that I have been here.

I am shocked and very upset that the officials find our school operating as “different” from most schools to be a problem. I have never had better experiences, been more motivated and never had more of a drive to learn and to be productive. I have not felt this relaxed and free from stress when sitting in any of the conventional brick and mortar buildings.

The mind is at ease when relaxed, and when at ease and tranquil, one is more open to learning. A tense mind cannot properly absorb and process the important information that a school has to offer.

On the farm, I learn about the things I love the most. The animals have taught me an unbelievable amount about biology, compassion and care. Everything important in life begins with the things which we are passionate about, and caring kindness towards all living beings.

Not only do I learn about the things I know I love, but I have also been learning a great deal about things I have not paid attention to, and even coming to love them as well.

Soapmaking has taught me about chemistry and math, while the library has opened the doors wide into the magical world of literature.

The staff has been a huge asset in teaching me how to resolve conflict through nonviolent communication. They are sympathetic and helpful, and always willing to lend a hand and teach something new.

I have not been able to concentrate or soak up information properly in a conventional setting, which is very sad because I believe that learning is something that children should yearn to do, something they live for. Something that they look forward to each morning when they wake up.

If this school closes, I will be unjustly deprived of an emotional safe haven which has nurtured me and helped me grow for the past few months.

But please consider the above. I hope and pray that you come to see what I see in the same beautiful light.

This school has helped me to feel more comfortable in my own skin, to feel happier and more accepted. Every child deserves to feel like they are accepted and that they belong. I believe we will then be able to grow up into productive, optimistic adults who help to make the world a better place. I believe in the power of education when done the right way, and I most sincerely believe that THIS is the right way. I believe in the Chagrin Valley School and I believe in the farm. Because at the end of the day, I really believe in us.

-Leah Berkowitz