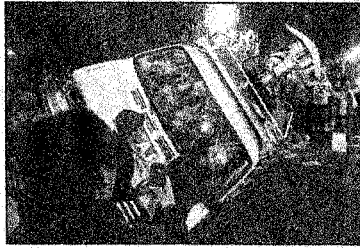


# Opinion

The Record



Penn State outrage, special needs children, N.J. brain drain.  
Letters,

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2011

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## YOUR VIEWS

### Do what is best for student

"More districts bringing special ed in-house" (Page A-1, Nov. 7) and "Private schools call their success hard to replicate" (Page A-1, Nov. 7) do not address the very valuable partnerships that exist between many approved private schools and their public school sending districts.

When we accept a student into The Phoenix Center, we make every effort to work with our districts to include the student back into his or her home school district. I believe that the intensity and types of services offered in many private schools cannot be matched by public school districts.

However, I also believe that in the best-case scenarios, several years of intensive therapies and small class ratios will certainly prepare a student to return to a less restrictive district or community setting. We have a young man who entered the Phoenix Center for two years, worked with one of our eight employment specialists (job coaches) in our transition program and is now gainfully employed on a part-time basis in a Paterson business.

We have been asked to consult with some of our districts to develop transition programs, behavior plans and materials for the alternative proficiency assessments to be used within their districts. The partnerships do work. Many private schools have also developed satellite programs within public school districts to as-

sist with the education of students with moderate to severe disabilities.

I've been in the therapeutic and special education field for 37 years, and I believe that special education should not be either/or. It should be what is best for the student, because in the end the students and their families is what it's all about.

**Geraldine A. Gibbia**

*Wyckoff, Nov. 8*

*The writer is co-founder and executive director of The Phoenix Center, a non-profit school in Nutley for students with disabilities.*