



Braden's Senior Speech

Hi, my name is Braden and I am from Skowhegan, Maine. I enrolled in Means in 2017, which was quite a while ago. I came to Means as the public school I was in failed to properly handle someone like me, who has Asperger's Syndrome, and I needed a new school which could do better in that regard. I don't speak for everyone like me on this, but in my experience, there was no way I could manage the public high school, as I was told by numerous people that my issues would only get worse there.

As soon as I took a tour in June/July of 2017, I immediately noticed a difference in how teachers treated their students. From going to what was at best a neutral attitude from teachers, it was a nice surprise to see all the teachers were always friendly. I was initially a bit shy and still coping with the hardships of the public school I was in prior, but very quickly got used to MeANS. In my almost 5 years of being here, I can say that not once have I ever seen any teacher act out or get mad, even with so many teachers being replaced within that 5 years.

I have enjoyed being a part of this community, as I was actually treated equally among peers, and the peers themselves have never had any bad interactions with me within the 5 years I've been there. I was able to participate in group activities more easily, and made friends fairly easily, most of whom I am still friends with even after they've graduated. I also feel like I've almost become friends with some of the teachers, neither of which I can say I've done in the public schools.

Over the years, we've been on many field trips, from trips such as going to beaches, to going to baseball games – you really can't go wrong with them. My favorite of these trips was when we went to a Boston Red Sox game in 2018 near the end of my freshman year. Some honorable mentions would be two Portland Sea Dogs trips in 2018/19, and a trip where a group of students went to D.C this year to speak out against some new regulations for charter schools. I can almost safely say that you would be lucky to get even one of these trips in your full four years of public high school, and I will never forget the experiences I've had at MeANS.

My future plans are a little hazy right now, but I have completed one college course while at Means, and am currently participating in something called a "Step up program" at Umaine Orono, which will lead to me having 2 college courses under my belt right after high school, which is pretty good. I do have some ideas on what jobs I want to do after school/college, but I know most of my interests require a lot of education/experience within the IT/Computer software industry, so I am self learning some things on the side and hoping I can return to college at some point in the future to pursue my interests even more. I also have MeANS to thank for helping me get started on my first course, and for providing the opportunity for me to partake in the Step Up



program to begin with. I do not know how I would have ended up after high school if I went the public school route, but I can say that I would have likely not ended up doing college right after, let alone getting a course done while I was still in high school.

I have quite a few people to thank for helping me along the way, and I could say a lot of names, but will make it short and sweet for the ones who've really helped me the most. First, Danni. Danni has been at MeANS since at least when I started, and she's always been there to help when needed, and has always remained friendly and helpful. I also have Susie to thank, and while she may have left 3 years ago, she was my first "Advisor", which is the equivalent of a homeroom teacher, who really helped me fit in with the school and helped me get started at MeANS. I also have Jenn and Hope to thank as my second and third advisors after Susie left, and they both helped me a lot for the remainder of my time at MeANS. I also have my father and stepmother to thank for supporting me throughout the entirety of my time at means, and they were among the few who helped introduce me to means, which I can't thank enough for. I could express my gratitude to many more people, but because I can't be here too long, here is a brief thanks to the following: Frank, Ben, Jeff, Grace, Jerry, Saloman, Dylan, Austin, Gina, Tonya, Matt, Tyler, Sarah, January, Autumn, Brenda, Jill, Evan, big and little Brian, Christine, Mary, and Wanda, to name a few. Sorry if I missed anyone, there were a lot of people in my mind, and I may have forgotten to add some names.

I am not really the one to give advice to fellow classmates but if I had to say anything, it would be to make sure you don't become a negative person when you grow older, as nothing good can come from that. Perhaps it's a bit random, but more positivity can make a difference in the long run. Thanks for listening to my speech.