



## **Suggested Questions for Parents to Ask When Doing a Boarding School Search**

### **Assessing Your Own Child**

1. What are my child's strengths?
2. What are my child's weaknesses?
3. What is my child's personality type?
4. What are my child's extra-curricular interests?
5. What motivates them?
6. What do they most like to do, are good at, or are proud of?
7. What type of environment do they need?
8. What are our goals for our child's education and beyond?
9. Where should my child be? Does geography matter over all other considerations?

### **Assessing the School's Support Structure**

1. What kinds of academic support does the school offer?
2. How will the school communicate with me? How often?
3. How will the school respond if things don't go well?
4. How well is the boarding program supervised?
5. What is the ratio of boarders to day students?
6. WHO supervises the boarding program, residence halls?
7. What are the dorms like?
8. How will the school help my child to feel at home here?
9. Are there common recreation areas? What are they like?
10. What happens on weekends, long weekends, and holidays?
11. What are rules for drinking, smoking, and drugs?

12. What are rules for travel off campus, leaving campus?
13. Are the school's values compatible with the family's values?

## **Curriculum and Programs**

1. What is the curriculum?
2. Do they offer Advance Placement or International Baccalaureate courses?
3. What is the policy on AP classes? What are the criteria for taking them and what percentage of the students who apply are able to take AP English?
4. How long will my child stay at this school?
5. Will my child graduate from this school?
6. What kind of college counseling do they offer?
7. What is the school's philosophy towards college counseling?
8. What special programs or courses do they offer?
9. Do they have a learning support center?
10. Do they teach study skills?
11. Is there a supervised study hall?
12. What are the rules for study hall?
13. What is the size of the school and teacher/student ratio?
14. How stable is the teaching staff? Is it a revolving door, or do teachers stay forever?
15. How does the school approach professional development to keep teaching methods fresh?

## **Sensitivity to Third Culture Kid Issues**

1. Are there other TCKs there?
2. What is the student diversity?
3. Do they understand the unique issues Foreign Service children represent? (see our website on Boarding School Personnel and the Foreign Service child.)

## **A Word of Advice to Parents:**

Often, parents are unsure of how much they should disclose regarding their child. Should they tell the school that there have been learning or disciplinary issues in the past? Should they keep some information close at hand so as to not jeopardize the admissions process?

My firm belief is that parents should reveal as much information as they possibly can. There is a huge variety in the types of schools out there, and some are more appropriate matches than others. By withholding important information, you might actually be jeopardizing your child's chances for success and setting them up for failure. It is far better to be absolutely clear about your child's abilities and challenges than to set the stage for unpleasant surprises. In my experience, schools have been very open about the imperfections of youth, and use the information to better respond to the student's needs from the time of enrollment and arrival. Furthermore, if disclosure of particular information means that the student is NOT accepted, then it is better to realize that this school was not the appropriate match from the beginning than to waste time and money on a poor placement.

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