

Is Boarding School the Right Fit for My Child?

by Kimberly Coughlin

Background

A boarding school offers a living and learning environment for students looking to gain independence and a quality education while making lifelong friendships. Junior boarding schools, most of which are located in New England and New York, are independent schools targeted to middle school students. The majority of the boarding schools in the U.S.; however, begin in grades 8 or 9 and end in grade 12. Some boarding schools offer a postgraduate (PG) year for students who wish to have an extra year of high school preparation before entering college or university. There are more than 300 boarding schools to choose from in the United States alone.

Reasons to Choose Boarding School

There are many reasons to consider attending boarding school. Boarding schools provide a “home away from home” for students whose parents may be required to travel often for work or who may be stationed in another part of the world. Boarding schools provide a safe and stable environment to live, study, and make friends throughout their school years. Boarding school students benefit from 24-hour support and supervision and from frequent access to their teachers, many of whom live on campus with their own families.

Boarding schools also traditionally feature small class sizes, rigorous college-preparatory curricula, superior faculty, impressive campuses with state of the art facilities, outstanding opportunities in arts and athletics, availability of learning support, and strong college placement programs.

Many boarding schools have a healthy international student population, which benefits both students and faculty members, as everyone gains knowledge and appreciation of cultures and traditions outside their own.

Boarding school students experience tremendous personal growth. They become very independent and are often better prepared for college than their peers who have never lived away from home.

Choosing the Right Boarding School

Choosing the right boarding school is a family decision. At St. Timothy’s School, we advise students and parents to collaborate closely on narrowing down their list of possible boarding schools to attend.

Some factors to consider include:

- Location – in the U.S. or in another country; rural, suburban, or urban campus?
- Size – would your child thrive in a small (200 students or fewer), medium-sized, or large boarding school?
- Academic Program – what curriculum would work best for your child - Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Prep?
- Single Sex or Co-ed?
- Religious affiliation?
- Availability of special resources or programs (i.e., those that focus on the arts, support for learning differences, athletics or community service)?

- Cost – Is financial aid, including merit scholarships, available?

There are many helpful free resources that families can use to narrow down the boarding school search. Foreign Service families should take advantage of resources that can be found on the State Department's website (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21940.htm>). Other resources include www.boardingschoolreview.com and www.boardingschools.com.

If possible, families should consider visiting each boarding school after the research process has concluded. Call the admissions office to schedule an official tour and interview, but also request to sit in on classes, eat a meal with students and faculty, observe a sports game, arts event, or any other activity that is important to your child's ultimate boarding school experience.

After the visit, have an in-depth conversation with your child. Does your child feel that the school is an appropriate fit for her or him? Do you, as the parent, feel like the school is a good fit? Trust your instincts! If you are unsure, go back and visit the school again, or ask the admissions office to connect you with additional students or faculty members who can answer questions by email or phone.

St. Timothy's School

St. Timothy's is a private school for girls in Maryland - serving boarding and day students grades 9-12 and PG - with an unparalleled setting, strong community, comprehensive resources, and premier education based on the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB). To learn more about St. Timothy's School visit <http://www.stt.org>.

St. Timothy's has long-standing ties to public servants. Mary Pillsbury Lord ('23) chaired the U.S. Commission for UNICEF and was appointed to be the U.S. representative to the UN Human Rights Commission following Eleanor Roosevelt. Marietta Peabody Tree ('34) held this same role. Eleanor Mondale ('78) attended St. Timothy's while her father was serving as vice president. Also, current Assistant Academic Dean and Registrar Heather Ireland attended boarding school from 8th-12th grades while her father Michael Ireland was posted in Bamako, Mali as the Executive Officer of USAID. Mike Ireland was also posted in Vietnam, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, Sudan, Zambia, and Senegal before he retired in 1994.

St. Timothy's School highly values the contributions of men and women who serve in the foreign, military, and civil service fields. As such, we offer the St. Timothy's Foreign and Public Service Scholarship each year to the daughter of a public servant. Please contact admis@stt.org or 410-486-7401 to schedule a campus visit and/or receive a scholarship application.

About the Author:

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