

Choosing a Right Fit School for Your Child (and Family)

Whether you are considering your child's next educational step into kindergarten, middle school, or high school, we know you are making this decision with great care. Our children's future is incredibly important, and ensuring a right fit school for your child's education is critical. With so many schools from which to choose, this can be a daunting assignment, but our schools are here to help you!

Why Choose an Independent School?

In addition to the many public schools, charter schools, religiously-based schools, and for-profit schools, the Pasadena area is home to over 20 fully-accredited, non-profit schools providing an independent, private education to families. Our schools operate independently of any larger organization (i.e., public school board) and instead are managed by a board of trustees. Our funding relies on revenue from tuition, charitable contributions, and in some cases endowments. *(For more information on the value and benefits of independent schools, please visit the National Association of Independent Schools at: parents.nais.org.)*

Choosing an independent school for your child shows that you are committed to an educational experience for your child that focuses on high academic standards, small class sizes, excellent teachers, healthy social-emotional development, a connected, inclusive community, and the unique mission of the school. As tuition-dependent organizations, we do rely on the families to support our programs, but we also offer financial assistance to ensure our programs are within reach for families.

Educational Model?

Independent schools vary in several ways with regard to the **educational structure and model**. So it's important to spend some time thinking about the type of school that will best suit your family's

needs. For example, there are day schools (traditional school day schedule where the student lives at home), or boarding schools (students live on campus, away from family); there are co-educational schools (not gender specific), as well as single sex schools (girls or boys only); and there are schools that focus on specific grades (i.e., K-5 or K-8), or provide a long-term education (i.e., K-12), or anywhere in between (i.e., 4-12; 7-12)

Perhaps one of the most important considerations in choosing an independent school is ensuring the school's **philosophy and mission** are in balance with your family's views on education. Our area offers a beautiful variety of educational options, from progressive models, to classic or traditional models, to hybrids. When visiting schools, be sure to ask about the learning philosophy and style of the classrooms. Taking a look at the classroom designs will often give insights into a school's educational philosophy as well. Each school has a unique mission and purpose, and no doubt you will discover one that shares your educational views.

Independent schools all have exceptionally high standards for **curriculum and instruction**, and many are aligned with state and federal educational standards. However, we all go above and beyond those standards by offering the flexibility to challenge and enhance our curriculum to meet the needs of the students in our classrooms. We embrace the curiosity and intellectual interests of our students, encouraging our students to excel. As you explore our schools, you will notice that our curricular emphases are very similar, but yet our unique approaches to meeting the needs of our students aligns with our missions and visions. Many of our schools seek to ensure a balanced approach to education (similar to a liberal arts degree in college), while others are very focused on STEM learning or the Arts.

Creating Community at School

When selecting an independent school for your child, your entire family is welcomed into a caring, family-oriented environment that shares the commitment to your child's educational future. Through our partnership with parents, we work together to ensure our students' experiences prepare them well for their futures. Parent involvement is encouraged and expected, and through parent volunteerism we realize that a strong community forms.

This community also includes dedicated faculty and staff members who work together, and in concert with families, to promote a healthy student experience. You will often see faculty members attending community events and after-school sporting events to support their students!

Our communities hinge on the common core values of the school, and we know you will find a school that blends in seamlessly with your family's beliefs and values. Our programs all work toward helping our students grow and develop into strong, self-reliant, intelligent, caring people who will be ready for all life brings.

Student Success and Outcomes

Measuring the success of our schools is so much more than using a ranking system like those available for public schools. We look to the outcomes and successes of our students to ensure our program delivers on the promises of our missions. Questions to ask prospective schools include:

- What percentage of students qualify for gifted and talented programs like *The Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University* or the *Duke TIP Program*?
- How do you evaluate student growth and progress?
- How many students require outside tutoring and support?
- What high schools and colleges do your students attend?

Extra-curricular Offerings and Enrichment

While many of the local public schools are reducing their offerings of enrichment programs due to financial constraints, our schools realize that our students thrive when given opportunities to learn, grow, and shine in areas other than core academics. We offer explorations, studies, and classes in visual and performing arts, music, science, foreign language, athletics, and so much more. Our programs run throughout the school day, as well as during our after-school programs.

Excellent Educators Make a Difference!

Research shows that a high quality teacher makes a difference in a child's life that lasts for years to come. Our schools realize that the heart of the program relies on the instruction provided by our amazing and talented educators. We seek teachers who are experienced professionals with the knowledge and pedagogy that creates inspiring classrooms. Additionally, we value the relationships and connections that our teachers are willing to make with their students. They have long since learned that the magic of learning happens in the classroom when teachers build healthy and safe learning environments for their students.

Location

While location and convenience are an important factor in our busy lives, we encourage you to explore a variety of school options. Even if a school seems like it may be too far away from home, it is worth consideration as there are always carpooling and transportation options available.

Affordability

As tuition-dependent programs, we realize you are making a significant and important investment in your child's future by choosing our schools. We do have financial aid available to help families.

What makes our schools "right?" It's when it's a right fit for YOU!