



MERION MERCY ACADEMY

TOP 10 TIPS FOR CHOOSING
AN INDEPENDENT HIGH
SCHOOL FOR YOUR
DAUGHTER

www.merion-mercy.com

511 Montgomery Ave.
Merion Station, PA 19066

Top 10 Tips for Choosing an Independent High School

A private school education is a significant investment for most families and therefore requires significant research and consideration. The best place to start is a school's website, followed by a campus visit. Then you'll want to talk to current students and parents, teachers and administrators. Not sure what to look for or ask about? This top 10 list will provide guidance. Need further assistance? Reach out to Merion Mercy Academy's Director of Enrollment Management Diane Greenwood at admissions@merion-mercy.com or call her at 610-664-6655, ext. 116.

1

All Girls or Co-Ed?

At their heart, girls' schools are places of leadership. Places where community and collaboration, agency and self-efficacy flourish.

Girls' high schools teach young women that regardless of what they want to pursue, there's nothing that can stand in their way. That message provides powerful, relevant advantages. From politics and passion for a cause to pursuing leadership opportunities or a STEM major in college, [research has found](#) multiple ways in which young women who attend girls' schools are more likely to stand out.

Need more examples of how a girls' school will engage, challenge, inspire and prepare your daughter? Check out this [top ten list](#) from the International Coalition of Girls' Schools.

Independent High Schools in Philadelphia Area

175+

Independent Catholic High Schools in Philadelphia Area

40+

Percent of Philadelphia High School Students Attending Private School

23%

Decision Time

By the time your daughter reaches seventh grade, high school is likely to already be on her radar, which means it should be on yours as well. If she's been attending a public school will she stay in the system? Will she transfer from one Catholic school to another for high school? If she's been an independent school student, will she continue in that vein?

If you're still on the fence, when considering a co-ed school environment, be sure to ask:

- Are girls really on the front lines of leadership?
- Are girls actively called upon and encouraged to participate in class?
- Are there fewer girls than boys in the upper level science and math classes?
- Are girls' athletic teams valued as much as the boys' teams? Are budgets, staff and facilities equal?

2

Religious or No?

Most private school students (78%) attend religiously-affiliated schools, however, what that looks like can vary significantly. For some schools, religion is reflected primarily in a value system; for others, it means required theology courses and attending Mass. If you're interested in a religious school, be sure to find out what that means in practice so you can find the right fit for your daughter.

At Merion Mercy Academy—a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition—Catholic Social Teaching is central to our faith life as we seek to build a just society and partner with students on their spiritual journeys. Our students are required to take four years of theology courses, participate in prayerful reflection, attend Mass and partake in other faith-filled traditions.

At an all-girls' high school like Merion Mercy Academy, studies show that girls tend to feel more respected, supported, are more engaged, and have higher aspirations than in co-ed environments.

Percent of Private School Students who Attend a Religiously-Affiliated School

78%

3

Location

Location is probably the most obvious criteria for selecting a school. If it's not easy to get to from work or home, regardless of everything else it has to offer, it probably isn't going to make your short list.

Transportation options are an important aspect as well. Very few private schools have their own busing, though Merion Mercy Academy is pleased to offer transportation for our Philadelphia and South Jersey students, as well as those in Manayunk and Roxborough. For girls within 10 miles of MMA, free school district busing is available and SEPTA provides yet another option for many of our students.

4

Educational Philosophy

Strong academics may be the rule, but private schools' educational philosophies can be quite different, as is the type of student they are trying to attract.

- Is the curriculum traditional or exploratory?
- Is everyone on the same track or is the course schedule personalized?
- How is technology integrated into learning?

The most important thing is that a school's approach to education matches the learning style of your student.

Merion Mercy's Educational Philosophy

Merion Mercy engages students through reflection and transformational learning experiences that develop critical thinking skills, cultivate student agency, unleash creativity, harness the power of collaboration, and build community.

At Merion Mercy, each girl's progress and growth is evaluated annually and adjustments and recommendations are made to ensure that she is on her own path for success.

5

Culture

We all know there's a private school student stereotype. At some schools, it fits. At others, like Merion Mercy, you'll find a nurturing, caring community where sisterhood extends to every student.

Another aspect of a school's culture is its diversity. At Merion Mercy, we foster a welcoming and inclusive community, where students build friendships with girls from throughout the Delaware Valley, including South Jersey; all with varied cultures and backgrounds. We believe that in order to succeed, students should expand their world and understand and respect other people's stories, while shaping their own.

The best way to get a sense for a school's culture is to visit and talk with teachers and parents of current students. Even the school's social media can shed light on the school environment.

Merion Mercy
Average Class Size

16

Merion Mercy
Enrollment

395

Merion Mercy is large enough to offer the resources that students need and want, while being small enough to nurture them like family.

6

Class Size

Class size and student-to-teacher ratio are advantages most private schools have over public schools. One expects a smaller class size to equate to more personalized attention from the teacher. While most archdiocese schools have larger-than-average class sizes, an independent Catholic school like Merion Mercy Academy is considerably smaller.

7

Enrollment

You may have asked yourself this question when you decided on an elementary school and you'll likely ask it again when it's time for college (but let's not get ahead of ourselves!). What size school will my child thrive in? The good news is that there are private high schools of every size –some with enrollments of fewer than 100 students to those with more than 1,000. Often the largest schools have the most resources and extracurriculars, while smaller schools are better engaged with parents and have the feeling of a close-knit community.

8

Student Outcomes

Parents often choose a private school for its outcomes. How well do its graduates do when it comes to college? Each school's Admissions department should be able to tell you what percentage of their students are admitted to college, how many schools they're admitted to and which ones graduates attend, and what kind of scholarship money is earned.

Merion Mercy Academy graduates are attending the Ivies, national research universities, top-ranked Catholic schools, historically Black colleges and universities, art schools and state colleges.

100% of Merion Mercy's 2024 graduates were admitted to college and they earned more than \$23 million in scholarships.

9

Extracurricular Activities

Is your daughter all about sports? A gifted musician or speaker? Passionate about the environment, service, math or writing? Often a school's extracurricular offerings are influenced by its size, yet even with its relatively small enrollment (and the wonderfully small class sizes that result), Merion Mercy is big on athletics, arts, clubs and activities. In fact, there are more than 70 of them and time to meet is built into the weekly class schedule! When choosing a school, be sure to select one that aligns with your daughter's interests and abilities.

**Merion Mercy
Clubs, Sports and
Activities**

70+

Tuition and Financial Aid

Tuition for Philadelphia-area private schools can range between \$8,000 and \$45,000 a year. Even if cost is not a significant factor for your family, it's still worth asking yourself if the schools that cost more offer more of what matters most to you and your daughter. Are they worth the additional investment?

Merion Mercy Academy's 2024-25 tuition is \$23,950. [Financial aid is available](#), as are a variety of scholarships.

As you consider these factors, write down what is most important to you and your daughter. When you visit campus, ask questions of teachers, current students and administrators. If current parents are available, be sure to engage them as well. The more you know the easier the decision will be!

We at Merion Mercy invite you to an Open House, Visit Day, or a personal tour. Learn more [here!](#)

Diane Greenwood
Director of Enrollment
Management
Merion Mercy Academy

610-664-6655 ext. 116
[admissions@merion-](mailto:admissions@merion-mercy.com)
mercy.com