

A Resource Guide for Partners of the Independent School Advocacy Initiative

America's
Independent
Schools

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Leading Education Groups Identify Five Questions Parents Should Ask



How does your child's school measure up?

Many people look at high-test scores or school rankings to determine if a school is providing an excellent education. Yet, these criteria do not provide important insight into critical elements of an educational experience. Recent research from the U.S. Department of Education confirms that there are several factors that strongly influence excellence within a school — public or private. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and 34 partner organizations have identified five questions parents should ask to assess the quality of their child's education.

- Are there high quality and committed teachers?

Schools that employ educated, talented teachers are making a clear investment in students. High quality teachers are individuals who are well prepared in content knowledge, possess strong teaching skills, and have a command of the materials that are being presented in the classroom. They are also able to develop an understanding of how students learn and what interests and motivates them.

- Is there a low student-to-teacher ratio?

A small student-to-teacher ratio allows students to receive individualized attention that leads to greater academic and personal success. Intimate educational environments allow teachers to closely connect with students and fully understand how each individual learns. When teachers are able to spend more time getting to know a student's learning style, they can successfully tailor teaching approaches and actively engage students.

- Do students feel challenged by their school?

First rate schools provide students with challenging classroom instruction and demanding graduation requirements, leading to greater preparedness for life-long learning, as well as college. Students know when they're being asked to meet high standards – and respond accordingly. Hands-on learning experiences, stimulating class discussions, group projects and offsite field trips are just some of the ways that successful schools motivate students to stretch their minds. Quality schools also give teachers the freedom to create unique learning opportunities that are tailored to individual student learning styles. These schools encourage students to excel by setting high academic goals and expectations.

- Are there strong partnerships among parents, teachers and students?

The best schools develop collaborative relationships among parents, teachers and students. These partnerships ensure that students are active participants in the learning process and parents are well-informed about their child's educational experiences. Strong partnerships are built on regular, open communication about classroom goals, as well as student academic achievements and personal development. These relationships are an integral part of a quality education.

- Does the school have a climate that supports achievement?

The climate of a school is directly connected to its effectiveness. The most successful schools are those in which students and teachers share a sense of purpose and where student achievement is actively supported. Administrators in schools with supportive climates are focused on communicating standards and enforcing both high

expectations and rules of student conduct. The close-knit and supportive environment that results ultimately ends up shaping not only the academic development of students but overall personal development as well.

Interested in learning about what the research tells us? [Click here](#).

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