

Common Boarding School Myths

Thanks to Marylou Marcus (CA, NH), the Schools Committee, and IECA members who sent in their favorite school myths.

MYTH: Boarding Schools are for kids with problems or for children whose parents are divorced.

REALITY: Wrong, in fact well-informed parents who know boarding and day schools are looking for the best match, the best education for their children, academically, extracurricular and socially. This could be a public school or a private school. Informed parents are looking for the school that best meets a child's needs and best fulfills that child's potential.

MYTH: Newspaper articles tell you what really is going on at boarding schools.

REALITY: The best information about a school comes from visiting a campus, observing classes and activities, and talking in person, on campus, with students and faculty, and whenever possible with parents of current students.

—William Morse (CT)

MYTH: Boarding Schools are for rich kids only.

REALITY: Not at all. Financial aid depends on a variety of factors, but, it is all need-based. On average, 30-40% of the student body is receiving some degree of financial aid. The only sure way to determine whether a family is eligible for need-based financial aid is to fill out a PFS (Parent Financial Statement) and send it into SSS (School and Student Services) in Princeton, NJ. This can all be done online at: www.nais.org/financialaid/sss. Also check into each school's financial aid figures to see how much is allocated for financial aid yearly and check to see how large their endowment is.

MYTH: There isn't as much supervision at boarding school as there would be at home.

REALITY: In fact, a student will probably have more supervision at a boarding school. During the day, academics, structured study time, followed by athletics and extra-curricular programs consume most of students' time. In the evenings, proctored study halls or adult supervised study time in the dorms leaves little wasted time.

MYTH: Eighth grade students' grades do not count toward boarding school admission.

REALITY: Every year counts towards a student's overall GPA.

—Marylou Marcus (CA, NH)

MYTH: Attending a tier one boarding school ensures placement at the most competitive colleges.

REALITY: In fact, it's not where you go to high school but how well you do there that works best at gaining admittance to the most competitive colleges.

MYTH: Only the most accomplished athletes will find success at boarding schools.

REALITY: In fact, there are many more students who find their first

opportunity to play a sport when they attend a boarding school. Whatever their level of development, an athlete will find a suitable level of competition. There are cases of students who first take up a sport in boarding school and go on to compete at college.

MYTH: Am I a bad parent to let my child attend a boarding school?

REALITY: Absolutely not. One of the greatest benefits of having your child attend a boarding school is the opportunity your child will have to mentor with other adults. The other great outcome of attending a boarding school is the time management and study skills your child will develop.

—Rick Dickson (CT)

MYTH: Families unfamiliar with boarding schools and the process assume they will get into every school they apply to.

REALITY: Boarding schools are competitive by nature and actively seek strong candidates. Although academics are of primary importance, individual schools seek students who are the 'right fit,' actively reflecting the schools' culture, philosophy, and unique strengths. The admission process identifies those who appear to be 'best fit' applicants. Acceptance should never be assumed.

MYTH: Boarding schools are hotbeds of alcohol and drugs.

REALITY: In actuality, boarding schools are less prone to drug and alcohol use. A boarding school environment has more inherent controls with many more adults present in all facets of daily living. In addition, boarding schools maintain a busy schedule and far less opportunity for unsupervised free time. Although drugs and alcohol may find their way onto a boarding school campus, the nature of life on campus is public and discovery is probable, with inevitable consequences.

—Audrey Ludemann (CT)

MYTH: A boarding school does not allow for many home visits.

REALITY: Boarding schools usually have closed weekends before exams or at the beginning of terms. Otherwise students may go home after their sport and academic commitments on Friday or Saturday. Parents are also invited to attend home and away games and encouraged to visit their child on campus! This is not to say that your child should return home every weekend; schools want your child to get involved socially in the school's community.

MYTH: Because a coach says he/she wants me, I'm guaranteed an acceptance to that particular school.

REALITY: The Admission Office has the final say. I have seen clients strung along, being told they have been accepted and everything is on track and then the admission committee will send a rejection letter or a phone call and not a word from the coach.

—Louise Slater (SC)

MYTH: If you apply to enough tier one schools, one of them will accept you.

REALITY: Begin with schools that are a good fit. Make sure your list includes “likely” to be admitted, a few schools that are probable, and then a few that are a reach.

MYTH: Boarding schools can be pressure cookers.

REALITY: This is where the ‘right fit’ comes into play; you must find a school that has the level of challenge, pressure, or competition that is appropriate for your child.

—*May Peach (SC)*

MYTH: A post-grad year is a year after college.

REALITY: A post-grad year can mean many things but in relation to boarding school, it is a year after a student has received their high school diploma and chooses to attend a boarding school to enrich their academic and/or athlete resume. Not all boarding schools offer this option.

MYTH: If your child has a learning difference, boarding school is not the place for him/her.

REALITY: Many boarding schools have a learning center that can deal with mild learning differences. There are specialized boarding schools to deal with specific learning difference (ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia, Asperger’s, NLD, OCD, anxiety, etc). If your current school is not dealing with your child’s current academic needs, a boarding school may be the perfect fit for him/her.

MYTH: Day students often feel isolated from boarding school life.

REALITY: Schools differ on how they include day students in their community and should be questioned when families visit. Day students, for the most part, have to make an effort to get involved in weekend and residential life at a boarding school.

—*Rick Dickson (CT)*

—*Marylou Marcus (CA, NH)*