



## THE ASSOCIATION OF BOARDING SCHOOLS

### HOW TO APPLY TO AN AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL

#### I. The School Search

- A. Consider what type of school will suit you.
  1. Small/Large
  2. Rural/Urban
  3. Coeducational/Single-Sex
  4. Junior Boarding School
  5. Pre-Professional Arts
  6. Military
- B. Are you interested in any special programs, like:
  1. English as a Second Language (ESL)
  2. Post Graduate (PG)
  3. Programs to support students with learning differences
  4. Athletics or other extracurricular activities
- C. The TABS *Boarding Schools Directory* and website contain a great deal of helpful information to get you started.
  1. Directories are free of charge and are available at the IIE office in Hong Kong.
  2. The TABS website [www.schools.com](http://www.schools.com) has an online directory with a helpful search engine and provides links to member school websites.

#### II. Contact the schools that interest you

- A. Requirements vary from school to school.
  1. Some application materials, like an official school transcript, are standard while other materials will differ from school to school.
  2. It is important to contact the admission office at each school to inquire about:
    - a. Application Requirements and Deadlines
    - b. Admission Materials

#### III. Completing the Application Form

- A. Check first to see if the schools in which you are interested accept the Common Application.
  1. The Common Application is a standardized application form developed by TABS. It was designed to simplify the admission process for applicants as well as for teachers who complete the recommendations.
  2. Currently, the Common Application is accepted by nearly 200 TABS member schools. In addition, a number of schools who do not accept the application *do* accept the teacher recommendation forms.

3. The Common Application can be downloaded from the TABS web-site at [www.schools.com](http://www.schools.com)
4. The Common Application is also available in the *TABS 2000-2001 Boarding Schools Directory*.

B. Completing the Application Form

1. Make sure to complete the form thoroughly and neatly.
2. The student should complete the application him/herself. Schools want to see the student's work.
3. Avoid the natural impulse to do extensive editing to your child's essay!

C. Teacher Recommendations and Official School Transcript

1. The teachers and administrators at the student's current school must complete these forms. They are designed to provide the academic history of the applicant and are very useful to admission officers.
2. Recommendation forms should be delivered to the student's current school.
3. Ask the teachers/administrators to complete the forms and mail them *directly* to the schools.
4. Request that your child's current school send an official school transcript (academic record) to each of the schools being considered.

D. "Other" materials

1. Often families provide letters of support written by friends, acquaintances and others on behalf of the student. This information does not influence the decision of the admission committee and is often removed from the file before the file is read by others.
2. Admission officers are very busy and have to read numerous files in order to determine who will be offered admission. It is best to provide only the information requested.
3. Providing extra or unnecessary information may disadvantage a good applicant – the admission officer may become concerned about the student's ability and question why the family thinks it is important to provide additional letters of support.

IV. Testing

A. Standardized testing such as the SSAT allows schools to more fully evaluate students.

1. Most boarding schools require or accept the SSAT as part of the application process.
2. Review the school application materials or check with an admission officer to see if additional testing such as a test of English proficiency (typically the SLEP or TOEFL) will also be required.

B. SSAT Writing Sample

1. Very useful to schools in determining whether or not a student's writing skills are sufficient because the school knows that it was completed by the student without any help and within a certain period of time.
2. School admission officers will be concerned if the SSAT writing sample is weaker than the application essays or other information submitted on behalf of the student.

## V. Interview

- A. Generally, schools require a campus interview with all applicants; however, many will make exceptions for international students.
  - 1. When possible it is best to visit the school for an interview in order to get firsthand information and to ensure a good match between the student and school.
  - 2. Telephone interviews work best when a student has read about the school and has taken the time to write down several thoughtful questions.
  - 3. School admission representatives often travel internationally and it is possible to schedule interviews in your own city.
- B. Making a good impression
  - 1. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Admission officers are educators who enjoy working with children/teenagers – they appreciate honest and thoughtful answers to their questions. They also expect the student to ask questions.
- C. Interviewing is a two-way street
  - 1. The interview is not only for the school to assess the applicant, but it is also an opportunity for the applicant to assess the school.

## VI. Deadlines

- A. The school year in the United States is from September through June (approximately). Many schools request that application materials be submitted by January or February and they notify families of their decisions in early March.
- B. Be mindful of published deadlines and check with the admission offices frequently (by e-mail, fax, or telephone) to ensure that all materials have been received.
- C. Once you receive notification of acceptance from a school, be sure to send the signed contract and deposit by the deadline given to reserve a space. If you do not wish to accept the offer of admission, notify the school as soon as possible so the place may be offered to a student on the wait list.

## VII. The F-1, or Student Visa

- A. After your child has been accepted, you will receive an I-20 form or *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status for Academic and Language Students*. Some schools require a signed contract and deposit before sending the I-20.
- B. The I-20 enables a foreign student to apply for an F-1 or student visa.
- C. The student must take the I-20 along with the following information to a US consulate or embassy in his/her home country:
  - 1. Valid passport
  - 2. Financial documents indicating family’s ability to cover the cost of tuition and other expenses.
  - 3. Letter of admission from school

- D. The student must also complete Form OF-156, the Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form, which may be obtained from the US embassy or consulate.
- E. An interview with a consular official at the US embassy or consulate is also required.
- F. If the student's visa application is approved, the student is given an F-1 visa stamp in his/her passport. This stamp indicates:
  - 1. Where the visa was issued.
  - 2. Date the visa will expire.
  - 3. Number of entries permitted into the US.
  - 4. Type of visa issued.
  - 5. Visa number.
- G. The student will also be given a sealed envelope containing both pages of the I-20, which will be needed at the Port of Entry.

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