

School News & Notes

Financial Aid Is Available For Private School Students

(NAPSA)—Financial aid is available to help private-school students make the grade. More than \$694 million in need-based financial aid was awarded to students attending nearly 900 independent, private schools in 2003-04. The average need-based award to students given aid was \$9,608, according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Surprised? You're not alone. "Too few people know that financial aid is available to help students attend independent elementary or secondary schools," says Mark J. Mitchell, vice president for financial aid services at NAIS.

Nearly 17 percent of students at independent schools, he says, received need-based aid in 2003-04. Another five percent received merit awards, which averaged \$2,856 apiece.

"Another misconception is that aid is for low-income families only," he notes. "That's patently not true. Even families earning more than \$100,000 could qualify for aid under certain conditions."

There are good reasons to want to be one of the nearly 500,000 students attending these schools. The National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) found that students in independent schools earn significantly higher SAT scores than students from public schools even when the stats are adjusted for socioeconomic background.

Independent school graduates



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are more likely to graduate from college and show a greater commitment to community and civic service, the NELS data—gathered by the U.S. Department of Education—indicates.

Parents considering enrolling a child in an independent school should pick up a four-page "Parents' Financial Statement" (PFS) at a local independent school. Fill it out and return it to The School and Student Service for Financial Aid (SSS). This organization looks at family income, financial assets and expenses and determines the "expected family contribution."

"The expected family contribution is a suggested figure," Mitchell explains. "The actual aid award depends on how much aid a school has available, what the PFS form indicates, and other variables such as the number of

applicants for aid." Some independent schools are heavily endowed and offer a great deal of aid. Others offer less or none.

"If your financial picture changes for the worse, and the PFS information does not reflect that fact, don't hesitate to ask if there is any way the school can reconsider," advises Mitchell. "The answer may not always be 'yes' but it is certainly worth asking the question."

Tuitions at independent schools vary considerably, often based on the geographic region and the type of program the school offers. In 2003-2004, tuition at independent schools ranged from a few thousand dollars to more than \$25,000.

Said Mitchell, "Surveys show that students at NAIS schools are far less likely to report being bored in class and twice as likely to ask teachers for advice after class. Eighty-five percent go on to 'very high' or 'highly selective' colleges and universities.

"More importantly, they become adults that our society really needs. They participate in community action programs and volunteer at higher rates and place a greater value on promoting racial understanding than graduates from other types of schools."

For more information about financing an independent school education, or to search for independent day and boarding schools, please visit www.nais.org/admission/.