

# Pointers For Parents

## Five Questions Parents Should Ask About Schools

(NAPSA)—Knowing what questions to ask may help parents better evaluate the quality of their children's education.

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), along with 34 partner organizations, developed five questions to help parents assess the quality of a child's education.

"With the many issues parents have to think about regarding educational standards, we wanted to make it easier for them to assess their child's education by providing them with a one-stop list of questions to consider," said NAIS President Patrick F. Bassett.

Many parents 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 five questions parents can ask are:

- Are there high quality and committed teachers? 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. When teachers

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are able to spend more time understanding each student's learning style, they can successfully tailor teaching approaches and actively engage students in the learning process.

- 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.

- Are there strong partnerships among parents, teachers and students? The best schools develop collaborative relationships among parents, teachers and students. Strong partnerships are built on regular, open communication about classroom goals, as well as student academic achievement.

- Does the school have a climate that supports achievement? The most successful schools are those in which students and teachers share a sense of purpose and where student achievement is actively supported.

"Education is perhaps the most important investment parents can make in a child's future," said Bassett. "It is our hope that parents across the country will pose these questions and evaluate their child's school to determine if it meets the high quality standards that correlate with student and school success."