

SECTION I

Principles of Good Practice

These principles provide guidelines that we encourage schools to consider when assessing their institutional operations and practices. They focus on common concerns and issues where schools, as part of a local community, can encourage each other to follow best practices and where interschool cooperation is helpful to the public.

AISGW PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID

While AISGW schools may differ in their size, configuration, and philosophy, all members subscribe to standards and principles grounded in ethical conduct and mutual respect and consideration. These standards and principles are designed for the protection of both individuals and institutions and presume that existing agreements will be honored, that appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, that the rights of students and families will be respected, and that schools will deal with each other in a forthright manner. In short, integrity should guide all member schools in their dealings with applicants, with their current constituencies, and with one another. This statement incorporates good practices for families as well as for schools, and the Association invites member schools to share these guidelines with their families.

Application Process

1. Schools recognize that general advertising, direct-mail campaigns, and communications between other schools and current independent school families guarantee the free market rights of the families and the general public to consider all options and that such practices from competitor schools should not be seen as a violation of the spirit of collaboration, collegiality, and professionalism reflected in these principles.
2. Schools recognize the right of students and parents to consider other schools and to hold preliminary discussions regarding admission without notifying the present school.
3. No member school may impede current students or families who wish to leave of their own volition.
4. AISGW strongly suggests that member schools be mindful of current relationships between peer schools and families, and allow families to initiate contact with a new school, as schools invest significant time and resources in composing their student bodies and disruption of those efforts is a lost opportunity to provide that place to another student.
5. Schools should make clear to candidates all dates pertaining to application and reenrollment procedures. AISGW recommends the following timeline:
 - a. application deadlines – schools set a date independently;
 - b. notification date – notification of admission decisions shall be the last Friday in February; electronic notification, which includes email, telephone, online portal, or any other form of instant notification, shall occur no earlier than 4 pm; letters may be placed in the U.S. mail any time on the last Friday in February.
 - c. registration/reply date – enrollment contracts for newly admitted students are due back to school no earlier than the second Friday in March, or two weeks from the date of notification;
 - d. tuition binding date – enrollment contracts for newly admitted and re-enrolling

students are final and binding as of 4 pm on May 1st. This provision means that schools will not release the tuition obligation of a family that has already enrolled unless the family notifies the school of its decision to enroll elsewhere by 4 pm on May 1st.

Although a widely diverse group of schools, AISGW members are strongly encouraged to adhere to these recommended dates. Schools that are subject to the timeline of a different organization or geographic region are asked to notify AISGW of the reason(s) for a different timeline and to make the Association aware of the alternate timeline. In addition, AISGW will send a reminder to schools in the summer that sets forth the dates that are specifically applicable for the upcoming admission cycle.

6. When a family files an application for admission to another school, AISGW recommends that the family advise the student's present school that discussions are in progress so that the current school can plan for the upcoming school year.
7. Families bear the responsibility for completing the application process and should consult their child's school's policies regarding release of transcripts and other pertinent data.
8. Upon request, a school will send student records to another school to which a student has applied. However, the sending school may, when permitted by law, reserve the right to refuse to release such records if the family has not met its financial obligations to that school.
9. It is strongly recommended that an AISGW school not admit a student without first receiving appropriate records directly from the student's present school.
10. An AISGW school will take all reasonable and lawful measures to maintain the confidentiality of recommendations, reports, and other pertinent data that are exchanged between and among schools.
11. Parents should notify a school promptly if they do not want their child to receive further consideration for the coming year.
12. The parents of an accepted applicant should be informed of the complete cost of the forthcoming school year before being required to sign an enrollment agreement.
13. During the period between notification and reply date, AISGW recommends that schools endeavor to keep the nature and scope of post-acceptance events and enticements to a reasonable number in order to allow the family to engage in a thoughtful decision-making process.

Enrollment and Waiting Pools

1. When a family receives an enrollment contract, either from one or more than one school, the family will notify all schools promptly regarding its decision to attend or not attend. Families are strongly discouraged from submitting an enrollment deposit at more than one school. AISGW encourages member schools to share this guidance with all applying families.
2. Waiting pools are established for the academic year for which the family has applied. The waiting pools are considered closed once the school year has begun.
3. If parents of a prospective student accept an offer of admission by returning an enrollment contract and deposit to one school, then receive an offer of admission to a second school that they subsequently choose to accept, they should promptly notify the first school of their change in plans.

4. When a school accepts a student from its waiting pool, the admission office is encouraged to advise the parents that they may have a financial obligation to another school. Parents should consider all obligations of a previously signed contract before signing a contract with another school.

Financial Aid

Need-based financial aid is the primary means to support access to independent schools by students of diverse socio-economic levels. For this reason, AISGW strongly endorses financial aid on the basis of demonstrated financial need. AISGW also recognizes that some member schools offer merit-based (non-need) aid.

1. A school will provide students and families with comprehensive information about the total yearly cost, all aid opportunities, financing options, and policies and procedures.
2. A school will recognize that the primary responsibility for financing a student's education rests with the student's family.
3. A school will use a uniform methodology to assess annually, in a consistent and equitable manner, the ability to pay of each family that is applying for need-based financial aid.
4. A school will require adequate documentation of family resources when determining need. A family's aid shall be provisional until all requested documentation is submitted.
5. A school will refrain from discussing with any other school awards of financial aid to specific applicants.
6. In granting need-based aid, a school will not exceed in its offer of financial aid the amount needed to meet the difference between the resources determined by the school to be available to the family and the student's total educational expenses.
7. A school will notify accepted aid applicants of all financial aid decisions before expecting a binding reply to the offer of admission.
8. A school will safeguard the confidentiality of all financial information supplied by a family.
9. A school will refrain from and discourage others within the school community from disclosing the names of need-based financial aid recipients and award amounts.
10. A school will have the same standards of behavior and academic performance for financial aid recipients as for all students.
11. A school that offers merit awards will include information about such awards in their admissions materials, specifically listing the criteria for awarding merit-based aid.
12. A school that offers donor-sponsored merit-based aid will maintain administrative control over decision making in the selection of recipients.