

## **Principles of Best Practice**

### **Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools (AAAIS)**

The educational choices you consider for your children are among the most important decisions you make as a parent. Just as children are different, so are schools. Though finding a suitable match between your child and a school can be an anxious one, Atlanta is fortunate in having a wide variety of schools with a generous range of characteristics. The Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools (AAAIS) is proud of its member schools and strives to provide useful information for parents. AAAIS is as diverse as the population it serves.

There is no one “best school” for your child. Finding a suitable match occurs when parents and admissions professionals work together to share important information about children and school programs. Your goal is to find an educational environment where your child can learn well and thrive. A school’s goal is also to support that child and also to develop a group of children who enjoy learning in a setting where their particular intellectual, social, and emotional needs can be met. Finding an appropriate match should be a process of discovering more about your child and learning more about the excellent options Atlanta offers.

#### **AAAIS Schools and Admissions**

AAAIS schools share an interest in a student’s personal as well as academic growth. Some schools are elementary or secondary only; some enroll students from pre-school through grade twelve; and some “special purpose” schools offer programs for students with unique learning needs. All AAAIS schools are accredited schools of notable quality.

While independent schools have much in common, they vary in how they evaluate a child for admission. Families are encouraged to visit [www.aaais.org](http://www.aaais.org) and to contact schools directly for detailed information. Reading their material, visiting their campus, and asking questions about their educational mission, as well as their instruction, values, and practices, are strongly encouraged.

The Principles of Best Practice that follow reflect the ethical and professional guidelines expected of everyone in the school community: administrators, trustees, faculty, parents, and alumni who serve as the constituency of the AAAIS school. Understanding and adhering to these Principles help ensure professional admission procedures and ethics for both families and schools.

#### **Nondiscrimination & Individual Respect**

AAAIS adheres to the same standard of nondiscrimination which is a Principle of Good Practice of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS): “The school adheres to local, state, and federal laws and regulations that require nondiscriminatory practice in the administration of admission policies.” AAAIS schools are committed to ethical practices. Another NAIS principle affirmed by AAAIS states: “The school respects and affirms the dignity and worth of each individual in the admission process.”

## **Student Recruitment Practices**

Each school seeks those students who meet its particular mission and admission criteria. Further, school employees and their representatives – e.g., current parents, benefactors, trustees, etc. – should:

- Communicate the school’s mission and admission criteria through objective advertisements, recruitment materials, open houses, interviews, etc.
- Speak accurately, comprehensively, and proudly about their own school, but refrain from alleging weaknesses or problems in other schools.
- Avoid using undue influence in recruiting students.
- Refrain from asking applicants or their parents to designate a certain school as their first choice, which applies undue pressure on families.

## **Visitation & Preliminary Discussions**

AAAIS recognizes the rights of currently enrolled students or parents to visit and consider other schools without notifying the present school. Initial inquiries should be made to the potential new school’s Director of Admission.

## **Communication of Admissions Policies**

A school’s Director of Admission is responsible, in conjunction with the Head of School, for communicating admissions policies to its constituents (trustees, administrators, staff, faculty, parents, alumni, and friends of the school) and for making clear to all applicants details of the admissions procedure, dates, and related costs of applying to and attending the school.

## **Financial Aid Policies**

Each candidate for admission will be required to give adequate documentation of family financial resources in order to be considered for financial aid. All financial awards are based only on need. AAAIS schools prohibit the use of scholarships or stipends for academic, athletic, or artistic merit or talent as recruitment tools, on the grounds that these benefit larger schools and disadvantage smaller schools. Financial aid applicants will be notified in writing no sooner than the time of parent notification of admission status. Financial aid applications are confidential.

## **The Submission of Information**

The applicant and his/her family will:

- Provide truthful and complete information regarding academic performance, conduct, and reasons for leaving another school.
- Agree to notify the school of significant changes that occur in academic and conduct performance after the application has been submitted and/or after the applicant has been accepted.

The school reserves the right to revoke the applicant’s acceptance if inaccurate information is given or information is omitted.

## **Transcripts & Confidentiality**

AAAIS schools will:

- Upon written request and as promptly as possible, send a transcript (or its equivalent) and other pertinent information to another school to which a student has applied.
- Require an official transcript (or its equivalent) from the student's present school, unless the student's immediate needs dictate otherwise.
- Take all responsible and lawful measure to maintain the confidentiality of reports and information exchanged among schools concerning students and parents.

## **Personal References**

Schools and their representatives (as described above) will adhere to these Principles of Best Practice by not exerting undue influence on the Director of Admission or an admission committee or by implying their influence to candidates. Any recommendations should be based on actual knowledge of the student's academic achievement, potential, or character.

## **Notification Dates**

AAAIS schools recognize that the admission season for an upcoming school year can be an anxious time for families, as it is for schools. Therefore:

- AAAIS schools agree to common admission calendar dates. General purpose schools abide by a common date for applicant notification of status as well as a common date by which applicants must advise schools of their decision regarding offers of admission.
- No AAAIS school will advise any applicant of acceptance, denial, or wait-list status prior to the Common Notification Date in early spring, nor will any AAAIS school ask or imply that an applicant should advise the school of a decision prior to the common applicant response date.
- Schools designated by AAAIS as "special purpose" schools – which have as their central mission the provision of special services for students with unique learning needs – may follow their own admission calendar, which can include "rolling admissions."
- AAAIS member schools agree not to initiate contact with accepted applicants between the Common Notification Date and the Common Reply Date, by which the school must be notified by the applicant family of their decision regarding offers.
- AAAIS schools encourage families to complete their visits early in the admission process. In order to prevent inappropriate "rushing" of accepted students, AAAIS asks that parents and applicants not visit campuses between the Common Notification Date and the Common Reply Date.