



## Introduction

Helping students gain access to private schools can have a substantial impact on the quality of students' high school education and following success in post-secondary education. Recent research<sup>1</sup> has demonstrated that students who attend private schools arrive at college better prepared, both academically and culturally, to make the transition. This document serves as a guide for programs hoping to prepare and place students in private high schools. (Note - when referring to private schools throughout this document, we are generally referring to the Northeast boarding schools for reference. Please note that processes for boarding schools outside of the Northeast or local private day schools may be different. )

## Overview

To lead an effective private school placement and support programs, programs need to do the following.

- Educate students and families about private school
- Identify strong student candidates
- Ensure student and parent commitment
- Prepare students for standardized tests
- Prepare private school applications
- Prepare students for attending private school
- Support students once they are at private school
- Assist with and monitor financial aid applications

## Educate Students and Families about Private School

Students and their families may not be familiar with the concept of private schools, or may not think that they can afford private school. They also may have concerns over whether private school is the right fit for them. Start the private school process with a meeting with all seventh grade students and parents to explain what private school is (especially if boarding schools are being focused on). During this meeting, cover the following information.

- Information about private schools
  - What is private school?
  - The benefits and challenges of private school
  - How to afford private school
- Program expectations
  - Standards students must meet in order to apply
  - Application process and expectations of students/families

Include families or students from your program who have already experienced private school

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard Ed. Magazine. *Poor, but Privileged*. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/17/05/poor-privileged>

so they can offer a personal perspective of the benefits and drawbacks of private school.

## **Identify Strong Student Candidates**

The most important factor to consider in selecting students is their academic record. Schools will look for at least an 85% overall average, and will see any individual low grades as red flags on the application. Students with grades around a 90% have the highest chance of success in the process. Strong performances in Math and ELA are especially important since those two teachers are required to write a recommendation for most applications. Be clear about these requirements upfront so that lower-performing students understand why they are not selected and do not feel resentment toward the program.

After taking grades into consideration, other important things to consider are interpersonal skills and squash ability. Interpersonal skills are important both for the interviews and for when it comes time for the student to make the transition to boarding school. Unlike college, an interview is a mandatory part of the application process and admissions officials usually weigh the interview fairly heavily when making decisions. Students with strong interpersonal skills are more likely to make a strong impression in the interview, which is what admission officials are really looking for (interview prep is an important part of the application process for this reason). The adjustment to boarding school is also generally very tough for both cultural and academic reasons, and so students who are more outgoing, confident, determined, and adaptable, among other things, usually have an easier time adjusting. While the selection process is about which students will fare well in the application process, it also is about which students will succeed in boarding school as you never want to set a student up for failure. The interpersonal and academic skills play a big role in this figuring of which students will be able to succeed in both the application process and at a private high school.

Squash ability is important because admissions officials are looking for players who are going to impact the team. Especially when test scores are not very high (50% or above), squash definitely plays a role. This is not to say that lower-level squash players should not apply as there is obviously a range of boarding school levels, but it's good to keep squash ability in mind throughout the process and especially when selecting schools for a student to apply to.

A final component of the selection process is for the student to complete an internal application (within your program). Having students complete an internal application increases buy-in and signals that this is a serious process with extra work and expectations. Include a Parent Questionnaire so you can hear parents' thoughts and ensure they understand that they will need to share financial information in the applications. This Parent Questionnaire also creates the opportunity to talk with parents individually and confidentially about whether they are comfortable with the idea of boarding school and if there are any

specific financial situations to be aware of (i.e. not filing taxes etc.).

## **Ensure Student and Family Commitment**

Getting student and family buy-in to this process is critical. You and the student are going to spend hours working on applications, learning about and talking with schools, preparing for tests, getting recommendations, etc. Without the full commitment of students and families, all this work could go to waste if, in the end, a student or parent decides they don't really want to go away to private school after all.

Once students are selected for the process, meet at least once individually with any students or parents where parents have raised some concerns about the application process, or with students who you are more unsure of their success in the process. It's best to get all parental concerns out on the table up front and talk through them rather than finding out later in the process. It's also important to manage expectations with students who might be on the border to make it clear that the application process is very competitive and that there are no guarantees of admission. For families who are hesitant about the process, one of the most effective resources can be having them talk with other parents who have sent their children to private schools, or having them talk directly with the students themselves.

Have all students and parents sign contracts for the placement program that clearly lay out expectations and timelines. Regular parent communication throughout is important, especially where there are concerns. If students are missing a lot of sessions, are not completing homework, or perform poorly on practice tests, it is good to keep parents fully in the loop. Consider having progress meetings with parents to share progress reports, to comment on student performance, and to point out areas for improvement. These meetings could also be a time to review preliminary school thoughts to make sure parents are comfortable with what the program is thinking.

## **Prepare Students for Standardized Tests**

Standardized test prep can be very difficult because the quality of students' education up to that point really makes a difference, as does the language they grew up speaking (i.e. if they grew up speaking a language other than English in their home, vocabulary-heavy tests can be difficult). For the Northeast boarding schools and the private day schools in the Tristate Area, the **SSAT & ISEE** are the two standardized tests students can take. The SSAT is much more widely accepted and some schools have an explicit preference for that test, but the ISEE is gaining in popularity. The main difference between the tests is that the ISEE does not have the analogy section that the SSAT has. Instead of analogies, they have sentence completion questions, which seem a bit more straightforward.

## **Timing and Structure**

Students should start preparing for the SSAT as early as possible in their 7th grade year (at CitySquash, students start preparing in March), and then take the June SSAT test to give a data data point early on in the process. The most effective approach is to organize small group or one-on-one tutoring, but large group sessions can be helpful at the beginning of the process for covering larger math concepts and topics and overall test strategy. Once tutoring begins, it is important that students are regularly attending tutoring (at least once per week) and that there are no large gaps without tutoring to prevent learning loss. Over the summer, students should participate in intensive summer SSAT preparation and, if there is a summer recess for the program, give students SSAT practice packets to be working through and reviewing during this time. The fall SSAT tests (offered each month October-December) will likely be the most important ones for applications and so tutoring should continue very regularly up until the final test date.

### **Content to Cover**

SSAT prep can be tailored by each instructor but some important aspects to consider including are basic math concepts that will be covered on the test (any SSAT prep book will lay out all math concepts covered and include sample questions for each), test strategy, and plenty of practice problems/tests. It can also be worth focusing on mental math as students don't have calculators for the test, and on vocabulary. Given the focus on vocabulary throughout the test, programs might start focusing on vocabulary with students earlier than when they start test prep, especially given research about teaching vocabulary effectively. Vocabulary workbooks can be helpful in this regard.

### **Importance of Practice Sections/Tests**

In addition to having students regularly complete practice problems or even full practice sections either in class or for homework, students should take at least a few full-length practice tests. Not only will these tests serve as good benchmarks to see how students are doing and give lots of tutoring material as you go through the practice test afterwards but also these are important for students to see how long the test is and develop skills in time management and focus throughout the test. When possible, give these practice tests somewhere other than the program office and in a setting that feels more like a real test center.

### **Test Strategy Content**

Like any test, there are some strategies on the SSAT that are helpful for students to know. All test books will have much more information and strategy but a few of the main ones follow.

- ❑ **Skipping:** On the SSAT, you lose a  $\frac{1}{4}$  point for every wrong answer, but you are not penalized for a skip. Therefore, students should skip if they have no idea on a question, but they should be careful they are not skipping too much. If they skip every time they're not sure, they are probably hurting themselves. Admissions officials will

receive score reports that list number of questions skipped, and so not only does skipping too many negatively affect your score (since there is a decent probability you'll get at least a few guesses right) but also it looks bad to admissions. Try giving students a maximum number they can skip on each section so they really reserve them for the questions they have no idea on. Students should try to narrow down the answer choices wherever they can to make a better guess. Even if they don't know the right answer, knowing an answer or two that is wrong is helpful.

- ❑ Vocabulary Strategies: Word Charge/Roots/Prefixes
  - ❑ Learning word roots as well as prefixes can be helpful on the vocabulary section for both synonyms and analogies. If a student doesn't know the word, but can recognize the root or a prefix, it will help them make a better guess and might even help them figure out the answer.
  - ❑ Similarly, if students can figure out the word charge (if a word has a positive or negative connotation), they can also better guess by crossing out answer choices that don't match the word charge of the word in question.

### **Multiple Tests/Superscoring**

The SSAT can be taken as many times as desired and schools generally don't seem to care if someone has taken it several times because they know it's not a perfect test of admissibility. Often times you don't need to even send all scores to a school as score reports can usually be sent from the program and you can choose which to send. Most schools will superscore different sections though so it can be beneficial to send more than one in the case that different tests superscore for a higher overall score (i.e. if a student's October test had the highest math and verbal scores and the November test had the highest reading comprehension score, schools will superscore these two tests to create the highest overall score for an applicant).

### **Prepare Private School Applications**

Private school applications have several components to them, and it's helpful to start thinking about the different parts early. Most applications to the Northeast boarding schools are due January 15 or 30/31, but some schools vary, and day school deadlines are usually earlier. Check all deadlines at the beginning of the school year and make a projected timeline for application work to ensure everything gets in on time.

### **Interview Scheduling**

Boarding schools require an interview with each applicant, either in-person or over Skype. Wherever possible, do in-person interviews as, for students without as much interview experience, Skypes can be awkward. Admissions officers often do a lot of travel in the fall and winter to visit different schools/programs and conduct interviews, so the earlier you reach out, the better chance you have of getting them to interview your students at your program, or

in your city, to avoid a campus visit to each school. Some campus visits will likely be necessary though and it can also be helpful to ask schools how much they care about a campus visit (i.e. some schools will say it's unlikely they'll give full aid to a student who hasn't visited and then you can know to prioritize that campus visit). As a last resort, when in-person interviews can't be scheduled, set up Skype interviews. Usually, admissions offices will interview through January but, again, it is helpful to get the interview calendar set up as early as possible once you know who is applying to which schools.

### **Interview Prep**

The best ways to prepare students for the interviews are to practice interview skills and to do research on the school. Students should be ready to talk about why they want to go to a certain school and should have some questions ready about the school. Interviewers will often ask about the students' interests in and experience at school, their involvement with squash, their family, and their desire to go away to school. Give students lists of sample questions for them to practice on their own, and arrange for them to run through simulated interview prep with someone they don't know, like a staff member they're not familiar with, a volunteer etc. The interview is an important piece of the application so definitely do as much prep as possible!

### **Common Application**

Wherever possible, use one of the standardized applications that can be sent to multiple schools so as to avoid filling out ten different school-specific applications. Almost all schools accept at least one of the common apps, and, some schools who normally don't will make exceptions when working with programs as they know the programs have multiple students they are helping. The most popular application at this point seems to be SAO (Standard Application Online through the SSAT) but others are Gateway and TADS. The SAO also offers a membership that certain programs might find beneficial if private school is enough of a focus for it to be cost effective. When you are a member organization, you receive unlimited SSAT fee waivers and application fee waivers. For organizations that don't become members, specific schools will provide application fee waivers and sometimes SSAT fee waivers as well (but ask ASAP in September for SSAT fee waivers as schools get a limited amount each year).

### **Written Application**

The written application has several parts to it.

- ❑ **Personal Essay:** Most applications will require a short personal essay. When using a common app, only one essay is necessary (unless a school has supplements). The personal essay is 200-500 words and applicants can choose from a number of prompts.
- ❑ **Short Answers:** Most applications will also have a short answer section - 4-6 paragraph responses to ask the students more specific questions about themselves. These are required, just as the personal essay is.

- ❑ Mini Resume: It can be helpful to have a mini resume to upload along with the application to detail the applicant's extracurriculars, leadership positions and other achievements. This is not a required piece.
- ❑ For a sample of the 2018-2019 SAO essay prompts, click the following link:  
<https://enrollment.org/images/SAO/Student-Essays.pdf>

### **Sending Test Scores**

You do not need to designate score recipients when signing students up for the SSAT, and it is often better not to. If you designate the schools a student is applying to as a recipient, the school will automatically receive the report. Schools usually do not require tests to be sent this way, so it is better to wait to see how students do before choosing which tests to send. Not all scores have to be reported as with some standardized tests. If a school ever requires the official score report to be sent directly from the SSAT, you can do this later on.

### **Teacher Recommendations**

Most applications require the current Math and English/ELA teachers to fill out a recommendation form, as well as a school counselor/principal. When using a standard application, it is a standard form that teachers only need to fill out once. The earlier teachers know, the better to ensure they are not late with them. Give students a heads up about these recommendations at the beginning of the school year so they're on their best behavior in those specific classes, since they don't get to choose which teachers write the recommendations like they do with the college process.

### **Supplements**

Some schools will have supplements - either an additional set of short answers or a second essay. Check supplements early to avoid surprises the day before applications are due.

### **Supplemental Program Recommendations**

Having a staff member from your organization write a supplemental recommendation letter for each applicant can be really beneficial. Especially since the teachers are just filling out a form more or less, it can be helpful to provide more color on the applicant and their character, work ethic etc.

### **Parent Portion**

Many standard applications now have a parent questionnaire. Don't agonize over this as this is really only meant to gather more information, and a weaker parent section won't hurt the application. A program recommendation can help give some of the information that is lacking in the parent questionnaire where there are barriers with language etc. for a parent.

**Financial Aid** will be discussed later in this document.

## Prepare Students for Private School

Students who attend private schools often have a big transition to make, both academically and culturally. Below are some steps you can take to ensure they are ready for the experience.

### Academic Transition

- ❑ **Increase their workload:** For some students, the academic transition can be the hardest part of the transition to boarding schools, and it can be normal for students to take up to a year to really adjust to the increased workload and demands of private school. Starting to prepare them for this transition early is vital. One tip is to use the SSAT prep as a way to do this starting in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Giving regular homework on top of their normal homework from both the program and school can help them get used to increased workload and also help them work on time management and organizational skills. Teaching organizational and study skills as part of this class as well, and utilizing regular quizzes, can be helpful.
- ❑ **Summer prep:** The school students get into is likely the best resource for how to prepare them academically. Schools will often have ideas of good academic summer prep programs or might even be able to sponsor a student to attend a program at their school or another school. If they are unable to help, look for general academic prep courses that are convenient and might be willing to give a deal. Writing and foundational math skills, especially, will be vital for boarding school and so courses focusing in these areas will often be recommended by schools as a way to either get ahead for the year, or brush up on skills that will be necessary for success in their courses. If no courses are available, making a tutoring program for them to go through with their home program is a great back-up. Whatever the prep is, try to make it as intensive as possible to help students acclimate to the increased workload and academic expectations coming their way.
- ❑ **Self-advocacy & extra help:** A big part of preparing students also is teaching them how to ask for help and self-advocate. Boarding school teachers will expect students to come see them for extra help and students need to know how to do this. A lot of their communication with teachers will also be over email so teaching them email etiquette can be helpful. They should know in advance that if they don't have a book for class, if they can't find their homework in an online portal, or if they simply don't understand something, they should always ask someone ASAP, whether it's over email or going to find a teacher (at many schools even during evening study halls, teachers are available if students just ask). Reinforce for students that it's not a sign of failure to ask for help; asking for help is necessary and expected.
- ❑ **Using their advisors:** Students should also be prepped on what exactly the role of their academic advisor is, since many students won't have had an advisor before.

Advisors can be an important resource and students, again, need to know how to use them. They should use advisors to help set up extra help with other teachers if necessary, find out about other resources on campus, and just generally keep them in the loop about where they are struggling so advisors can troubleshoot. Having weekly meetings with their advisor at the beginning of the year is often mandatory, and students should know that these meetings are not to be skipped.

## **Cultural Transition**

- ❑ **Campus visits:** The cultural transition can be harder to prepare students for, but in some ways it is the most important thing. First and foremost, it's really important that students have visited a boarding school campus when other students are there so they can see the student populace they are entering. While we can tell them that they may feel out of place since the majority of the other students won't look like them, nothing can replace their actually seeing this for themselves, and better for this not to happen for the first time on their first day of school.
- ❑ **Orientation:** Holding an orientation session with all the first-year students going away in the summer before, or even an orientation series, is hugely beneficial. Having open discussions about some of the feelings they may experience of not belonging or even inferiority are important to help prepare them. It can also help to create bonds between the class and make them more likely to reach out to each other when they are actually experiencing some of these feelings on campus. They should understand the reality that the majority of the students on the campuses will come from very different and more affluent backgrounds. It can also be helpful to ask older students who have gone through the transition what they wish they had known beforehand. Directors of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at different schools can also be good resources for putting together an effective orientation program.
- ❑ **Student panels:** Utilize older students from your program or other programs who have gone through the transition. Student panels can be an incredibly effective setting for older students to share their own struggles during the transition (academic or cultural) and also a good forum for students to ask questions they might not ask of staff.
- ❑ **Peer mentoring:** Where possible, setting up peer mentoring to help students through the transition, similar to SEA's Campus Connections program, can be really effective. The more resources the students have the better!
- ❑ **Paperwork & forms:** There is a lot of paperwork to be completed before students arrive on campus. First are the enrollment forms, including the official contract that usually confirms financial aid details. Additionally, there are health forms and multiple other permissions. Many schools have transitioned to using an online health form portal called Magnus Health that enables basically all health forms to be filled out online by parents (with the exception of the actual physical form that needs to be filled

out and signed by a doctor). Schools will have different systems for other forms, but it is important to check with the school as to what forms are necessary and make sure that they have the program's contact information as secondary contact information so you can be alerted when things are missing since often information is emailed out to parents.

- ❑ **Summer Reading/Books:** Be sure to check summer reading lists with students so they have completed all work before arriving on campus. Check with financial aid offices also about whether or not books and a laptop are included in the financial aid package. When they are not, schools will sometimes have additional money they can give to help students with this or loaner laptops. Schools often also have old, used books that they're willing to give out if there are no other options.

## Support Students at Private Schools

Once a student goes away to private school, the responsibility of the program to support them does not end. Programs need to stay in regular contact with and support participants throughout their time there.

### Communication

The key to supporting students away at school is having really consistent communication with the student and key contacts on campus who will be able to tell you about academic, personal and other progress. As soon as students get on campus, find out who their advisor is and reach out explaining your program and the support you will continue to give the student while they are away at school. Ask the advisor about any other people who it would be good to establish contact with (coaches, deans, individual teachers etc.) and, once communication is established, make sure to remain consistent with check ins. Ask if report cards can be sent to you whenever they are released or get on the email list that notifies you when grades have been posted online. Reviewing report cards with the student and their advisor when there are concerns is important. Some schools may need a release on file to communicate with you, and so having a generic program release form that families can fill out is useful. When parents speak a language other than English, it can also be helpful to request that the school pair the student with an advisor who speaks the same language as their parents. This obviously is not always possible, but where it is possible, it can be hugely helpful as it takes the program out as a middleman with communication between the school and parents, and, more importantly, helps make both parents and students more comfortable with the school.

### Parent Communication

Since you may end up having more communication with a student's advisor than their parents do in some situations (see note above about requesting an advisor who can converse with the parents if primary language is not English), it is important that you relay all pertinent news (grades, updates etc.) back to parents. If you know parents are not going to be reliable about

checking their email, add a staff member's email as a secondary parent email for the student so you can track communication from the school. Emails about financial aid and other important deadlines/logistics are often relayed over email and it is important that you don't miss getting these. Many schools will also have parent portals online where important forms are posted. If parents are comfortable with it, help to monitor the parent portal as well.

### **Campus Visits**

Campus visits are important as well to support students. The visits are hugely appreciated by the students as their families may not be able to visit as often as their classmates. Visiting them and taking them off campus for lunch is a really nice treat. It is also good to check-in in person at least once as things will often come up in that setting that you wouldn't learn about over the phone or through email. When on campus, make sure to sit down with the advisor and ask the advisor in advance if there is anyone else they'd recommend you meet with. It can also be good to meet with your admissions and financial aid contacts while on campus. Visiting first years and other students of concern at the beginning of the year is a good idea and then you can wait for the winter to visit students you're less concerned about, and could even bring your next applicants up for interviews at those schools at the same time. Wherever possible, help your students' families get to campus as well. Financial aid offices will often have budgets to help families get to campus and stay on/near campus for visiting weekends, graduation weekends etc.

### **Spending Money**

Find out about how spending money works at each school before students go to campus so you can help parents deposit money into their student account at the beginning of the year. Often, the student account will be charged for school trips, spending on campus, etc. Have a conversation with students and parents about what the expectation is for spending and make sure that students know they need to be careful about their spending. It can be helpful to establish contact with someone in the financial aid or students account office about this as well so you can figure out billing systems and how you/the families will be notified when the account is running low. Where parents really cannot deposit anything into the account, it might be beneficial for your program to consider helping with a small amount so students have some spending money.

### **Transportation**

It can be useful to have a conversation with each school before a student goes about the different transportation options to/from campus for the cases when a student's family does not drive or have a car. Many schools will hire break buses to the major city areas for the longer breaks, but they don't always run these buses so it is good to know what other bus/train options exist and what assistance schools can provide with these (rides to stations etc.).

## **College Placement**

Midway through a student's junior year, they will be assigned a college counselor to work with them throughout the college placement process. Establishing contact with their counselor will be key as you'll want to work closely with the counselor to best support the student. Programs usually handle the financial aid side of things with a student's family and the counselor does not get involved with this. Other areas where programs should be hands-on are with test prep, essay editing, and school visits. Counselors usually don't have the bandwidth to closely support the essay process for each of their students so programs should make sure to read all essay and application drafts. Check into test prep options that might be offered on campus and make sure you and the counselor are aligned on which test the student is going to take and when. Arrange for summer test prep and plan college visit trips as well.

## **Summer Support**

Have students come to your regular summer programming in order to maintain their connection to your program and to their peers in your program. At CitySquash, private school students participate in a 5-week long summer camp that includes both squash and academics, and is mandatory for every CitySquash team member. In addition, if schools identify specific classes/areas where students are struggling, CitySquash will work to provide extra support in that area over the summer, either by offering tutoring themselves or by making connections to other programs or courses that specialize in that content area. If there are concerns about the costs associated with summer courses/programs, always check with the school as they may have funding available to assist. When planning summer content, consider the following questions:

1. How do we prevent summer learning loss?
2. How do we make content engaging and fun?
3. What skills are most important (computer skills, math, sex ed/health, literacy, etc.)?

Rising juniors and seniors should participate in ACT/SAT prep. Summer is also a good time to bring private school students to different college campuses as coordinating visits for them during the school year is usually a lot harder (depending on how far away they attend school).

## **Assist with and Monitor Private School Financial Aid**

**How to Apply:** Schools use online portals for financial aid, which allows you to submit one application that will get sent to all schools (unless you are working with schools that accept different applications). The most common application is NAIS by SSS (applicants fill out the PFS, Parent Financial Statement). Another common one, especially with day schools, is TADS. The application is fairly straightforward (especially if parents don't have many assets or own property) and can probably be done in about an hour once familiar with the system. In order

to fill it out, parents should bring any tax documentation (1040, W-2/1099 etc.) and paperwork for any public assistance they receive. If parents do not file taxes, that is not an issue and won't affect the application negatively. If they do have an income and don't file taxes, an employer might need to write a letter stating their employment/salary. Any tax forms or public assistance forms will need to be directly uploaded through the site after the application has been submitted for schools to see the forms directly (you usually have 1-2 weeks after submitting to upload the forms, so if for any reason the families don't have them in hard copy when filling it out, that will not be an issue).

**Financial Aid Packages:** Private schools generally have pretty good financial aid budgets and can be very generous with their aid packages. In general, they do not award aid that leaves large gaps the way that colleges do, unless they actually assess that the family has a lesser need. All packages contain only straight grants; there are no loans associated with the packages. Depending on the school, financial aid packages may also include money for books, a laptop, transportation and even an extra spending money stipend. When assessing financial aid packages, it's good to ask about these details. In my experience with the Northeast boarding schools, I have seen gaps range on average range from \$200-3,000 annually.

**Appealing Packages:** If a package is pretty comprehensive but the family could use some additional grant money, it's always worth going back to the school and asking if they can add on at all. There is no formal appeals process, but usually just explaining the situation to an admissions or financial aid officer will suffice and they are able to sometimes increase the award enough.

**Re-Applying:** Students/families will need to re-apply for financial aid each year and it is possible for aid packages to change slightly based on tuition changes, financial aid budget changes, and family income changes. Schools will never drastically change an award year-to-year unless there has been a significant family income change. Again, if it changes in a way that isn't doable for the family, have a conversation with the school as they will likely be able to help. Re-applying each year is pretty easy – you just re-fill out whichever online application you originally used. Some info should be auto-saved from previous years. These applications are usually due between January 15-February 15 so stay on top of the deadlines by school since there isn't a universal one. This is another instance where having a program staff's email as the parent email can be helpful for receiving the communication about upcoming deadlines. New aid packages and re-enrollment contracts are usually sent in March or early April and need to be signed by parents and returned by a certain date to hold a student's spot. Enrollment deposits are often required as well.

**Program Help:** Having a scholarship fund or other mechanism to help families afford private schools can be helpful. Small awards (\$200-1,500) can be really helpful to families for tuition help, incidental fees or books/laptop/transportation. Having an internal scholarship

application is a good way to manage this. For example, CitySquash has an application that asks for family income information, the grant they already have from the school, what amount they are looking for, and for what reason. Boarding schools are fine with the programs sending money directly to cover a portion of tuition or be added to a student's account. If money is specifically being used for books/laptop/transportation, programs could also assist in the purchase.

## Additional Resources

- ❑ Enrollment Management Association (<https://enrollment.org/>)  
This is the organizing body for the SSAT and SAO (Standard Application Online) and a very good resource for placement programs generally. They offer annual memberships to schools and placement organizations to help streamline the SSAT registration and school application process and help to offer resources to students, including unlimited SSAT test fee waivers. They also offer many trainings and professional development series throughout the year.
- ❑ SSAT Prep
  - ❑ [SSAT.org](https://ssat.org/) has free test prep including full length practice tests and also offers a pretty thorough breakdown of the test. A very good resource for familiarizing yourself with the test and getting some prep started.
  - ❑ Wordly Wise Vocabulary Books: Vocabulary is a big part of the SSAT and Wordly Wise is a good series that does books by grade level and has several activities to go along with each set of words to help with retention and comprehension.
  - ❑ [CitySquash Curriculum Guide](#)
- ❑ Financial Aid Websites
  - ❑ Parent Financial Statement (through School & Student Services), <https://www.solutionsbyss.com/parents>: The financial aid application portal than nearly all of the boarding schools use. Parents create an account through the website and all information is entered here once and automatically sent to all schools a student is applying to (there is a page where you enter schools to send to). Tax and public assistance documents, when applicable, are also uploaded through this website.
  - ❑ TADS, <https://www.tads.com/>: Another financial aid application, used most frequently by day schools.
  - ❑ [Poor, but Privileged](#): An article by Lory Hough in Harvard Ed Magazine that discusses the different experiences of low-income students in college depending on whether or not they attended a private boarding school in high school.
  - ❑ [Best Intentions: The Education and Killing of Edmund Perry](#) by Robert Anson: A book about the true story of Edmund Perry, a boy from Harlem who attended Exeter through the A Better Chance (ABC) program. Perry attended Exeter in the early 1980's and was

one of ABC's early classes at Exeter. The book explores his time at Exeter and the difficult racial attitudes he encountered there, and his tragic death post-graduation in 1985.

❑ **CitySquash Resources:**

- ❑ [Parent-Student Handbook Excerpt: High School Placement Process](#)
- ❑ [Placement Program Contract \(for 8th graders\)](#)
- ❑ [Mock Interview Guide](#)
- ❑ [Placement Process Timeline](#)
- ❑ [Placement Program Introductory Meeting Slides](#)

*This guide was written by Alexandra Boillot at CitySquash..*