

Internal Guidelines

Pertaining to Principles of Best Practice

AAAIS exists for the benefit of private-independent schools, and the Principles of Best Practice attempt to clarify understanding of admission procedures for both schools and families. These Internal Guidelines are aimed at enhancing communication within schools. Neither the Principles nor the Internal Guidelines serves as a legal document, and therefore have no binding power. They are intended to assist schools in communicating with one another in order to better serve students and their families.

Communication of the Principles

The AAAIS Executive Director oversees the communication of the Principles of Good Practice. Specifically the Executive Director is responsible for responding to issues regarding the Principles.

Each year the Head of School and Director of Admission will sign a statement that the Admission Principles of Good Practice have been read and agreed to. The AAAIS Secretary is responsible for sending and receiving the Principles statement to schools.

Any Head of School or Director of Admission new to a AAAIS school will attend an orientation session on the Principles, conducted by the AAAIS Executive Director and members of the Executive Committee, together with the Admission Director who serves as Chair of the Admission Committee.

The Principles will be communicated by each school's Admission Office to each family who makes application to a AAAIS school.

Process Concerning Perceived Violation of Principles

Communication about perceived violations begins with collaborative, informal dialogue between one person and the other. If an issue is not resolved at that level, then it should go to the next step. The steps to be taken are as follows:

1. If a Director of Admission perceives that another school has violated a principle, or if such a perception is brought to the Director's attention, he/she will communicate that concern to his/her Head first. With the Head's agreement, the Director will contact the Admission Director at the other school. The discussion will be noted to the chair of the AAAIS Admission Group.
2. If the issue is not resolved successfully, it is suggested that the Head of the first school contact the Head at the school where a violation has been perceived. If not resolved at that level, the Head of the first school will take the concern to the AAAIS Executive Director.
3. The Executive Director will then contact the Head of the School where a violation has been reported, reviewing the principle in question and recommending a resolution. The issue in question will be shared with the Executive Committee President, and if necessary, the full Executive Committee.

Sanctions for Violations of the Principles

Any school that the AAAIS Executive Committee has agreed has violated the Principles of Good Practice may be asked to reconsider its membership in AAAIS. If following appropriate discussion between the Executive Director and the Head of the School in violation a resolution cannot be reached, and after consultation between the Executive Director and Executive Committee, such school may be asked to resign from AAAIS. A school that has been asked to withdraw from the Association may reapply for membership after one year.

Issues Pertaining to Notification Dates

Private and independent schools exist ultimately to serve children and their families. Admission notifications are provided by general purpose schools not earlier than the last Saturday in March, with the family reply date approximately two weeks later. In regard to Notification Dates and certain applicants, the following issues bear clarification:

1. General purpose schools may receive the rare applicant whom the Admission Office identifies as requiring special services that exist far outside the school's ability to provide. In those cases it is appropriate for the Admission Director to consult with that family early in the admission process so the child may be directed toward a school that will be of assistance.
2. General purpose schools typically receive applications from legacies or children of faculty/staff who may not be well served by their school. In those cases it is appropriate for the Admission Office to consult with that family early in the admission process so another school can be found. If it is not determined until late in the process that such an applicant will not be accepted, those families may receive their formal denial of acceptance up to five business days earlier than the notification date.
3. Schools with applicants who are applying to only one school and who are moving from outside the United States may send a decision notification at any time to be followed with the enrollment contract (if accepted) on the common notification date. The response date for such families is the same as for all accepted students.
4. General purpose schools that have either or both of the following may also send a decision notification to applicants to these programs at any time.
 - a. "School within a school" self-contained program for special needs students (provided there is independent diagnostic testing, extra tuition is charged, all core classes other than specials or electives are taken within the program, and the students are in the program for one full school year).
 - b. PreK programs for 2, 3, and/or 4 year olds.

For all other applicants, the common notification date and common response date remain in effect.

5. Regarding gifts: Small tokens, such as a sticker or pen, may be given to prospective students during the application process, as during a tour, open house, or shadow day. Gifts may not be given to accepted applicants when the decision is released or during the silent period, but they may be given after the admitted student has enrolled at the school.

6. No agent of the school, including but not limited to any paid employee of the school or parent volunteer, may initiate contact with admitted applicants during the silent period (the time between the notification and response dates) or until the family enrolls at the school. It is acceptable for parent organizations to include a message with the notification of acceptance.
7. Admitted applicants may not visit the school until the family enrolls at the school or the silent period ends.

The point of these seven issues is twofold:

- (1) To allow earlier notification of those parents whose children require services another school can better provide, to provide a courtesy to families with demonstrated commitment to the school, to assist families who must interface with the federal government in making an international move, and to relieve stress for parents of very young students and those with special needs.
- (2) To assure that families are treated equally among all our member schools during the admission process.

Related Issues

Out of professional courtesy and mutual regard, it is helpful for a AAAIS school to communicate with other schools that might be affected by that school making a substantial change in its mission, program, etc.

Heads of School and Admission Directors need to play an active role in educating those in their school communities about appropriate support and actions regarding admissions.

Admission Directors and Heads of Schools become more effective leaders when they communicate with each other on a regular basis, such as through AAAIS meetings.

Admission Directors should carry on dialogue regularly about the type and tone of marketing and student recruitment efforts.

Financial aid is a topic that Admission Directors need to discuss regularly and place before Heads as important to their schools' missions.