

HANDBOOK OF CANADIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Ashley Thomson
and Sylvie Lafortune

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¹It really was a pleasure working with these folks. In the independent school world, when Admissions Officers come together at meetings, they refer to their group as a “charm”. But in our experience Heads and Development Officers were equally charming!

Preface

This book started off as the 2nd edition of the *Directory of Canadian Private Residential Schools* (1986) and this preface explains not only how it evolved into the *Handbook of Canadian Boarding Schools* but also how it came to be prepared.

The change from *Directory* to *Handbook* is probably self evident, but the other word changes may not be.

Solette Gelberg, Executive Director of the Canadian Educational Standards Institute, and Mike Nurse, the Admissions Director at Appleby College, both deserve credit for suggesting that the word *Private* be dropped from the title. They pointed out that schools such as Appleby which are independently controlled by their own boards of governors, do not really think of themselves as private, in the sense that they were owned by one or two persons. Both sorts of schools are represented in this book as are one or two schools in Saskatchewan which were profiled in the first edition as private schools and now are fully funded by the provincial government. So both out of respect and accuracy, the word private was eliminated¹.

In the last 15 years, the name *Residential* has come, unfortunately, to be associated with the abuse of natives in church-run schools. The word now has an odour that we did not want associated with this book. But on a more positive note, as Mr. Nurse reminded us, *Boarding* implies a seven-day structured experience designed to develop “the whole person”. At Stanstead College, because the school expects its students to participate in a wide variety of activities over the weekends, weekend leaves are limited to two per academic term (with the exception of Grade 12 students). Not all schools in this book are like Stanstead, but most build in activities for their boarding students beyond the classroom.

This book only encompasses boarding schools which offer programmes leading to Canadian secondary graduation diplomas; it excludes any Canadian boarding school which does not. It also excludes every French-language boarding school in Quebec but the Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf since in that province, boarding is only available through the week. On week-ends, students return to their families or stay with friends.

The book includes schools like Venta Preparatory which provide special programming at the elementary and/or early secondary level to those who have average or very high intelligence that has not been fully developed. Students transfer from these schools into others to complete their secondary education.

Many schools in this book offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses which allow extra

¹The fact remains, however, that nearly 100% of Canadian boarding schools are not part of the public system. For that reason, we have asked Ms. Susan Massarella, B.A. (University of Toronto), M.L.I.S. (University of Western Ontario), formerly the government documents librarian at Laurentian University, to provide a snapshot of “Arrangements by Province for Independent and Private School Education” Ms. Massarella’s article appears as Appendix IX in this book.

credit for those applying to certain universities, especially American ones. A fewer number offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) as an extra option because it sets up holders for easier admission to world universities. For two, Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific and Upper Canada College, the IB is the exit diploma.

Readers should also be aware that there are a number of schools overseas which offer Canadian qualifications to foreign students and that this book excludes such schools. It does however profile the two offshore schools which have a base in Canada and attract Canadian students, Canadian College Italy and Neuchâtel Junior College.

After deciding upon the scope of the book, we then had to identify schools for inclusion. We started with the first edition of our book but soon discovered that some schools profiled in it had dropped their boarding programmes. In Ontario, full funding of Catholic separate schools in the mid-80s coincided with the end of boarding programmes at Assumption College School and Regina Mundi College. After our own *Directory* we turned to *Southam's Directory of Canadian Schools* (Don Mills, ON: Southam, 1996). This is a true directory in that it lists the briefest of information about every Canadian school, including whether it has a boarding programme. As with the first edition of this book, we then attempted to verify the accuracy about each school listed in *Southam* and by phone, we soon discovered that some schools which *Southam* had marked as having boarding programmes did not in fact operate such programmes.

We also discovered the reverse. Some of *Southam's* school listings suggest that schools did not have boarding programmes when in fact they do; even more serious, despite its title, *Southam* did not list all schools, including some with boarding programmes. All this is not to criticize *Southam*, which was an indispensable source, just to underline the difficulty of identifying all Canadian boarding schools.

After the two printed resources we turned to the Internet for help, and in the process, discovered that while most schools we knew about had a home page it was very difficult using existing search engines to find new ones. Even government sites could not be counted on for accurate information. When we were searching for boarding schools in Ontario, that province's guide to *Private Elementary and Secondary Schools* failed to turn up the country's largest boarding school! (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/privsch/index.html>)

To be sure, there are Internet sites which have various leads to schools. The best include:

e.Smart School Forms (Boarding Schools K-12):

<http://www.eschoolforms.com/Boarding-A.htm>

Education International (a site catering to International students who want to study in Canada):

http://www.eiworldwide.com/html/secondary_schools_in_canada.html

Peterson's: The Private School Channel (a site which links all schools which are members of the Canadian Association of Independent Schools):

<http://www.petersons.com/private>

Study Abroad: A Program Directory (includes some high schools):

<http://www.studyabroad.com>

Web66: International School Web Site Registry (theoretically registers all schools with home pages—but incomplete):

<http://web66.coled.umn.edu/schools.html>

But until this book there is no, one, comprehensive source which leads to Canadian boarding schools. But while the authors can claim with confidence that it is now the most comprehensive resource available, they are only too well aware that it may not be complete. In all honesty, we must confess we finally uncovered the country's largest boarding school, Columbia International College in Hamilton, because it had placed an ad in the McMaster Alumni magazine to which one of the authors had recently subscribed.

If the second step in preparing this book was to identify potential schools for inclusion, the third was to gather information about each one. One might well ask why this was necessary since most schools have home pages on the Internet—wouldn't an article listing such sites suffice—or maybe a new Web site linking every school in the book?

Unfortunately, while all schools have e-mail addresses, not all have their own web sites. But even for schools which do, readers who visit school sites will quickly observe that the information supplied by each school about itself varies enormously from school to school. Some are thorough, others less so. One purpose of this book is to standardize the information about schools and to make comparisons among them easier.

In preparing the draft profiles, we included relevant information taken from our first book when available, as well as from the Internet; we also drew up the profiles based on printed information supplied to us by each school including its prospectus and other relevant resources, such as boarding handbooks. This was a massive job that had to be supplemented by interviews with various school personnel almost always concerning current statistics and sometimes about other matters concerning their history, the background of their heads and some of their specific policies.

The existence of e-mail and fax machines made the last step possible. In each instance, we shared our profiles with the schools in the book, and we asked each one to ensure that its was "fair, accurate and respectful". All schools in this book have responded to our invitation within the limitations we imposed about maintaining a standardized format. All disagreements were resolved by phone and final profiles have been approved both by the authors and by the schools themselves. Thus this book could have easily added the word *Official* to its title.

It is worth noting that unlike similar American reference books, no school paid to be included in this book. All research expenses were covered by Laurentian University.

The profiles of the book represent a snapshot of Canadian boarding schools in 1999 although the statistical information about the towns and cities they are located in is derived from Statistics Canada's web site <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb> in which the data was collected in 1996. Like every reference book, this one will be out of date almost from the moment of publication—staff leave, numbers (especially costs) change, maybe facilities and programmes are dropped or added. Even so, experience suggests that the book can meet a felt need well into the future because it provides a framework for those interested in Canadian boarding schools. It assumes of course that users will still validate all data as they explore individual schools in the book. The authors can assure such users that all schools profiled in this book will welcome honest inquiries about their operations and will respond with enthusiasm to whatever information is requested.

Selecting a Canadian Boarding School: Some Suggestions for Parents

If you are a parent who has attended boarding school yourself, you will probably already have decided where to send your son or daughter: back to your old school.

Schools encourage this process. Brentwood College on Vancouver Island gives special consideration in admissions to the children of former “Brentonians”. Upon entering Havergal College, each student is assigned to one of eight houses. Girls who have a family affiliation with the School join the same house as their mothers and grandmothers to carry on the family tradition.

And yet while the process is common, it is not necessarily in the best interests of young people: for not only do schools change over the years but, even more important, what may have been fine for a parent may be less suitable for a young person--people do differ. Thus, for example, if dad enjoyed playing hockey in Saskatchewan for Father Athol Murray at the school which now bears his name--Athol Murray College of Notre Dame--but son enjoys sailing and art, then a place like Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island¹ might be more appropriate for him. The examples, of course, could be reversed.

In selecting a school, you cannot go wrong if you pick the one that best meets your youngster's needs.

This *Handbook* will assist in the initial selection process since it provides a convenient means of comparing Canadian boarding schools. But by no means should it be the last word. We would suggest that if a school looks interesting, you write the individual named at the end of its profile for further information. Once data is collected from several schools, you will want to visit the most likely prospects before making a final decision.

In preparing the *Handbook*, the authors have resisted friends, and even some schools, who thought this book would be most useful if we included a modified version of the *Maclean's* rating system of the schools. Aside from the fact that unlike universities, most schools are not publicly funded and might not feel obliged to participate in a ranking process, we don't happen to agree that the *Maclean's* rating system is very valid--for universities or for schools!

The fact is that parents do not choose schools based on the number of books in their libraries, or the number of their faculty who have Ph.D's. There are other, more intangible, factors that go into selecting a school and so just as all boarding schools attempt to educate the “whole person” so parents should assess the “whole” school before making a final decision. We have set out each profile to allow them to do that.

Each school profile follows a similar pattern: location, history, philosophy, campus, boarding facilities, health and safety, administration and faculty, student body and student dress,

¹. So of course could Lakefield College School in Ontario. We would like to make it very clear that the examples used in the text are just that--examples--and are not meant to suggest that other schools could not fit the illustration.

academic calendar and programme, information technology, student activities and student conduct, and admission and costs.² Thoughtful parents will consider each of these factors in turn³.

Location

In looking at a school's location, the first question you will probably ask yourself is: How far is this school from where I live now?

It is not a co-incidence that, with the exception of Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific

² The only school whose profile does not match these criteria exactly is Upper Canada College. That school preferred that Student Body and Student Dress be renamed Student Body, and that Student Activities and Student Conduct be renamed Student Activities. It also requested that under Student Body, two subsections be created, one for dress, the second for conduct. The authors have accommodated the school for two reasons, first, the information we felt necessary was still in the UCC profile, and second, we had promised each school that any profile which we published would be "fair, accurate, and respectful". Since UCC felt so strongly about the look of its profile, we were prepared to respect its thinking. On a more minor point, UCC also thinks in terms of hectares and not acres, and all references to such matters appear first in hectares (with the acreage listed thereafter).

³ A number of schools have recognized the difficulty parents have in assessing schools they may be unfamiliar with. That is why they joined together in 1986 to create the Canadian Education Standards Institute (CESI). Over the years, CESI has accredited a fair number of schools, especially in Ontario, and a review of their standards as reproduced in Appendix IV should reassure parents of an accredited school that it is of excellent quality. The major problem just now is that a number of what appear to be equally excellent schools have for one reason or another not participated in CESI and to overlook such schools simply because they are not CESI-accredited may do a serious disservice to your child. Because the CESI standards are higher than those of provincial Ministries of Education, in the long run, we think it would be to every eligible school's interest to think seriously about joining CESI and becoming accredited by it.

which operates on a quota system, the National Ballet School which selects by audition, as well, of course, as the two offshore schools in this book (Canadian College Italy and Neuchâtel Junior College), in every Canadian boarding school, the majority of *Canadian* residents in that school come from the province in which it is located. In part this is because most schools are closed at certain times of the year--usually December and Spring breaks--and it is more convenient for students to get home; in part, it is because many parents like to keep involved in their young peoples' education and it is easier to do this when they are close by. The myth that "boarding schools" are dumping grounds for unwanted young people is usually just that--a myth.

Does this mean that those parents who send their young people to boarding schools out-of-province should feel guilty? The answer of course, is no, since every school commits itself to staying in touch with parents and as we have suggested, many other factors than a school's proximity to home should affect the selection of a school.

In looking at location, the second question you will probably ask is: What's the climate like in the area the school is located? While the climate across the country is fairly uniform running through all four seasons of the year, a number of schools in British Columbia enjoy a milder climate than the rest of us. If your youngster is bothered by cold winters, then he or she might be interested in heading west. On Vancouver Island, St. Michaels University School regularly attracts a good percentage of its students from the Prairies.

In looking at location, the last question that you will probably ask is: Would it be better for my child to attend an urban or a rural school?

If you think it important for your son or daughter to enjoy art galleries, museums, music, theatre and ballet you will be looking for a school in or close to an urban centre. Students attending St. George's School are encouraged to take advantage of Vancouver's cultural amenities. If, on the other hand, you would prefer that your child be protected from city temptations or become involved in skiing, riding, sailing, canoeing or outdoor education, you'll be checking out schools in more rural settings. At the St. John's Schools in Stony Plain, Alberta, boys are offered a physically demanding regime that may send them a 1000-mile canoe expedition.

All this said, it probably does not make sense to dismiss any school out of hand because of location, since a number have tried to ensure that their students have the best of all possible worlds. In Oakville, Appleby College boasts of an outstanding outdoor education programme which makes use of Rabbitnose Island in the middle of Lake Temagami. At Pickering College, on the other hand, the School often sponsors outings to the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Ontario Science Centre.

History

In looking at a school's history, you will want to find out when it was established. It is generally--though as Netherwood, the New Brunswick girls' school which collapsed after almost 100 years would suggest, not always--the case that the older the school, the more stable and successful it has been⁴.

⁴ See Appendix II for a list of school Names Changes over the years.

You will also want to find out what traditions continue to this day. Sedbergh School near Montebello Quebec was established in 1939 by Tom Wood to provide not only an academic but also an outdoor experience for students. That tradition continues--not surprisingly, since the current Head, Mr. Jeremy I.D. McLean, A.B. (Duke University), J.D. (Vermont Law School), is a Sedbergh Alumnus.

One of the most important and most common traditions, overriding all others, is the religious tradition. Without question, the vast majority of boarding schools founded in this country have been inspired by the desire of a particular religious group to educate its young--thus for example, Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville, Ontario, and Western Christian College, in Dauphin, Manitoba were both founded by the Church of Christ whilst Lakefield College School and Ridley College, were both established by Anglicans.

But traditions change. St. John's-Ravenscourt and Upper Canada College when founded, were both affiliated with the Church of England. Today, for separate reasons, they are completely nondenominational. And even within the last ten of fifteen years, three schools formerly affiliated with the United Church of Canada have dropped their ties: Albert College, Stanstead College and Trafalgar Castle School⁵ and also now nondenominational.

⁵Alma College in St. Thomas Ontario was a fourth school associated with the United Church. Instead of dropping this affiliation, it went out of business.

The schools that continue to be affiliated with a particular religious group—with a couple of understandable exceptions—all welcome members of other religious faiths⁶. In 1998/99, only 60% of the student body at Rosthern Junior College in Saskatchewan, which is affiliated with the Mennonite Church, was Mennonite. The remainder were Anglicans, Baptists, Brethern in Christ, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, and students from the United Church of Canada, to name only a few of the faiths represented.

In our examination of Canadian boarding schools, we can identify many other trends that have affected schools--some dull (the gradual change in purpose from profit-making to non-profit), some exciting (the forced replacement of plant after major fires--Pickering and Sedbergh being two examples). But most of you will be less interested in these trends than in three others that, like the changes in religious composition, have affected the texture of the student body at many--though certainly not all--Canadian boarding schools.

First, many Canadian boarding schools now attempt to cater to an academic elite. This explains why Advanced Placement courses are so popular in Canadian boarding schools, and also why the International Baccalaureate Programme continues to be made available⁷. Many universities both in Canada and around the world give extra credit to those who have succeeded in AP courses or obtained their IB Diploma. At Upper Canada College, as at Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, the IB is the exit Diploma.

Boarding schools have not always been so academically focussed. When originally set up, many boys schools had as their first goal the creation of "men of character", and if this meant that academics had to play a secondary role, then so be it. In such an environment, subjects like Art or Music never had a chance. In many girls' schools, the emphasis was placed on the art of being a good wife and mother.

But today, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which are pressures on enrollment and the expectations of parents, many Canadian boarding schools have as their primary concern the preparation of students for university. One school reflecting this trend is the Ontario Ladies' College, which, since 1979, has been known as Trafalgar Castle School. Interestingly, as the pressure to succeed in school has increased, a number of school have begun to emerge to help students who are having difficulty in this area. The Sheila Morrison College School in Utopia

⁶See Index IV for a list of schools organized by Religious Affiliation.

⁷See Appendix V for a description of the AP programme and Appendix VI for a description of the International Baccalaureate Programme. The attraction of the AP is that it can be set up on a course by course basis; the IB is a complete programme.

Ontario attracts bright, emotionally sound students who have been labelled "unteachable" because their reading, writing and spelling skills, have not caught up with their thinking and problem solving capabilities.

Second, boys' schools are increasingly becoming coeducational⁸.

⁸. Interestingly, the trend toward co-education seems only to be going one way. As far as we can determine, no girls school has started bringing in males, at least at the senior levels. If boys do get in, it's where they can't do much harm. Thus day boys may be found in kindergarten and junior primary school in Toronto's The Bishop Strachan School , Branksome Hall and Havergal and Winnipeg's Balmoral Hall School.

It is true that some schools have been coeducational since their beginning: Albert College, founded in 1857 is the oldest. It is also true that others, such as Upper Canada College, continue proudly male to this day. But beginning with Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf in 1965, a number of boys' schools have slowly become co-educational, particularly in the senior grades. These include St. John's-Ravenscourt (1971), Brentwood (1972), Bishop's College School (1973), Ridley College (1973), St. Michaels University (1978), Ashbury (1982), Rosseau Lake College (1983), Lakefield College (1987), Shawnigan Lake (1988), Sedbergh (1990), Appleby (1991), Trinity College (1991), and Pickering College (1992). In 1979, on a more official level, the Canadian Headmaster's Association and the Canadian Association of Principals of Independent schools for Girls amalgamated to form the Canadian Association of Independent Schools.⁹

There are of course, several reasons for these developments, including the financial requirements of the schools as well as societal pressures. At Pickering, the latest school in this book to go coeducational, the change was made "to celebrate the School's Sesquicentennial". It is not unreasonable to suggest however, that until boys' schools came to be primarily interested in educating the academic elite, it was not possible for them to accept qualified girls.

Third, the foreign student population has substantially increased, certainly since the nineteenth and even the early twentieth centuries, when the schools were largely the preserve of English-speaking Canadians. Why today, even the National Ballet School aggressively recruits its students from the very best around the world.

There are a whole host of reasons why international students have become so prominent on the campuses of virtually all Canadian boarding schools. They include the financial requirements of the schools, the missionary activities of the churches who sponsor many of them, and the desire of the schools to attract all qualified applicants and to enrich the education of Canadian students by exposing them to other cultures.

The pressures to bring foreign students to this land have not, of course, been only one way. We think that many foreign students have come here because they want to get qualified for post-secondary education in this country.

In recent years, as this trend has picked up steam, some schools have been established that cater almost exclusively to International students. One of the most successful has been Columbia International College in Hamilton, now the country's largest boarding school with 500 places in its residence.

Philosophy

All schools have a distinctive philosophy or mission if you will, which animates them. Parents looking for a boarding school will probably want to find out how a school's stated philosophy is reflected in its programme.¹⁰ We think that a legitimate philosophy is one which animates all

⁹ See Appendix III.

¹⁰ Sometimes school philosophies are also reflected in their slogans. See Index II.

aspects of programme--and not just the curriculum. To take one dramatic example: Lakefield College School in eastern Ontario believes in outdoor education. To this end as a matter of policy, the school has decided not to erect any indoor athletic facilities: no indoor pools at Lakefield when Lake Katchewanooka is at the doorstep!

Campus

A school's campus should satisfy you that the school can accommodate the programme offered.¹¹ Thus, you will want to find out when campus facilities were erected, and whether there have been any recent improvements to them. Some schools have been around a long time, and while old plants may have charm and dignity, they may not be able to meet current demands. That is why it is useful to know that in 1997, Concordia High School in Edmonton opened a new 23,000 sq. ft academic building, on the north end of campus.

In looking at a school's campus, you will also want to find out whether your son or daughter will have access to facilities intended for older students. If so, their education cannot but be richer.

At Ridley College in St. Catharines, boys in Middle School (Grades 5 to 8) spend much of their time in a self-contained building, but they also share access to playing fields and extensive athletic facilities with boys in Upper School.

Far more common across the country is the situation where the secondary school programme is taught in conjunction with a college or university programme. At Luther College High School in Regina the school sits adjacent to Luther's University College, on the same campus as the University of Regina.

Less satisfactory, but not uncommon are those boarding schools that do not share facilities with other educational institutions but at least have access to them. At Pickering College in Newmarket, senior students frequently travel to Toronto to use city libraries, including those at York University and the University of Toronto.

If the students of a school that looks interesting do not regularly use other educational facilities, you should not necessarily switch schools. The facilities of the school that you like may be just fine.

Boarding Facilities

If a child has his or her own room at home, you can expect that he or she will be required to double up in residence--very few schools have private rooms for students, and those that do usually reserve these rooms for seniors.¹²

It is often more economical for the schools to require that students share facilities, but most cloak this necessity with more philosophic and quite legitimate rationale: sharing is good for students in that it teaches them to get along with others, especially when students from two different cultures share the same room. For those schools such as Queen's Margaret's, which have relatively few international students, those that do attend have the extra advantage of

¹¹See Index VI for a selected list of Programmes offered by schools.

¹²See Index V for a list of schools organized by Residence Capacity.

improving their English quickly living in residence.

If your youngsters are to feel at home, you will want to know what they can and cannot bring into residence with them.

At Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario, students may bring personal equipment such as computers, radios and stereos and even a small refrigerator. At one of the church schools profiled in this book, “in order to protect the safety, health, studies and morals of students, such things as pets, firearms, hunting knives, boxing gloves, playing cards, questionable or degrading reading matter, psychedelic pictures or posters, undesirable written or recorded music (rock, psychedelic, jazz), TV's, candles, kerosene lamps, incense, lighters, cooling appliances, sun lamps, electric cooking utensils, fresh foods, coffee, tea, cola drinks, exploding fireworks, combustible chemicals, devices pertaining to spiritualism, or other harmful time consuming-devices, are not allowed in the dorms or on campus”.

You will also want to know what responsibilities, if any, your child will have in residence.

Many schools require students to keep their rooms neat and tidy. Because Columbia International College wants to ensure that students can focus on their academic work as opposed to household chores, linens are changed every two weeks and rooms are vacuumed once a week.

At all schools which require it, student labour helps offset operating expenses (thereby keeping fees somewhat lower); in the Seventh-day Adventist schools, it also reflects a school philosophy which teaches that an education is not complete until students learn about the dignity of labour.

It should not be assumed that if a school makes a student do work around the residence that someone else does for him or her back home, the student will suffer academically. Most colleges make plenty of allowance in their daily schedule for such activities.

Health and Safety

In recent years, the emphasis in boarding schools has gone from looking after those who are sick, to ensuring that students remain healthy and this change has been symbolized by replacing the word “infirmary” with the phrase “Health Centre”. Of course, most schools still have an infirmary on campus, and many have resident medical personnel. If such facilities do not exist in the school being considered, you will want to know what alternative arrangements exist. Most schools are only equipped to handle basics, and this explains why they often require a medical certificate indicating general good health as a condition of acceptance. A few schools, especially those with an intensive athletic programme, also have an athletic therapy centre attached to their health centres. At Trinity College School, the Sports Injuries Clinic is located in the main school complex and is equipped with all the modern facilities available at a public physiotherapy clinic. Trinity also has a qualified athletic therapist on staff and this service ensures prompt and comprehensive treatment of sports injuries.

The one area that may pose problems for a student otherwise in good health is teeth. Virtually every school requests that you get a dental check-up before your child leaves home--and that, as a general rule, any work required be done on a student's own time.

The issue of safety is a related matter. Some schools because of their isolated location don't seem to worry too much about safety--there has never been a problem. Others, located in a

big city are more concerned. At Toronto's The Bishop Strachan School, there is an excellent security system which features video and surveillance cameras on major doors, and all-night guards on duty 6:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.

Administration and Faculty

Far more than in the public system, a boarding school reflects the tastes, values, and skills of its Principal or Head. Parents will want to find out about the person in charge.

We've tried to do a bit of this work for you--we've asked every school when the Head of School was appointed, and what his or her academic and professional background is. For those who have been willing, we've even asked about their educational vision¹³. While we would feel most confident with experienced heads of school, the fact is that in the last three or four years, many new heads have been appointed, some with impressive paper qualifications. At Queen Margaret's School, Dr. Stephen M. Johnson, has been Head of School since 1996 and comes complete with a B.Sc. in Zoology (Iowa State), and a M.A. and Ph.D in History from the University of Manitoba.

The faculty is another matter--they're the people who will be working with your son or daughter some for many years. To work in a boarding school in this country, faculty need not necessarily be qualified teachers, but it probably helps.

You would assume that as a general rule, the faculty at any boarding school, qualified or not on paper, would be a cut above their counterparts in the public system: because they are not unionized, the Head of School has the power to fire those who cannot teach, without challenge by teachers' federations.

The problem with this view is that a Head of School may not elect to dispose of marginal teachers because they may have other qualifications that the administrator values. For example, they may be prepared to work for a salary that could not attract more capable individuals. Or, they may make other contributions to the school's overall programme that are important, for example, as coaches.

To protect your child against weak teachers, you would be well advised to find out how students at a school fare externally. Many schools make their students take such tests as the one for Scholastic Aptitude or participate in provincial or national competitions in various areas--for example, the University of Waterloo's Math Competition. Parents might also find out how many of the current graduating class went on to university, and if possible, which ones. If the school that seems interesting has no record in these areas, it does not necessarily mean the teaching is bad: it may only mean that its records are bad. But if there is a record, and it is a positive one, you will use the information in coming to your final decision.

Student Body and Student Dress

¹³ The Head who provided the most extensive outline of his educational philosophy was Mr. David Penaluna from King's-Edgehill. His comments alone make that school's profile worth reading.

The schools in this *Handbook* vary in size from under 100 to, in the case of Upper Canada College over 1,000; they also vary according to sex, and in their ratios of day students to boarders. This means that there are some fundamental questions that must be posed.

First off, you may wonder whether your child would be happier in a small or a big school. Some schools, such as Nancy Campbell Collegiate in Stratford think that a student body of about 200 is ideal: on the one hand it is small enough for everyone to get to know each other; on the other hand, it is large enough to enable the school to offer a sufficiently varied menu of courses and activities. Larger schools seem to feel that intimacy is less important than opportunity. Parents will have to make up their own minds.

One thing that might be worth looking at is student-teacher ratios. For if you are investigating boarding schools because you don't like overcrowding in your child's current school, you won't be pleased if your child comes home at Christmas complaining of the same problem at his new school. Even relatively small schools can become cramped if there aren't enough teachers on staff so we would suggest that class sizes be checked out at whatever school being considered.

You may also be wondering about whether to send your child to a "unisex" or coeducational school¹⁴.

For boys, the case for unisex schools is usually put in terms of the distractions that females would pose to concentration. For girls, the argument is that the chances for developing leadership skills could be diminished if boys were around to compete for positions. In addition, in single-sex schools, girls appear freer to study certain subjects such as Mathematics and Science and finally, to assimilate important attitudes towards learning such as questioning, challenging and risk taking. In recent years, the largest percentage of graduates from Havergal College have entered maths, sciences, engineering and business at the post-secondary level. Many have won prestigious entrance scholarships.

For both sexes, the argument for unisex schools is that they make much easier the "bonding" process that can have such dramatic consequences in later life. This explains why one hears of the "Old Boy" or "Old Girl" network in connection with graduates of unisex schools.

These arguments have some validity.

Coeducational schools, which are of course the norm in the public system, also have their own rationale. As one of the schools in this book has pointed out "Boys are humanized by girls, becoming less prone to bully, and more mature in behaviour. Girls tend to be less petty and sentimental in a school with boys, and less inclined to form cliques. Through co-education, boys and girls learn to cooperate and compete together, to be confident and at ease in mixed company, and to develop a wholesome mutual respect. Co-education prepares young people for university and adult life, when they must live and work with members of the opposite sex on equal terms."

The last question you will want to consider is whether it is better to send your child to a boarding school that is primarily residential such as Shawnigan Lake or one with mostly day students in attendance, such as Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg.

It is often said that a largely day school is to be preferred over a largely boarding school, since a school which has strong community support must be good. It's worth remembering

¹⁴See Index III for a list of schools organized by Sex.

though, that many boarding schools are in small towns, whose inhabitants may be unwilling or unable to bear the cost of sending their child to a private school.

The problems for boarders in a largely day school are that they could they could feel strange and alien in their surroundings. However largely day schools school encourage either formally or informally an "adopt a boarder" plan among day students. Week-end leaves are generous and boarders are encouraged to stay with new friends at their homes

And rest assured that all schools make every effort to create a "family environment" in their residences-- except of course for Robert Land Academy which does not pretend to take the place of parents. The Academy is that authentic experience that catalyzes a young man's many talents with a responsible attitude. Its young men come to appreciate their parents, their siblings and their home in a new light.

One of the ways that boarders get to feel part of a total school community is by wearing a school uniform, or at the very least by observing a school dress code that requires students to be neat and clean at all times.

While the absence of uniform requirements or a school dress code should not by itself deter you from selecting a particular school, you might want to consider the advantages of clothing standards. We've already mentioned one, a sense of community. A second is cost. Frequently students, particularly adolescents, compete with each other to wear the latest and most expensive clothing. A uniform requirement eliminates such competition. A third advantage is psychological. When students are required to present themselves neatly and smartly, that cannot help having an effect on attitude. Students allowed to run around in jeans and T-shirts for no reason frequently demonstrate a similar sloppiness of mind.

Academic Calendar and Programme

Boarding schools need not necessarily observe the same academic calendars as their public counterparts. At Collège Mathieu in Saskatchewan, the school year runs from mid-August until the end of June, with plenty of breaks in between. Parents who plan to have children in both public and boarding schools, might consider getting a copy of the academic calendars of the schools that interest them so they can plan family life in a rational way. It's also important to get a copy of a school's calendar so you can make travel arrangements well in advance. Boarding schools often have generous holiday periods but when they are open, want their students around.

It's also worthy trying to review the daily schedule that boarders must follow during the school week and as far as possible we have tried to supply these schedules. You will have your own reasons for sending your youngsters to a boarding school and an examination of the daily schedule boarders must follow will give you a pretty good idea of whether your children will have the time to do the things you think they should--when looking at the academic programme, you will want to check out class times as well as times set aside for compulsory study to get some indication of what will go on.

The curriculum most students must follow is fairly standard: any school that wishes to issue provincial diplomas, must follow provincial requirements. We have listed the requirements for each province at the beginning of each set of provincial school listings in this *Handbook* courtesy the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. You should be aware though that as with everything else, provinces regularly recommend changes in educational requirements and

that the requirements listed may soon change. A good place to keep up is the Council's Web site:

<http://www.cmec.ca/tguide>

What should also interest you are the supplemental requirements that each school has, most especially the courses in religious education. While virtually all Canadian boarding schools, of whatever religious affiliation, welcome students of other faiths, their motivation is not entirely selfless: if there is a chance to make converts, they will seize it. Thus, if you feel very strongly that you do not want your child exposed to the religious teachings of another denomination, it probably does not make much sense to send the child to a school where this would be required. If, on the other hand, you feel that your child is strong enough in his own faith, or alternatively, has little faith but could use one, then you need not worry about the requirement.

Information Technology

No school in this book has been unaffected by the revolution in technology that has hit education.

All have computer labs; most utilize other available forms of technology; all have e-mail accounts; most have web sites. Beyond that, some schools have strategically specialized in this area—in 1996, Grenville Christian College became one of the first schools in North America to fully integrate laptop computers into the conventional school curriculum. In 1999, students in Grade 9 at Ridley College were required to have their own Macintosh PowerBook G3 computer. The school is the only one in the country to use the Mac G3, which allows dual platform capability: both *Windows 98* and the Macoperating system. That same year, 1999, Appleby College became the first school in North America to outfit each of its classroom with electronic whiteboards, a piece of equipment that looks like a cross between a chalkboard and a movie screen.

If technology is your area of interest, you might give such schools a closer look. On the other hand, even these schools will admit that there is much more to education than technology, and in fairness to every other school, technology must be balanced against all other aspects of a school programme.

Student Activities and Student Conduct

In boarding schools, your child is under the care of staff seven days a week. Some schools allow a fair amount of free time after classes and on week-ends. Others have a long list of co- or extra-curricular activities that are *compulsory*. At Bishops's College School in Lennoxville Quebec, a school which prides itself on "having one of the most extensive character building programmes in the country" students are expected to participate in daily chapel, in the Cadet Corp and in sports activities. In addition, the school provides a huge—but not untypical—range of other options to engage any student. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme¹⁵ and student exchange possibilities through the Round Square.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Appendix VII.

¹⁶ See Appendix VII.

Most boarding schools place a particular deal of emphasis on compulsory athletic activities. While the programmes are often similar, the philosophies that motivate them frequently vary in emphasis. At Ridley, competitive athletics are emphasized because success in the gym or the playing field affects one's positive self image. At St. Michaels University School in Victoria, students are expected to keep fit because, while not everyone is equally gifted in sports, if they are in shape, students will feel better and study more effectively.

The major exceptions among Canadian boarding schools in their emphasis on athletics are the two Seventh-day Adventist schools: Kingsway College and Parkview Adventist Academy. Here, while the schools may offer sports, competition is exclusively internal and no opportunities are provided for inter-collegiate play. Instead, these schools put a heavy emphasis on student work. At Parkview Adventist Academy, students may gain experience in a furniture factory, a press or even a leather factory, all on campus.

Schools that cater primarily to day students tend to have fewer compulsory activities than schools which are primarily for boarders. At Havergal College, with 863 students enrolled 1998/99, 799 were day, and 64 boarders. While all students are required to attend assemblies which reinforce spiritual values and are respectful of cultural diversities within the student body, no other co-curricular activities are required. This is not to suggest that if no activity is required, your child will be idle. Havergal, like many other schools offers a huge assortment of possibilities and since you know your child best, you can assess how well she or he will respond to such opportunities.

You will also want to know what your children will *not* be allowed to do while at a school.

Some schools, Shawnigan Lake and Lakefield College School, being two that come to mind, have a very relaxed set of rules and regulations, probably reflecting their ability to pick and choose among potential applicants.

Others have very specific prohibitions that probably grew out of unpleasant incidents. At Sheila Morrison College school, girls are now allowed to wear see-through blouses. Parents who know their child, will know whether he or she can live with a school's regulations. If not, they can expect to see their child either very unhappy or out.

Admission and Costs

Some boarding schools are harder to get into than others. Ashbury College in Ottawa, which boasts *Friends'* funnyman Matthew Perry as an alumni, has been receiving so many applications over the past ten years that it's been regularly forced to turn away highly qualified candidates.¹⁷ On the other hand, the principal of one of the schools on the prairies told us "We will accept all qualified applicants."

The difficult schools to get into usually insist on an admission test and restrict entry to certain grades: the traditional upper level entrance grade is three or four years from the last grade taught. Parents considering these schools will observe the school's stated application deadline scrupulously; better yet, beat it by several months.

¹⁷ Snyder, Trish. (1999). "Class Distinctions: Many Concerned Parents Are Looking For An Alternative To Public Schools. But Are Private Schools Really Worth the Money?" *MoneySense*, 1, 1 (June/July): 50.

In those schools where entry is more open, you will have to decide when best to send your children.

Some of course, have little choice. A popular reason for enrolling children in Canadian boarding schools is that the parents must leave Canadian shores for overseas postings, either in business or in government. These moves cannot always be tied to the "best time" to enroll the young people.

In terms of that "best time", there are two lines of thought. One is that students should be enrolled in boarding school as early as possible, because the younger they are, the more adaptable they are. Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg urges you to give serious consideration to entry at the Grade 7 level, because as it once said, "It is impossible for the school to accept weak and disinterested students in the later high school years and perform a miracle of teaching."

The second line of thought urges a somewhat later admission so that students will be in school only for the last three or at most four years before they proceed to university. Reason: boarding school by its very nature is a tightly disciplined existence; if it is to be a university preparatory experience, too much might burn a student out. At Appleby College, any day student in the school is required as a matter of policy to be in residence after Grade 10.

Whatever line of thought makes sense, if you can help it, you will want to enroll your child at the traditional times new classes are formed in a school. If not, your child will find that student relationships throughout the school are already tightly formed, and that it might be pretty difficult to crack the system. That's an extra stress that no student needs.

The question of costs is a more personal decision. It is true that the fees at some schools would probably be considered high by some parents; it is also true that many schools, particularly those who are long established, have impressive programmes of scholarships and bursaries for well qualified applicants. At Upper Canada College, the newly-established National Scholarship program provides up to full financial assistance to potential Canadian boarding students of truly outstanding achievement, extracurricular activity and ambition. National Scholars are assigned a Mentor in a discipline, profession or activity of common interest drawn from the rich resources of the UCC and Toronto communities.

Conclusion

At this point we would like to emphasize as strongly as we can a point made right at the beginning: the material in this *Handbook* and in school brochures has no flesh and blood attached. To get a real sense of whether a school would be suitable for your youngster, you would be very well counselled to pay the place a visit, bringing along your child.

Start off with the Head or Principal¹⁸. That is not only courteous, it will also enable you to size up the school leader. He or she will also be sizing you up, (not only as a parent but as credit risk) as well as evaluating your youngster. If your child cannot be polite, enthusiastic, informed, respectful, and well-dressed, then most schools won't want him or her.

¹⁸ In recent years, many Heads have turned over interviews to their Admissions Officers and much of the information we recommend you seek may be obtained through them. We feel very strongly however, that in addition to seeing an Admissions Officer, parents should insist on getting to know the Head. Since Heads are occasionally off-site for one reason or another, try to time your visit to a school to ensure that you don't miss the Head.

When you're talking to the Head of School, you will want to double-check the areas that we've discussed to make sure that the information you are working with is as complete and as up-to-date as possible. This is especially true of the school fees. We've provided the 1999/2000 figures, and you can expect them to rise marginally thereafter.

You might also ask the Head about grounds for expulsion (you lose a year's investment, even if you've only paid part of the fees when your child is asked to leave¹⁹), about tuition insurance (normally, when you commit your child for a year, it's almost impossible to get your money back from the school if the child must withdraw, for example for health reasons); about health insurance plans (you shouldn't let your child leave home without one); and about specific scholarships and bursaries awarded by the school.

As you talk, you will want to find out whether the Head of School seems experienced, knowledgeable, capable, intelligent, and committed. If not, excuse yourself early and go shopping.

If you like what you see and hear, try to observe a class in action. It's a good idea to pick a subject that you know something about rather than letting the Head make the selection, since he or she might send you off to the best teacher.

In class, watch for signs of good rapport between teachers and students. Does the class seem orderly, without being tense?

After class, you will want to talk to the students. Find out whether they seem to be learning and whether they are satisfied with the help they are getting and with the school's library and other resources. Do the students seem lively, intelligent and happy?

If time permits, attend another class and do the same.

If you receive an invitation from the head for lunch off-campus, decline politely and ask to be taken to the school dining area. There, check out whether a menu is posted, whether the meal is cafeteria style or served and whether it is nutritious and edible. Can students eat as much as they like, or are there restrictions placed upon them?

After lunch, head over to the residences. Ask to see a typical room. Is it large and liveable? Is it soundproof or can you hear students making noise down the hall? Find out what the students do for fun. You might be surprised.

You will also want check out the rest of the campus to find out whether there are enough books in the library and whether the gym smells or the showers leak.

Before you leave, ask the school for the names and telephone numbers of at least five parents who have sons or daughters in the grade you are interested in. Telephone calls are a fast and effective way to judge how well a school may suit the needs of your youngster. (Incidentally, if distance makes a campus tour impossible, the very least you might do is phone the school to get some references).

We don't want to create the impression here that boarding schools have something to hide; they don't. Most are superb educational establishments that are or should be the envy of other schools. Nor do we want to create the impression that it is incumbent on every parent who visits a campus to become so overzealous on the campus tour that the normal functioning of the school is disrupted. We just think you will want to exhibit normal and courteous caution to

¹⁹ You might also ask how many students were expelled during the last five years and on what grounds.

ensure that your money is well spent, and your child well educated.

Suggestions to Parents Intending to Send their Youngsters to Study in Canada

Every year, boarding schools in Canada welcome non-Canadian students from abroad. The presence of foreign students helps to create an international flavour in the schools; it also helps broaden the interests and outlook of all students. The total number of applications processed by the federal government from international students at all educational levels increased 135% between 1985 and 1997, this at a time when the government had to struggle with significant programme reductions. In 1997, the latest year Statistics are available, there were over 99,000 foreign students registered at all levels in Canadian institutions. This total climbed to well over 100,000 if students destined to short-term English and French as a Second Language (ESL and FSL) programmes are included.

Except at Jean-de-Brébeuf in Quebec and the Collège Mathieu in Saskatchewan, the language of instruction in the boarding schools of Canada is English. Experience shows that students for whom English is a second language, need several years at a school before attempting the senior grades leading to a provincial diploma. Most schools offer "English as a Second Language" classes supplemented by the experience of living in residence with Canadians but in recent years a small number have emerged whose primary purpose is to cater to the international student. Columbia International College in Hamilton is the largest but several more exist in both Ontario and British Columbia.

Admission of international students to Canadian universities varies. Most require standing of 60% or better in senior English from international students. Admission to professional courses (Engineering, Dentistry, Medicine) also depends upon a high score in some standardized *Test Of English as a Foreign Language*. Students are best prepared for these exacting tests by taking all of their secondary schooling in Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada regulates the movement of all people into the country, including students on either short-term or long-term study programmes. The procedure is as follows:

1. Application is made to an institution in Canada.
2. Upon acceptance into a Canadian school, a letter of admission is issued by the institution.
3. Application for a student authorization and visa is made at the nearest Canadian government office in the home country. Citizens of the United States, St-Pierre-Miquelon, and Greenland have the option of making application at the port of entry upon arrival in Canada.
4. Immigration officials will require the following documentation:
 - the letter of admission. This letter must be the original, not a photocopy, must specify in detail the courses you are taking, and must confirm that you have been accepted as a student, and indicate the length of programme or studies
 - evidence of good character
 - certificate of medical clearance
 - evidence of adequate funds to live and study in Canada, including return transportation (International students may be allowed to work while

attending school. But jobs may be difficult to find in Canada so you should not count on getting one).

- a valid passport.

If you wish to attend a school in the province of Quebec, you will have to obtain additional approval from the province. This will apply after you have met the requirements of the Canadian government; as well, you must have the Quebec approval renewed every year. There may be a Quebec office in your country where you can go for information.

You will be pleased to know that from the federal government's end, the high priority given to students has led to some encouraging processing results overseas. In 1997, over 70% of cases were completed in one month or less. Same-day processing increased from 17% of cases in 1996 to 21% in 1997.

Canadian boarding schools generally require that all international students pay the fees for each school year in advance.

Deposits for trust and expense accounts should also be paid in advance. Only after full payment of fees will letters of admission for immigration purposes normally be issued. Incidentally, Canadian regulations also require that a school notify Citizenship and Immigration Canada if a student fails to register or attempts to change his or her programme of studies after entrance to the country.

Parents of international students are reminded that Canada is located in the North Temperate Zone. Except for parts of western British Columbia where the climate even in winter is often mild, temperatures in that season throughout the rest of the country occasionally drop below -18 degrees celsius (0 degree Fahrenheit). Snow and ice are common. This makes heavy clothing essential.

The purchase of such clothing can normally be arranged through the school. We think you should consider setting aside extra funds in your child's expense account to cover such purchases.

You would also be wise to budget for the purchase of provincial health insurance. Normally, such insurance covers a physician's fees as well as hospital coverage. Ask for details in the Business Office of any school.

The opportunity to study abroad and to live in a Canadian school is an exciting one for most students, but there are times when homesickness, frustration and loneliness may trouble a student far away from family and friends.

In the *Handbook* we have tried, as far as possible, to list the geographical origins of resident students precisely because we know that many students will want to attend those schools that have already attracted their fellow countrymen.

But please be careful not to follow these lists too slavishly: some schools identify Canadian students as coming from the international destinations of their parents when the parents have gone abroad for business or diplomatic reasons.

Even when your youngster is the only student from his or her country in a school, you can be assured that the school is very experienced in trying to make international students feel at home.

Except for one or two schools who cater exclusively to international students and whose residences and cafeteria are open 365 days a year, the major problem in virtually all schools

seems to arise at "break times", when a residence is closed, and a student is to unable to return home or visit friends. To forestall such circumstances, you might consider arranging for a relative resident in Canada, or a business associate, to act as guardian of your child. Some schools require guardians as a condition of admission.

If you experience difficulty locating a suitable guardian, we suggest you contact the Head of School as soon as possible.

For Further Information

See: *Studying in Canada: A Guide for International Students* available at the web site of Citizenship and Immigration: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/study_e.html