



On Ranking Schools...

In relation to questions pertaining to elementary and secondary education, we must keep our focus on the children's best interests. The Quebec Association of Independent Schools is opposed to the ranking of schools. The "best" school, whether it is public or independent, is the school that uniquely meets the needs of each particular child.

In the independent school sector, each institution, in its mission statement, defines its own objectives, the kind of program and campus culture the school provides, and often the qualities that will help a student to succeed there. These schools were not created from one mold. They have different missions and offer different grade ranges, denominational persuasions, curricular emphasis, pedagogical approaches, and extracurricular programs. Some schools are highly competitive by design, others intentionally create an atmosphere wherein success is defined by the goals targeted by the individual student. Students will thrive in the environment best suited to them. Some schools focus on the arts, some on mathematics and science, others on outdoor education or the liberal arts. Different schools offer programs for different types of students: bright students with learning differences,

the gifted, students of average ability, children who face particular challenges.

Independent schools are to be judged, through their rigorous accreditation and goal-setting processes, according to what they individually set out to accomplish. Ranking such wonderfully different schools against one another misrepresents the institutions, misleads consumer-minded parents about the factors that should be considered in the complex process of choosing a school, but most importantly, hurts children. Ranking elementary and secondary schools is a *de facto* labeling of vulnerable children and adolescents and is inherently wrong.

Ranking of schools encourages a destructive competitiveness, leading institutions away from offering rich alternatives and toward a stultifying sameness. It is a disservice to the schools, concerned parents, and children and, therefore, to our society.

Acknowledgement and thanks to the NAIS for allowing the QAIS to adapt the NAIS statement, *On Ranking Schools* © 1997 National Association of Independent Schools.

May 6, 2005

* Queen of Angels Academy is a member of the Quebec Association of Independent Schools.