

## **ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN EDUCATION BOOKLET**

The Association of International Women (AIW), Indianapolis, was founded in 1992 to support women moving to the USA from other countries and states. The AIW now represents women from nearly 50 countries, including the USA.

This information has been prepared by members of the Education Committee of the AIW, to help international families in central Indiana adjust successfully to American schools. This booklet is divided into 5 parts:

- Part I**        **OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION IN THE US** – This section covers the general structure of education and schooling options in the US and also includes a section on options for International schooling
- Part II**        **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS** – This section includes information common across all levels of schooling such as admission procedures, financial aid, policies & common practices.
- Part III**        **EDUCATION INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO EACH LEVEL OF SCHOOLING** - This section includes information outlining the differing structures, curriculum, graduation requirements, testing etc. at each level of schooling – pre-school, elementary, middle and high school.
- Part IV**        **PREPARING FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES** – This section covers guidelines and information for children getting ready to apply to colleges. *(To be published soon)*
- Part V**        **LIFELONG LEARNING** - The final section provides information on lifelong learning opportunities for women in Indiana who may be looking for further opportunities for education or for enrichment courses. *(To be published soon)*

The information is not definitive and all readers are advised to seek advice for themselves from their local school or administrative office. Policy and practices vary between private, public, parochial and home schooling approaches and some of the advice will not apply to all these systems. Some of this information may be similar or different in other states so we advise anyone moving to another state to check the information as it pertains to that state.

The AIW, as an organization, **does not endorse any particular program, school, group or philosophy by means of this Booklet.** The information contained herein is intended to provide guidance in the difficult task of searching and selecting the right daycare, preschools, and schools. The decisions you make should be based solely on your own further research and evaluation of the situation you are facing. There is no "one size fits all" in education; each family's needs and expectations are completely different. It is advisable to engage as many friends, peers and neighbors in your search to provide options.

For international families who might be returning to their home country after a few years, it is important to check educational requirements back in your home country and ensure that you take those requirements into account when making a decision on schools.

**The AIW Education Committee will endeavor to keep this resource information up to date. We welcome your feedback on additional information needed or on updates to the existing text.**

We speak your language. If you have any questions, you are warmly welcome to contact us via website or mail. Visit <http://www.aiwindy.org> to send us a message to [education@aiwindy.org](mailto:education@aiwindy.org). We always have members who would love to talk to you and help answer some of your questions.

**Association of International Women, Inc.**

Education Committee

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*AIW Education Booklet- Part I*

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# **PART I**

## **OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION IN THE US**

In any international move, one of the areas, most critical to making a successful transition, is education for children. Throughout the world, education is targeted at developing a child into a successful and responsible adult. However, the emphasis placed on specific aspects of that development differs from country to country and understanding these differences helps greatly in making the right decisions.

Part 1 of this booklet covers areas that International families might not be familiar with in terms of the general system of education in the US.

### Section A – Environment & Structure of Education

1. Education Environment
2. General Structure of Education
3. Legal Requirements

### Section B – Schooling Options in Indiana

1. Types of Schools – Public, Charter, Magnet, Private, Parochial, Virtual & Home Schooling
2. School Districts In and around Indianapolis
3. International Schooling related Information
  - International Baccalaureate program (IB)
  - Language Immersion Programs
  - English Language Support for children for whom English is not the first language
  - Information about some schools with an international focus.

### Section C – Choosing the Right School

## **PART I - SECTION A ENVIRONMENT & STRUCTURE OF US EDUCATION**

This section aims at giving you a broad overview of the environment and focus of the education system in the United States of America. It covers the following areas:

1. Educational environment in the USA
2. General structure of education in the US
3. Legal requirements for education

### 1. **EDUCATIONAL ENVIROMENT IN THE US** (*Return to [Top of the Document](#)*)

#### **a) Focus on all-round development rather than only academic achievement**

US schools focus on developing well-rounded students – students with experience and knowledge in academic subjects, music, sport, art and so on – who are confident, have strong self-esteem, and who can present themselves well.

While some international families may have concerns about aspects of this approach (not enough emphasis on academic work, or excessive amounts of time spent on music, sport or other activities), many families comment favorably on the growth in the confidence and self-esteem of their children in the US school system.

#### **b) Classroom Learning Environment**

In US classrooms students are encouraged and expected to ask questions. Often part of their grade is earned by strong participation in classroom discussions. Students are taught to express an opinion and provide a defense for their argument. There is much direct eye contact.

Students from some countries find this style of student behavior in the classroom confrontational. In many countries, students are expected to sit and listen quietly throughout the lesson, and asking the teacher a question would be considered improper. Students from these countries may feel the US teacher does not know their subject matter well. US teachers may unknowingly penalize quiet respectful students from other countries because the teacher does not know this is the accepted student behavior in the student's 'passport country'.

#### **c) Student creativity and problem solving**

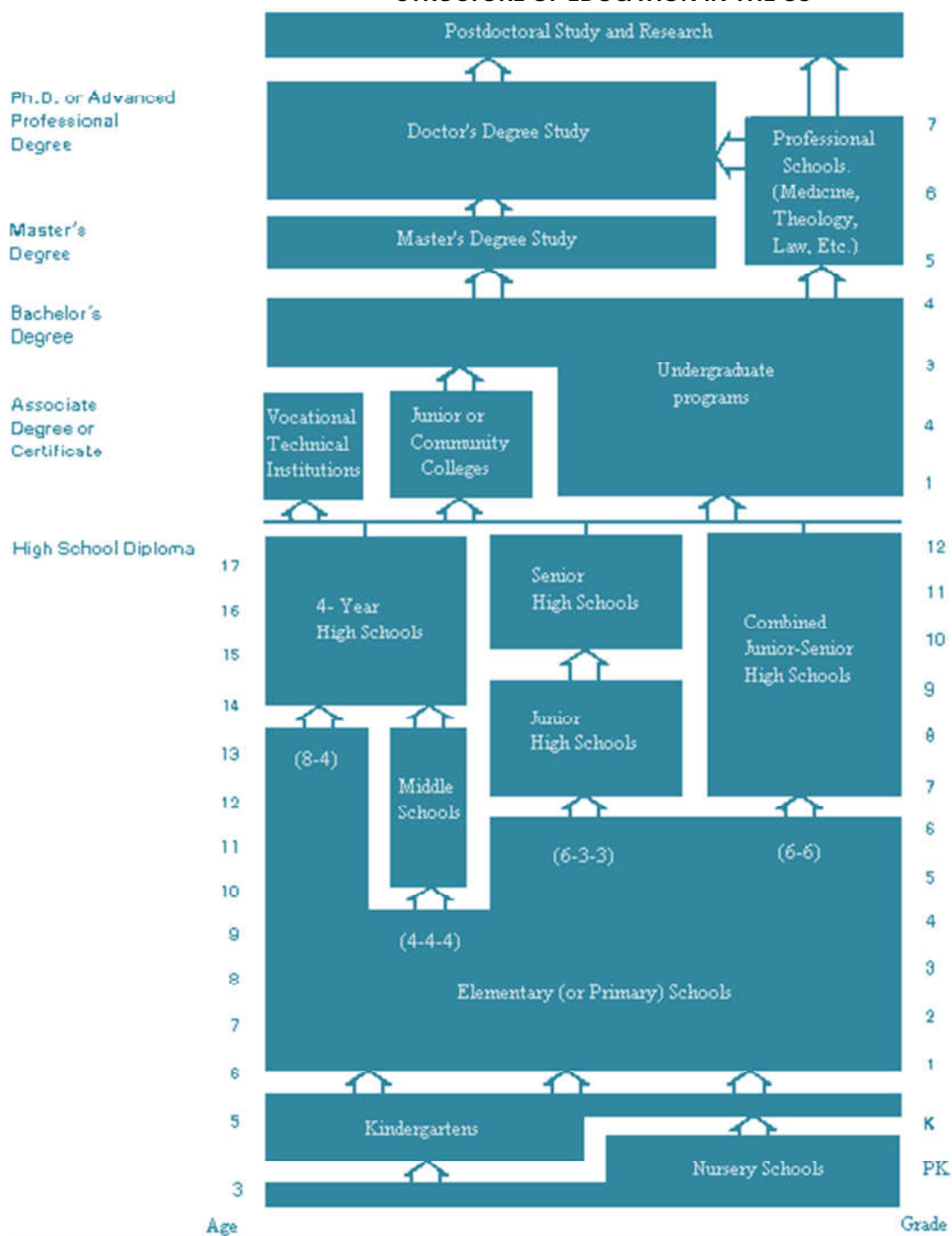
US students do not learn by rote (repetition of given facts and rules) and instead are expected to be capable problem solvers. There is also some encouragement of creativity (more than in some countries, and not as much as in others).

Many written assignments and projects have prescriptive structural requirements and will be graded according to a 'rubric' – often an extensive list of features which the student must address.

### 2. **GENERAL STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION IN THE US** (*Return to [Top of the Document](#)*)

The following chart outlines the general structure of education in the US. There is a brief description of each stage to give you a general overview of the system of education. Detailed information, specific to each stage of education, is included under separate sections in this booklet. ([Part 3 - Section G](#))

## STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION IN THE US



**Pre-school:** The majority of U.S. children begin their education prior to entering regular school. Parents who send their children to pre-schools/nursery schools (age 2-4) and kindergartens (age 5-6), most often have to pay for this themselves, although some government funding is now provided for Kindergarten (Contact your local school for more information). Children learn the alphabet, colors, and other elementary basics.

**Schools:** The terms K-12 education, and sometimes PK-12 education are often used to refer to all primary and secondary education from pre-school through Grade School to High School. As illustrated in the chart above, one of the following three patterns usually prevails in the community:

K-5 - Elementary school;	→	6-8 - Middle school	→	9-12 - High school	<b>OR</b> <b>OR</b>
K-6 - Elementary school;	→	7-9 - Junior High	→	9-12 - High school	
K-8 - Elementary school	→		→	9-12 - High School	

- **Elementary School** : In Elementary school, children are normally in a homeroom with the same teacher. Education is focused on the 3 Rs – Reading, wRiting & aRithmetic at lower levels and additionally, Science and Social Studies at the higher grades. They also have special classes such as Gym, Music, Art etc.
- **Middle School/Junior High**: After Elementary school, students proceed to Middle School, where they usually move from class to class each period, with a new teacher and a new mixture of students in every class. In most middle schools students can select from a wide range of academic classes and elective classes although some schools, especially smaller ones, may have the same subjects for all students.
- **High School**: In High School, each year is called a different name, which sometimes can be confusing.
  - First year high school students (9<sup>th</sup> graders) are called FRESHMEN
  - Second year students (10<sup>th</sup> graders) are called SOPHOMORE
  - Third year students (11<sup>th</sup> graders) are called JUNIORS
  - Fourth year students (12<sup>th</sup> graders) are called SENIORS

Here too they move from class to class to a new teacher and a new mixture of students. There is an even greater variety of subjects than before. Students must earn a certain number of credits (which they get for a successfully completed course) in order to graduate and be awarded with a High School Diploma – there is no final examination like in many other countries. Students can enroll in postsecondary (college) education, only with a high school diploma. It is important to know that colleges and universities require certain tests (e.g. SAT / ACT) (*Refer Part II, Section C*) and certain high school credits for admission, and students must plan their high school career with those requirements in mind.

**Colleges & Universities**: After high school, students can enroll in a college or university for their undergraduate studies. However, it is important to remember that admissions to colleges begin even before high school ends and it is important to start preparing for this soon after entering High School, if not before. *Part IV* of this booklet deals extensively with requirements and preparation for college admission.

Typically the undergraduate degree is a 4 year course, after which students will receive their Bachelor’s Degree. Alternatively, some students could opt for a 2 year Associate’s Degree.

After attaining their Bachelor’s degree, students could opt for graduate education – either a Master’s degree or branch out to obtain a professional degree like Medicine or Law. (*Note- Unlike in some European countries, where the term “professional degree” refers to a “trade school degree”, in the US the term refers to higher studies in a particular profession like medicine, law, finance etc.*). Master’s degrees are normally 2 year programs, while the time frame to complete professional degrees varies depending on the field chosen. Following the Master’s degree, students could opt to study further and pursue Post-Graduate and Doctoral studies.

### 3. **LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR EDUCATION:** (*Return to [Top of the Document](#)*)

The law in Indiana establishes the start of education at 7 years old. Each state has differing rules and regulations governing education and hence it is important to note the requirements specific to the state in which you live.

#### **State requirements**

Indiana Law requires **all children from the age of 7 to age 18 to attend public school or private school taught in the English language**. While the legal guideline is that the child must be 7 years old by August 1st in order to enter 1st grade, some private schools are flexible and may permit younger children to enroll. Further, there is an appeal process that allows parents to enroll their children earlier. Parents may make arrangements to educate their children at home (home school).

## **PART I - SECTION B**

### **SCHOOLING OPTIONS IN INDIANA**

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#### **1) TYPES OF SCHOOLS:**

The four basic schooling options in the US are described briefly below. Each option has been discussed in detail later in the section.

**a) Public Schools**, which include:

- Local District Public Schools
- Magnet Schools
- Charter schools

All states in the US have a public school system which is funded by the state and which provides free education to all residents in a particular school district. In the last few years, two new types of alternative schools have developed within the Public School system - Charter Schools and Magnet Schools. (We will talk about these in greater detail later)

**b) Private (Non-Public) Schools**: These are funded privately and not by the government. These include private schools, which are normally run by religious institutions and other independent private schools.

- Parochial Schools (Run by churches and other religious institutions)
- Other Private Schools / Independent Schools

**c) Home Schooling Education** – The US has a comprehensive home schooling system where parents, individually or in groups, can choose to school their children at home.

**d) Virtual / Blended Schools** – These schools offer options for online learning options

**Accreditation**: It is advisable for parents to inquire into the accreditation status of prospective schools and to ask by whom the school is accredited. This indicates that a school is approved by the State of Indiana or a national accreditation organization. The standard of education for each school is tested and approved by the accrediting agency.

#### **Public V/S Private Schools**

If you are opting for traditional methods of education, your first choice is to decide whether you would like to choose a Public or a Private school.

**The choice between Public and Private (Non-Public) schools is one of the most important decisions you make, because unless you have decided ahead of time that your child(ren) will attend a non-public (private) school, the process of choosing a school may directly influence your decision on where to buy or rent a home.**

#### **The most critical differences between public and private schools are:**

- a) School Districts & Attendance Zones** - Public schools are divided into school districts, each of which comprise of a number of schools. All public schools, (except for charter and magnet schools) are required by law to accept children who live in a designated geographical area around the school referred to as an “attendance zone”. For private schools, there is no such zoning requirement and most have an entrance requirement, which may include a test or an interview.
- b) Fees**: Public school education and transportation to the school are provided free of charge to residents. Private schools, on the other hand all charge a tuition fee that can range anywhere from \$2000 to \$20000 per year.

#### **Financial Aid for Private Schooling:**

For families unable to afford tuition fees for private education, there are various financial resources to help you pay, including vouchers, tax credit scholarships & school financial assistance programs. These will be discussed further in the section under [Financial Aid](#)



A brief comparison summarizing the key criteria that distinguish the difference types of schools is given in the table below. (Detailed information on each type of school follows the table.)

	<b><u>PUBLIC SCHOOLS</u></b>			<b><u>PRIVATE / INDEPENDENT (NON-PUBLIC) SCHOOLS</u></b>	
	<b><u>Local District Schools</u></b>	<b><u>Charter Schools</u></b>	<b><u>Magnet Schools</u></b>	<b><u>Parochial Schools</u></b>	<b><u>Other Private Schools</u></b>
<b>Definition</b>	A school funded with tax revenue and administered by the local government (School district)	"Alternative" autonomous public schools operating under a "charter"; Free from many regulations applied to public schools	"Alternative" Public schools with a distinctive theme and/or other program feature such as science and technology.	Parochial schools are grouped together in a school system that is run by a religious denomination.	Independent schools which are accredited private schools.
<b>Managed / Administered by</b>	School Boards elected by voters	Chartering Organization	Part of the Public School System (School Boards)	Boards appointed by parishes / institutions	Appointed board of directors.
<b>Fees</b>	None			Tuition fees / Tithes	Tuition Fees charged
<i>Tuition</i>					
<i>Transport</i>	Free transport provided in most cases			Transport, if provided, is charged	
<i>Other Fees</i>	May have modest fees such as Book Fees etc.			Normally charge other fees too.	
<b>Admission Procedure</b>	Have to accept children within a defined attendance zone	Define their own attendance zones.	No zones. Have only district boundaries	Do not have any school districts or attendance zone rules.	
<i>Attendance Zones</i>					
<i>Application</i>	Automatically assigned	Not automatically assigned. Need to apply to school directly.		Apply directly to schools.	
<i>Admission Tests</i>	No Admission tests	No Admission tests. Random lottery system.	May require entrance test	May have tests / interviews	May have tests / interviews
<b>Uniform</b>	No prescribed uniforms although dress codes/guidelines may apply.			Most require uniforms	May require uniforms
<b>Religion</b>	Are not allowed to teach religion.			Religion taught in school.	May or may not have a religious teaching.
<b>Information available / Useful links</b>	<a href="http://www.doe.in.gov/">http://www.doe.in.gov/</a>	<a href="http://www.in.gov/icsb/2408.htm">http://www.in.gov/icsb/2408.htm</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://imaps.indygov.org/schools/options.asp">http://imaps.indygov.org/schools/options.asp</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.magnet.ips.k12.in.us/">http://www.magnet.ips.k12.in.us/</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.doe.in.gov/ido/private-schools-indiana">http://www.doe.in.gov/ido/private-schools-indiana</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.indianapolismonthly.com/schools.aspx">http://www.indianapolismonthly.com/schools.aspx</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.greatschools.org/indiana/indianapolis/schools/?st=private">http://www.greatschools.org/indiana/indianapolis/schools/?st=private</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools_parishes">http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools_parishes</a></li> </ul>	

## **a) PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **i) Local district public schools**

Public schools, for Kindergarten to Grade 12 are organized by school districts with elected school boards who, together with the state, are responsible for meeting the educational needs of each community. Public schools:

- are required by law to accept children who live in a designated geographical area around the school sometimes referred to as a 'zone'. Depending on the size of the school district, there may be more than one school for your child, but your child(ren) will be assigned to a specific one. Some families choose their public school by buying or renting a home in the preferred school district. Some public schools accept students from outside their school district, however, the policy on fees might differ. For more information on schools in each county, visit <http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/dg/schools/welcome.html>
- are provided free of charge to residents and thus do not charge major tuition fees (but do have some modest fees such as for books). State and property taxes fund public schools.
- are managed by school districts in your township.
- have a Board of Directors which is elected by registered voters.
- are not allowed to teach religion.

Public schools do not charge students fees for tuition (teaching) or transportation for students who live in the school district/zone, unless you decide to place your child in a public school other than the one in your district. However, public schools do charge for book rentals, activities, and consumable materials. Also there will be charges for lunches and to replace lost or damaged books. During registration you will be presented with a bill for these and other applicable expenses. (For more info visit <http://www.doe.in.gov/>)

### **ii) Charter Schools**

Charter schools are public schools operating under a performance contract or "charter." The charter allows the school to operate under defined rules and regulations. Under Indiana Code, charter schools are established to serve the different learning styles and needs of public school students, to offer public school students appropriate and innovative choices, to afford varied opportunities for professional educators, to allow freedom and flexibility in exchange for exceptional levels of accountability, and to provide parents, students, community members, and local entities with an expanded opportunity for involvement in the public school system.

A charter school:

- is a public, nonsectarian and nonreligious school
- is free to those who attend it (funded by tax dollars)
- is not automatically assigned – interested families must apply directly to the school
- defines its own attendance zone within their contract. Enrollment preference is given to students who live within the charter school's defined attendance zone. If seats are not filled after students within the attendance zone are admitted, the school may open up enrollment to any student living within the school district in which the charter school is located.
- cannot have admission tests. In case of lack of space, students are chosen through a random lottery
- is normally run by a chartering organization or a state education agency. Administration may be a group or organization, for example, a collection of educators, a university, or a corporation. May also be run by a regular school district.
- is granted more authority and flexibility than other public schools, but has accountability standards directly related to its mission and written into its standards.
- its charter is periodically reviewed and may be revoked

To find out more about charter schools and where to find them in your area, visit <http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/charter-schools> and <http://www.in.gov/icsb/2408.htm>

### **iii) Magnet Schools**

Some school districts offer magnet schools which cater to students with special interests or talents. Magnet schools range from elementary, middle, to high school. Programs include: global studies, foreign language immersion programs, performing arts, sciences and trades etc.

A magnet school, like a charter school:

- Is a public, nonsectarian and nonreligious school
- free to those who attend it (funded by tax dollars)
- is not automatically assigned – interested families must apply directly to the school

However, unlike charter schools, a magnet school:

- has the same governance structure as any other public school. It follows the same laws and regulations, and its teachers, administrators and other staff are required to have state certification
- is meant to have a distinctive curriculum, theme or instructional approach
- attracts students from outside an assigned neighborhood attendance zone
- has diversity as an explicit purpose
- may have a selection process including admission tests.

The Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) district has the largest number of magnet schools: *(For more information on magnet schools in all school districts of Indianapolis visit <http://imaps.indygov.org/schools/options.asp> and <http://www.magnet.ips.k12.in.us/> )*

### **b) PRIVATE (NON-PUBLIC) SCHOOLS**

The Central Indiana region has a variety of non-public schools and systems, which include parochial schools and other private schools. These are open to anyone, living in any area, but they charge tuition and fees. In general, private and parochial schools:

- charge tuition fees
- do not have any zoning rules.
- may have a religious affiliation
- are likely to have entrance requirements that can include an examination and/or, an interview with the prospective student.
- may require a school uniform

The new voucher system ([Refer Financial Aid section](#)) may be used to pay some of the tuition; however, there may be a portion left unpaid, depending on the school. Inquire if the school has scholarships or financial aid available or whether they provide fee reductions for additional children from the same family.

The following are useful links that provide information on non-public/private schools in Indianapolis.

<http://www.doe.in.gov/ido/private-schools-indiana> (Department of Education website)

<http://www.indianapolismonthly.com/schools.aspx> (Indianapolis monthly school guide)

[http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools\\_parishes](http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools_parishes) (Department of Catholic Education)

#### **i) Parochial Schools**

Parochial schools are grouped together in a school system that is run by a religious denomination. The Catholic Schools form the largest parochial school system in Central Indiana. Catholic schools can be parish schools, paid for by tithes (which are potentially tax deductible), or private Catholic schools which charge tuition fees.

For more information visit [http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools\\_parishes](http://www.archindy.org/oce/index.asp?action=schools_parishes)

#### **ii) Other Private Schools**

These schools may or may not have religious affiliations and include

- Private schools administered by an appointed board of directors or
- Independent schools which are accredited private schools.

### **c) Home Schooling Education**

Some families choose to educate their children outside the school system. This is much more common in the United States than in many other countries. Home schooling can be religious or secular. There are many home schooling cooperatives, national conventions, training and resources available for families. More information can be found on the internet. More info at <http://www.iahe.net>

### **d) Virtual / Blended Public Charter Schools**

Many states now offer tuition-free online schools for students under a certain age (often 21), who reside in the state. Most virtual schools are charter schools; they receive government funding and are run by a private organization. Online charter schools are subject to fewer restrictions than traditional schools. However, they are reviewed regularly and must continue to meet state standards.

Virtual schools do not have an actual school campus or classrooms but rather provide education online, where students can log on and attend virtual classes or follow the curriculum that the school has. Some institutes offer a blended curriculum, which includes some days on-site at a physical classroom and the rest of the learning is online.

This type of education is best suited to those who prefer a self-directed pace and style of learning. It can be a successful option if students are self-motivated, independent and self-disciplined in their approach.

(For more information on virtual schools visit <http://www.indianavirtual.com/>)

## **2) SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN AND AROUND INDIANAPOLIS**

The city of Indianapolis is located in Marion County, which is divided into 11 school districts:

- |                                      |                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Beech Grove City                  | 2. Decatur Township  | 3. Franklin Township |
| 4. IPS (Indianapolis Public Schools) | 5. Lawrence Township | 6. Perry Township    |
| 7. Pike Township                     | 8. Town of Speedway  | 9. Warren Township   |
| 10. Washington Township              | 11. Wayne Township   |                      |

In addition, there are a number of towns and cities that do not form part of the “city of Indianapolis” and have their own school systems. Some of the school districts in other counties that you might want to consider are:

1. Hamilton County (North of Indianapolis)– This includes the school districts of :
  - a. Carmel Clay Schools
  - b. Fishers (Hamilton South Eastern) Schools
  - c. Noblesville Schools
  - d. Westfield Washington Schools (*Note – This is different from Washington Township in Indianapolis*)
2. Boone County (North-west of Indianapolis) :
  - a. Zionsville Community Schools
3. Johnson County (South of Indianapolis):
  - a. Center Grove Community Schools
  - b. Franklin Community Schools
  - c. Greenwood Community Schools

### **3) INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING RELATED INFORMATION**

Since this booklet is primarily intended for families with an international background, we have given below a brief description of a few programs / schools that have an international focus. It is neither meant to be an exhaustive list nor to serve as a recommendation for any particular school. Rather it aims at providing families with a brief overview of “internationally focused” curriculums available in some schools, including.

- a) **International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB Diploma) and Other IB programs (IB Certificate, MYP & PYP)**
- b) **English as a New Language / Second Language (ESL)**
- c) **Language Immersion programs**
- d) **Some schools with an international focus**

#### **a) International Baccalaureate (IB)**

The International Baccalaureate system is an international program of study that prepares students for admission to universities around the world. Thus it is often favored by families who are in the US on assignment and plan to return to their home country. An increasing number of US schools are being accredited for the IB programs and an increasing number of US colleges are acknowledging the IB Diploma when assessing students’ college applications. For more information on the IB programs, visit <http://www.ibo.org/>

There are three types of IB programs that could be offered by schools –

- Grades 1-5 - Primary Years Program or “PYP”
- Grades 6-10 - Middle School level - Middle Years Program or “MYP”
- Grades 11 & 12 - There are two options here –
  - “IB Diploma” which is a comprehensive program of study in Grades 11 & 12
  - “IB Certificates” where students follow the IB classes & take examinations in individual subjects.

At the High School level, because of the rigor and high standards of the IB courses, it is often seen as an alternative to AP (Advanced Placement) classes, which are very common across US schools. For a comparative discussion on both AP and IB, refer [Part 3 – Section G](#) of this booklet.

#### **IB Schools - Availability in Indianapolis**

The most common program offered in Central Indiana is the IB Diploma (High School program) in Grades 11 and 12. As can be seen in the table below, the PYP (Elementary) program is offered by a number of public schools. However there are a limited number offering the MYP (Middle School) program.

	<b>Primary Years Program (PYP)</b>	<b>Middle Years Program (MYP)</b>	<b>International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma and/or Certificate (High School)</b>
<b>rPUBLIC SCHOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allisonville Elementary School</li> <li>• Crooked Creek Elementary</li> <li>• Fox Hill Elementary School</li> <li>• Greenbriar Elementary School</li> <li>• John Strange Elementary</li> <li>• Nora Elementary School</li> <li>• Spring Mill Elementary School</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ben Davis High School</li> <li>• Carmel High School</li> <li>• Fishers High School</li> <li>• Lawrence Central High School</li> <li>• Lawrence North High School</li> <li>• North Central High School</li> <li>• Northwest High School</li> <li>• Pike High School</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Center for Enquiry (CFE) - (3 centers) <i>(Whole of PYP and first 3 years of MYP (Grades K-8))</i></li> </ul>		
		Gambold Preparatory School <i>(Certification expected in Fall 2014. Grade 9-12-(last 2 years of MYP +2 years of IB Dip)</i>	
<b>PRIVATE SCHOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International School of Indiana (Offers all levels of IB program – PYP, MYP &amp; IB Diploma)</li> </ul>		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathedral High School</li> <li>• St. Theodore Guerin High School</li> </ul>

## How Good Is The IB Program In My School?

There is much variability between schools in the ways that the IB program is run. It is therefore recommended that you do your research before choosing a particular IB school. It is important to note that many schools offer the option of the IB programs along with other mainstream curriculums while some schools are specialized IB schools. Thus, at many high schools, you will find options for both AP and IB, while in a specialized IB school, like the international School of Indiana, only the IB curriculum will be offered.

While the basic structure of both types of programs conforms to the required IB standards, there are likely to be differences in the way the program is run. It is therefore critical to meet the IB coordinator to get answers to certain questions and decide for yourself, whether the program on offer suits your child's need and whether they will get the maximum benefit out of the program. Here are some of the questions you might want to ask:

1. What is the average score of students in your IB program the last few years?  
*(The passing scores range from 24 – 46, with the world average at 28 and good colleges recognizing 36+ as a good score)*
2. What are the subjects offered as part of the IB program? *(Schools might not offer all the subjects as part of the IB program and you need to check whether the subjects your child is interested in, are being offered or not)*
3. What are the subjects you offer at Higher Level (HL) and which ones do you offer only at Standard Level (SL)?  
*(Again check whether subjects in your child's field of interest are being offered at the Higher Level. At college admission time, you might find that some universities give credit only subjects taken at the HL)*
4. Are your Higher Level and Standard Level classes separate or together? *( A good program is likely to offer these classes separately to account for the greater demands of Higher Level courses)*
5. How many AP / IB classes are combined? *(There are pros and cons to this answer. The IB curriculum differs from the AP and often, if they are held together, IB students are asked to do extra work to complete IB requirements) On the other hand, If your child would like to complete the IB Diploma program and yet take the AP exams, this might be a benefit)*
6. How long have your IB teachers been teaching IB syllabus?
7. Does the school have an Internal Assessment Calendar? *(A good IB program will have the Internal Assessments (IAs) scheduled and spread out over the two year so they do not clash with other subject internal assessments or other school assessments or SATs)*
8. Do you follow the Block Schedule or a Period Schedule? *(IB curriculum recommends a block schedule to give students longer periods of time for in-classroom discussion and work. However a large number of schools offering both IB & AP, will stick to the shorter period schedule)*
9. How much time do you provide for reviews of the curriculum? Especially in cases where courses are taught over a period of 2 years, it is very important to complete the syllabus a little ahead of time, in order to give students an opportunity to review the entire coursework.
10. Are Mock Examinations held for the IB students? *(The IB external assessments are very different from the traditional examinations in the US, and it will greatly benefit students to have practice examinations.)*
11. What is the support you extend to students for their Extended Essays?

These guidelines are only indicative and are meant to enable you to make a well informed decision. You might choose a school even if it doesn't have all the specifics mentioned above, but meets your child's needs in most of the areas.

### **b) English as a New Language (ENL) or English as Second Language (ESL).**

Some schools offer courses or other support for students who do not have English as their first language. Check with individual schools for availability and details of such programs or visit

<http://www.esldirectory.com/esl-program-search/usa/indiana/indianapolis>

### **c) Language Immersion Programs**

Recent research has shown that learning a second language at an early age has a positive effect on intellectual growth and leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language and improved listening skills. Many schools have introduced immersion programs, where the medium of instruction is a language other than English. *For a list of schools in Indiana offering immersion programs, visit*

<http://www.cal.org/resources/immersion/ImmersionList.aspx>

### **d) Some Schools with an international focus**

- **The International School of Indiana (ISI):**

ISI is an independent international school in Indiana. ISI students are challenged to attain the highest international standards and to develop as responsible citizens of Indiana, the United States, and the world. It is one of the few schools offering immersion programs in three languages - Spanish, French and Mandarin. It is the only school in Indianapolis to offer all levels of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program (PYP, MYP and IB Diploma). For more information: <http://www.isind.org>

- **Forest Glen International Elementary School:**

This is an international magnet public school serving over 700 students from grades kindergarten through six. It is located in the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township. Forest Glen selects students through a district wide computerized admittance process.

The school offers a strong focus on understanding other cultures and has two distinct programs Spanish language (Immersion) and Global Studies. In the Spanish Immersion Program, students are immersed in the Spanish language with all instruction and conversation taking place in Spanish in kindergarten through third grade. Students in fourth and fifth grades have instruction in Spanish for half of the day and English for half of the day. In the Global Studies Program students develop an in-depth interest in world studies and geography as they make cross-cultural connections. In addition students attend daily Spanish classes. For more information: <https://forestglen.ltschools.org/>

- **Gambold Preparatory School**

This is one of the few public schools in Indianapolis offering the IB program at all 4 High School grades (Grades 9-12) instead of the 2 year program offered by most other public high schools. It is a relatively new magnet high school which is a candidate IB school (Authorization from the IB Board is expected in Fall 2014). The emphasis of education here is on international mindedness, intercultural understanding and academic rigor. Gambold Prep's mission is to challenge high-ability scholars from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to become lifelong learners who develop personal and social awareness. It is currently located in the west side of Indianapolis, in the Indianapolis Public Schools District (IPS). For more information: <http://www.gamboldprep.com/our-school/>

- **Park Tudor (Global Scholars Program):**

Park Tudor's unique Global Scholars program (for High School juniors and seniors) augments the school's Advanced Placement program and uses components drawn from the IB program and the Alverno College Assessment. Blended with existing opportunities at Park Tudor, such as the service-based learning program,

the senior project and the college counseling process, the program offers rising juniors who enroll in this two-year course of study a valuable understanding of the ethical, aesthetic, linguistic and philosophical nature of the human experience.

For more information, visit <http://www.parktutor.org/academics/upper/Pages/global-scholars.aspx>

- **Indiana Japanese Language School:**

Indiana Japanese Language School is an independent Saturday school teaching basic subjects (Japanese, Math, Social studies) compliant with Japanese standards. Over 300 expat Japanese children from Grades kindergarten through 10th attend the school. The aim is to provide the extra inputs required to keep expatriate Japanese children on par with education in Japan so that they can adjust quickly after going back to Japan. All students go to public/private schools on weekdays.

The school operates within the premises of Orchard School, which is a private school located in North Indianapolis. For more information, go to <http://indiana-j-school.net/> (Website in Japanese only).

- **Chinese School of Chinese Community Church of Indianapolis (CSCCCI)**

Chinese School of Chinese Community Church of Indianapolis (CSCCCI) has been promoting Chinese language and culture through the weekend Chinese language classes, for over 30 years. They offer Chinese classes for Pre-K through High School, and also an instructional class especially designed to equip high school students for the Chinese AP class and the SAT exam. CSCCCI also promotes the Chinese culture through celebrating Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year, Full Moon Festival etc. For more information, go to <http://indychinesechurch.org/children/chineseschool>.

- **Some other schools attended by children of AIW members**

While the schools listed above have a specified “international focus”, there are many school districts or schools that AIW members often choose for their children. We have listed some of these below.

**Public school districts** (listed alphabetically)

- Carmel Clay Schools
- Fishers (Hamilton South Eastern) Schools
- Franklin Schools
- Noblesville Schools
- Washington Township Schools
- Westfield Schools
- Zionsville Schools

**Private schools** (listed alphabetically)

- Brebeuf Preparatory Jesuit School
- Cathedral High School
- Heritage Christian School
- St. Richard’s School
- Sycamore School
- The Orchard School

This list is by no means exhaustive nor is it meant to endorse any schools or school districts. It is intended solely to give new families an idea of some of the schooling options used by other international families within the AIW.

Remember when searching for information about schools, a large number of them do not fall under the city “Indianapolis” or Marion County and you will need to look at other cities / towns / counties. (Refer preceding section – “School Districts in and around Indianapolis”)



## PART I - SECTION C CHOOSING THE RIGHT SCHOOL

One of the best aspects of the US education system is the wide variety of options available. While this might sometimes make the choice of the right school a little more difficult, the advantage is that you will always find an option that suits your specific needs.

It is important to remember that, in education, one size does not fit all. The question you need to ask yourself is not, “What is the best school?” but rather **“Which school best meets the specific needs of my child and my family?”**

### 1) HOW DO I CHOOSE SCHOOLS?

Typically most people would follow the following simple steps to help them decide which school to choose. This section helps highlight some significant issues and decisions you might need to take in this process and also guides you to some resources that might be useful in your decision making process.

#### a) UNDERSTAND THE CHOICES AVAILABLE

The preceding sections describing the American education system and the types of schools available could be your starting point. As mentioned earlier, **unless you have decided ahead of time that your child(ren) will attend a non-public (private) school, the process of choosing a school may directly influence your decision on where to buy or rent a home.** For further information on public & private schools, refer [Section A – Types of schools](#)

#### b) DEFINE YOUR IDEA OF A GOOD SCHOOL

##### Describe your ideal school for yourself

List out your criteria for what constitutes a good school in terms of physical, emotional and social environment, the emphasis placed on various aspects of child development and the results the school achieves in various disciplines. This will help you clarify for yourself what you want and therefore when you look at schools, you will be able to focus on the key aspects.

##### List out your child’s and your family’s needs:

It is important that you understand each of your children’s needs and find a school will provide him/her the best opportunities to nurture and develop his/her talents and take care of his unique needs. For instance, the highest ranking school on academic performance may not always be the best suited to every child. For a child who would like to pursue a career in music, you might want to look at a school that offers an exceptional music program even though it is average on the academic performance. List out the criteria and environmental factors that are important for your child to feel comfortable and perform well as well as those that are a priority for the family as a whole. These might include some of the areas mentioned below:

<b><u>Child’s needs:</u></b>	<b><u>Family needs</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic level or curriculum offered</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities offered</li> <li>• School size</li> <li>• Teacher – student ratio</li> <li>• Courses or electives offered etc.</li> <li>• ESL (English as a second language) services</li> <li>• Other special needs etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to work / home locations</li> <li>• Transport facilities available</li> <li>• Lunch / Cafeteria Facilities</li> <li>• Before and After care Facilities</li> <li>• Religious / Faith based education etc.</li> </ul>

#### c) Collect information on good school districts and good schools

If you decide to choose a public school, it is very important that you are living in the zone covered by your school of choice. Therefore the next step is to choose a good school district.

Talk to colleagues and friends and gather as much information & recommendations for good schools & school districts. Also, since choice of house and school are so closely related, another good source for feedback on schools is a realtor/ real-estate agent, if you have one. Find out whatever information you can online. There are various resources available online that will give you information about schools and school districts.

- All public schools and schools, accredited by the government, have to report certain data, including ISTEP / ECA Scores, which will give you an idea of the academic performance of the school.
- However, private schools are not obligated to report all data and in these cases, you might have to ask individual private schools to provide you with the data. One good source for both public and private High Schools is to check the results of their students for the PSATs and the percentage of students on the National Merit Scholarship Finalist list. This data is available on <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/news/2013-national-merit-semifinalists-list.pdf>.
- There are also independent websites that rate schools based on their performance and feedback from parents / children. Some of the websites you could look up to get a comparison of schools are:  
Greatschools.org - <http://www.greatschools.org/>  
Zillow.com — <http://www.zillow.com/indianapolis-in/schools/>  
Trulia.com – [http://www.trulia.com/real\\_estate/Indianapolis-Indiana/schools/](http://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Indianapolis-Indiana/schools/)  
Schooldigger.com - <http://www.schooldigger.com/go/IN/districtrank.aspx> (Data available only for regular public schools)
- All schools have their individual websites where you can get a lot of the information that you need. Visit the websites of the schools in the school district you have chosen and check to see whether how they compare with the needs you listed above.

#### **d) Visiting the school**

Schools welcome parents and prospective students to visit their campus (school buildings and premises). Visiting a private/parochial school does not imply any commitment to the placement of your child and, if you have the time and the available resources, it can be very helpful to visit both public and private schools before making your final choice.

Visit the school with a list of questions that you would like answered. Tour the school facilities and get a feel of the environment and whether you and your child feel safe and comfortable there. Once you have visited all your shortlisted schools, compare all the schools on the basis of the criteria important to you and then make your decision.

#### **e) Register and apply at your selected schools**

We suggest that you apply to more than one school, especially if you are looking at magnet, charter or private schools. This will ensure you have a good back-up in case you are unable to secure admission for your top-choice school. The details of this process are covered in the following section ([Part 3 -Section A](#))

## 2) SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK AT SCHOOLS

Here is a list of indicative questions you can ask when you visit each school. There are no “good/right” or “bad/wrong” answers to any of these questions. This is NOT an exhaustive list but is meant to get you thinking about areas that might be important to you. We have also provided this information in a Checklist format, which you can use to fill in information and compare schools. [Refer “Choosing Schools Checklist”](#)

<p><b>Financial Implications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will be the cost I will have to pay for a single year of education? Include here all costs such as Tuition, Transport, Lunch, Uniforms, Books, Activity, Admission or any other fees that the school charges.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Demographic Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity - What type of racial / ethnic mix does the school have?</li> <li>• What is the socio-economic diversity of children in the school? <i>(The only published data for this is the percentage of children availing the Free Lunch program (Refer Part II Sec E)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Size of School &amp; Class / Learning Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the school small enough for more personalized attention or large enough to offer a wider variety of activities and facilities or is it so large that kids might not have as many leadership/participation opportunities as in smaller sized schools?</li> <li>• What is the class size or Teacher-Student Ratio? This is different from school size – and it is important because some large schools may have smaller class sizes and vice-versa.</li> <li>• What is the focus of the learning environment? Are there more teacher directed or child directed activities? Is the school strict on classroom discipline or does it encourage creativity and free-flowing style of learning?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Curriculum offered</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What syllabus does the school offer? Do they offer IB syllabus? What AP classes are offered?</li> <li>• Does the curriculum offer wide variety of options in arts and music programs, foreign languages, technology, sports and physical education classes?</li> <li>• Does it include a special focus on some areas –e.g. does it have immersion programs for a foreign language or a special focus on Math and science or high level sports/music program etc.?</li> <li>• Does the curriculum offer choices for special interests–e.g. photography, pottery, cookery, debate, forensic science, or any such area that your child might be interested in learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Academic Performance –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the academic level of the school? What are the ISTEP / ECA scores?</li> <li>• What is the qualification and experience level of the teachers?</li> </ul> <p><b>Gifted or Special Needs programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there programs to accelerate/challenge high academic achievers / gifted students?</li> <li>• What facilities does the school have for children with learning disabilities or physical disabilities?</li> <li>• Are there options for students to graduate early?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Extra-curricular activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the after-school extra-curricular activities offered in the areas of sports, music, art, drama, speech and at what level are they offered?</li> <li>• What are the facilities the school has - Swimming pool, tennis courts, theatre, music room etc.</li> <li>• In what sports does the school participate? How many of them are non-cut sports?</li> <li>• Does the school offer community service opportunities?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical Environment of school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the neighborhood around the school like?</li> <li>• Is there sufficient outdoor area? Are children allowed outdoor during recess?</li> <li>• What are the safety precautions the school takes?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotional Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the philosophy and focus with regard to children’s education?</li> <li>• Have you had problems with bullying in your school and how do you deal with it?</li> </ul>

**Get a feel for the environment of the school. Look around you and check to see-**

- Is the school is maintained well and kept clean?
- How do students and teachers interact with each other in the classroom?
- Does it feel too controlled or too lax or sufficiently disciplined, are the staff friendly?
- Do you feel safe in the school?

**COMPARING SCHOOLS – A SAMPLE CHECKLIST TO AID DECISION MAKING**

	<u>School 1</u>	<u>School 2</u>	<u>School 3</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
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**FAMILY NEEDS**

Proximity to work				
Proximity to home				
Transportation facility				
Proximity of bus stop				
Lunch cafeteria facility				
After care / Before care facility				
Religious / Faith based education				

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Tuition Fees				
Transport Fees				
Lunch Fees				
Books				
After-care cost per hour				
Others				

**FINANCIAL AID**

School voucher				
Scholarships				
Other financial aid				

**SIZE AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Number of students in school				
Average class size / Teacher-Student Ratio				
Racial/Ethnic Diversity				
Socio-economic level (% of students availing free lunch)				

**ACADEMICS**

Curriculum offered (other than State requirement)				
IB / Internationally recognized programs				
Subjects offered at AP / CLEP levels				
ISTEP / ECA scores				
Number of National Merit finalist				
Average Qualification / Experience of Teachers				

	<u>School 1</u>	<u>School 2</u>	<u>School 3</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
<b>NON-ACADEMIC / EXTRA CURRICULAR (List programs that your child is interested in under each head)</b>				
Sports programs				
Sports facilities (e.g. - Pool / tennis courts)				
Music programs & facilities				
Arts programs & facilities				
Other special interests				
<b>GIFTED / SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS</b>				
Gifted / Honors / Accelerated Learning				
Special Physical Needs				
Other Special Needs				
Learning Disabilities				
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES</b>				
School Year				
Uniforms				
Other Policies				
<b>OTHERS</b>				
Physical environment				
Safety				
Discipline				
<b>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</b>				
Is there a PTA?				