

Boarding School: The Right Choice for Me

An Essay by a Foreign Service Student

People are often curious when I tell them that I attend boarding school. Some ask, "*What did you do to deserve that?*" It puzzles me how boarding school is sometimes regarded in a negative way; for me, it is one of the best choices I ever made!

People often imagine boarding school as a bunch of snotty kids in uniforms who are unhappy. Overall, the students at my school are very nice, and (except during final exams!) we're generally very happy. Boarding school is designed to make life comfortable for both students and faculty. There are several individual buildings on my campus -- some are dormitories, classrooms, and some buildings double as both. Everything is nearby...just a five-minute walk and I'm in my science class; my math class is just three minutes away. Our new black-box theatre for performing arts is near the dining hall; the school's 'Red Frog Cafe' is a popular gathering place in my dormitory, where students can shoot pool, watch a DVD, make brownies, pop popcorn or just chill.

There are roughly fifty different nationalities represented at my school, all of which bring a bit of culture with them from their home country. My friends include sultans from Arab States and children of other heads of state. They are not snobs, or 'bad' kids; they like many aspects of American culture and are seeking an American education. Of course, there are several other diplomatic kids, as well. We start talking and find out that, "*Hey! We went to the same school in Kuwait in 1994...our teacher was Ms. Moss! Remember?!*" It's a small world, and somehow, we are all connected in some way at boarding school!

I've been exposed to many different cultures on our school cultural travels, and have met students from all over the world. I've learned not to generalize and make assumptions about people just because they happen to be from a particular part of the world. My first roommate experience was with a sweet girl from Japan. Lami, a nice and witty Nigerian girl, was my roommate during my sophomore year. At the end of this past school year, I had invitations to visit my friends in Beirut, Japan, Nigeria, Korea, France, Portugal, Germany and the U.S. These are life-long friendships that I will treasure.

My school offers a challenging curriculum, including the International Baccalaureate Program, to prepare students for university studies. With an average class size of only thirteen, students get individual attention. Students have mandatory evening study hall, and easy access to teachers at all times. It's almost impossible *not* to make good grades at boarding school!

Boarding school usually has lots of amenities...the school's wireless Internet allows me to use my laptop to communicate anywhere on campus with family

and friends. It's great to be able to IM my family and friends, or research a class assignment while sitting under my favorite shade tree!

My school keeps in touch with my parents via Power School education portal, a real-time web site that provides students and parents access to student information, including grades. It keeps them up to date on everything, from what I ate for lunch to whether I was tardy for history class. They sometimes know what I received on a test before I even find out!

My parents did not send me away to boarding school. I chose to go. It was a joint decision with my parents, mainly because I felt I could receive a better education. Plus, my brother was so happy at the same school, and I wanted to join him. Boarding school allows the shy person to come out of his shell, and helps the independent student excel. I find that boarding school offers a taste of what the 'real' world is like. Boarding school allows me to meet people who are just like me.

On the downside, there are the occasional homesick moments those first few weeks in the dorm; but you grow to realize that your friends and your teachers are just like a second family! I can call my parents most anytime. On the positive side, I have learned how to manage my time, studies and my weekly allowance. And, I have mastered the art of doing my own laundry! Everyone cares about everyone. With a student body of over 300 kids, we're all in the same boat, and I never feel lonely.

Living at boarding school has turned me into a more mature, independent young person, which I could not have become without all of the learning experiences gained during boarding school. I thank my parents for giving me this opportunity, and for trusting me to handle all the responsibilities that come with boarding school!