

## **Busting Some Common Myths about Private Schools: Why Some Families Don't Apply**

In spite of the great strides Hawai'i's private schools have taken toward accessibility for students from all walks of life, as a category, these schools are still shrouded in an aura of mystique and exclusivity. Intentionally or not, some of the mystery may be perpetuated by the schools themselves.

A school with a reputation for accepting only the best or brightest students isn't going to deny that. Nor is a school going to deny a rumor that their athletes are the strongest, their musicians the finest, their classes the toughest, or their teachers the most educated. These formidable images in themselves might scare off parents who think that their normal, happy, curious child—however special in their eyes—won't stand a chance of getting in. Rumors abound, and all too often, these rumors are magnified, overblown, or simply wrong.

In Honolulu, there is a preschool that has a reputation for placing each and every one of its graduates into a particular prestigious Honolulu school. Has this preschool alone mastered the art of culling only geniuses from their large pool of two-year-old applicants? Certainly not. And every four-year-old at this school does not get, as a kindergarten graduation present, an acceptance letter to the select private school of his choice. Nonetheless, I have heard this rumor repeated often—both by parents who have a child at the school and those who “don't even dare apply.”

Another school has a reputation of being a school only for the extremely rich. Wealthy parents, looking to attain another status symbol to add to their collection of Mercedes and vacation homes, apply their children; donate heavily to fundraisers and plop down full price tuition.

Why would a school go out of its way to correct a myth that helps subsidize the significant percentage of the student body that attends on scholarship?

Obviously those who have been playing the private school game longer and those who have plenty of financial resources at their disposal are more prepared and more comfortable with the private school process, but the fact is, anyone can apply to a private school.