

# IdyllwildARTS Academy

## *Life In A Small Boarding School*

*Advice for you and your child to aid in the transition to boarding school life, including important names and phone numbers of faculty and staff*

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## *Introduction*

*It is always challenging to enter a new environment. Each year presents new experiences whether you are a new or a returning student. Adjusting to boarding school life is no exception. Students and parents need all the guidance and support that we can provide, and your child will find strong support here throughout the year. Sometimes parents feel left out, distanced and even at a loss about how to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of the school year. However we believe that parents, too, need guidance and support.*

*We hope this booklet, written especially for parents, will help you. It provides information about the support staff at Idyllwild Arts Academy as well as what to expect throughout the school year. We have tried to anticipate questions you might have, but we also encourage you to call with any concerns.*

*When your child enrolls at Idyllwild Arts, two new relationships are formed. Your child becomes a student of Idyllwild Arts and you, as parents, form a relationship with the school. Your child's experience at Idyllwild Arts is determined as much by these relationships as by his or her artistic ability, scholastic achievement and your aspirations as parents. We feel that the most important element in these relationships is communication. Whether it be between you and your child, the school and your child, you and the school, or all of us together, communication needs to be continuous, clear and direct. This will enable us to work together in concert to provide the best learning experience possible.*

*Idyllwild Arts is a unique and exceptional environment. Our commitment to academic and artistic excellence provides the students with challenges as well as the inevitable stresses and strains that accompany striving for mastery. We will do all that we can to assure your child's success. We know that you will join us in this exciting journey and look forward to a long and fruitful relationship.*

Fall 2006-2007

John Newman  
Acting Dean of Students

## Who Can Help?

This may be the most important section of the handbook. Your child will quickly learn, within the first weeks, whom to go to with problems. However, it will be helpful for you to know whom to call or write when you need to clarify matters with the school, such as flight plans or giving permission for your child to be away from school on a particular weekend. This glossary of who's who at Idyllwild Arts may help you direct your concerns.

### ■ **Headmaster:** *Bill Lowman Ext. 2205*

The Headmaster is always open to communication from parents. He is an active and involved member of the community. He is intimately connected with the operations of the school.

### ■ **Acting Dean of Students:** *John Newman Ext. 2225*

The solution to almost any problem or the answer to any question can start here. A variety of functions accompany this title. The Dean of Students is often referred to as *Parents' Central* since he can guide you to the right person or department if you are not sure of whom to contact. At Idyllwild Arts, the major function of the Dean of Student's office is to provide a supportive and healthy experience for your child. Anything outside the classroom experience comes within his purview. This ranges from counseling to making sure that a student gets proper health education. He is the best person to call to clear up rumors, strange tales, and panic phone calls. It is important to remember that the Dean of Students is also responsible for discipline. If your child should misbehave, you will hear directly from him. Parents can help by sharing hints, danger signals, or any useful background information with him.

### ■ **Associate Dean of Students:** *Ext. 2232*

The Associate Dean of Students will be responsible for attendance issues and away permission forms and will assist the Dean of Students in other issues such as discipline and health and safety.

### ■ **Dean of Academics:** *Anna-Karin Li Ext. 2224*

The Dean of Academics monitors individual academic programs and progress. She will decide whether your child should drop chemistry, begin another foreign language, or transfer to another section. The Dean of Academics monitors graduation requirements and sets individual courses of study. If a student's work falls below standard, the Dean of Academics will monitor and structure studies through academic probation. If your child has specific learning problems or has received special instruction in the past, the Dean of Academics should be informed.

### ■ **Dean of the Arts:** *Nelms McKelvain Ext. 2221*

The Dean of the Arts is the person to call when you are concerned about anything that has to do with your child's arts program. If you want to know what courses your child should take within the major and how they should be ordered, he is

the person to talk to. When your daughter, the dancer, calls about her concern that she is dancing too little or too much; your son, the actor, complains that he is tired of acting and wants to change his major to visual arts; or you are just worried about whether or not you should attend the Spring concert, the Dean of the Arts can answer your questions.

### ■ **College Counselor:** *Jonathan Dunn Ext. 2322*

College Counseling begins unofficially in the sophomore year with PSAT testing and officially in the spring of the junior year. The school's College Counselor work closely with students, parents, teachers, and admissions officers advising, writing recommendations, and advocating for students. The College Counselors familiarize families with the particulars of the process from degree options to financial aid. Each fall, representatives from many colleges visit the Idyllwild Arts campus. Several conservatories hold auditions at school, and visual artists take part in local Portfolio Days attended by the major art schools.

### ■ **Registrar:** *Lainie Huddleston Ext. 2222*

The registrar can help you with attendance, scheduling questions, transcript information and give you information regarding standardized testing (SAT, PSAT, etc.)

### ■ **Assistant Head of School for Advancement:**

*Jolynn Reid Ext. 2435*

Students and parents new to Idyllwild Arts frequently ask "What is Advancement?" Advancement includes fundraising, marketing and communication.

- Annual Giving is a tax-deductible opportunity to support the general operation of the school. Parents are often surprised to find that tuition does not cover the total cost of their child's education. Annual giving funds essentially balance the budget. Board members and parent volunteers solicit contributions from every Idyllwild Arts family. Direct mail campaigns appeal to alumni, grandparents, friends, corporations and foundations. Many gifts to the Annual Fund may be enhanced through corporate matching gifts. If you or your spouse works for a matching gift company, you may be able to increase the size of your gift. Every gift is important and is a vote of confidence in and support of the school by the donor.

Capital campaign contributions make a lasting impact for our community and:

- expand our Endowment to ensure that, for years to come, the best and brightest students from diverse backgrounds can attend the Academy—regardless of their family's ability to afford tuition. It also ensures that we are able to preserve the campus land and maintain the necessary infrastructure: and

- build a new Theatre Complex worthy of our students' enormous creativity and talent and at the same time, to build and upgrade other dorms, classrooms and facilities, as well as technology across campus.

Significant naming opportunities are available to broadly recognize major contributions and offer an opportunity to remember a loved one, faculty member, student, or honor your family name.

■ **Director of Parent and Alumni Communication:**

*Theresa McCaughey Ext. 2338*

Parent and Alumni Communication is located in Advancement and is responsible for the following:

- CenterStage@IdyllwildArts – our weekly e-newsletter
- Parent Directory
- Headmaster Receptions
- Alumni Reunions
- Monthly Alumni e-newsletters

Please feel free to call or email regarding any of the above. If you would like to help with hosting a Headmaster reception, make a change to your entry in the Parent Directory, or RSVP for an event, we welcome your call and look forward to hearing from you.

■ **Dean of Admission and Financial Aid: Karen Porter**

*Ext. 2343*

You've probably already met the person who arranged your child's acceptance and entry to Idyllwild Arts. The Admissions office provides essential initial information and remains a contact point at Idyllwild Arts for you. Others will take over the day-to-day involvement with your child upon arrival, but the Admissions office stays acquainted, remains interested, and is always a ready resource welcoming your call.

■ **Associate Dean of Admission and Financial Aid:**

*Marek Pramuka Ext. 2344*

■ **Assistant Dean of Admission: Tara Dutton Ext. 2345**

■ **Transportation Manager: Ext. 2351**

This is the person to call for any transportation problems. He will also help you with dates and times of leaving and returning from vacation. When your child tells you that *everybody* is leaving early, call the transportation office! They can assist you with making travel arrangements and arrange for summer storage of belongings. Parents who live in other countries may also call or fax with any concerns involving international students, including ticket ordering.

■ **School Nurse: Becky Sandlin Ext. 2275**

The school nurse keeps medical records on each child, is responsible for updated immunizations, screening programs and early intervention practices for health protection and health promotion, and provides for or arranges for, medical attention as needed. The nurse also dispenses medication. All prescription medication must be kept in the health center. This measure prevents unauthorized use of medication and protects all students from accidental misuse. Parents can help by providing full medical histories, including any regular medication that the student has to take, and careful documentation for any physical or mental problem that might occur during the year (e.g., allergies) or that require medical follow-up. The nurse welcomes communication with parents and adolescents throughout the year. If you have any questions relating to health, please write or call Ext. 2275. In accordance with the regulations regarding medical confidentiality in California, the nurse and the consulting physician will keep all matters confidential, unless there is danger to the student or others in the community.

■ **Counseling Coordinator: Keith Froehlich Ext. 2285**

The Dean of Students may refer students to outside therapists, after consultation with the family, if the need arises. The outside counselor provides individual psychological support for your child here at the school. As with the nurse and consulting physician, the school counselor also operates in accordance with the regulations of medical confidentiality and does not breach confidence unless he feels there is a danger to the individual or others.

■ **Dormitory Parent**

Another adult who will be important to you is the dormitory parent. He or she is the on-the-spot person who supervises a particular dormitory. The dormitory parent will report a plumbing problem, do room inspections and check-ins at curfew, and come to know your child through the kind of *family* socializing that naturally stems from frequent contact and living in close proximity. He or she will make sure that your child has a warm and supportive relationship with an adult.

■ **Director of Residential Life: Bethany Edstrom Ext. 2248**

The Director of Residential Life is responsible for the operation of all dormitories and coordinates weekend activities for students. To inquire about dormitory matters, please call Bethany.

■ **Other Important Numbers**

Idyllwild Arts Academy Switchboard (951) 659-2171

Executive offices FAX (951) 659-5463

Dean's offices FAX (951) 659-4383

Transportation FAX (951) 659-2941

## Making It Easier

Here are some practical tips on ways to make life at Idyllwild Arts the best possible experience for your child.

### ■ Letters, letters, and more letters

If you can, send the first letter before your child leaves home. You might also alert grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters that the first month away is a good time to keep those funny cards and letters arriving. Mail, mail and more mail! It does wonders for morale. If you live outside the U.S. be sure to send things air mail and to calculate the slow international mail. E-mail is a good solution if your child has a computer.

The address of Idyllwild Arts is:

Idyllwild Arts Academy  
P.O. Box 1758, *Your child's dormitory*,  
Idyllwild, CA 92549

### ■ Making that new room "My place"

When you pack, be sure your child includes a favorite poster, stuffed animal, scrapbook, dresser ornaments, choice possession... whatever decorates the room at home. Those bare walls and serviceable furnishings at school need to be converted to the student's own special place as soon as possible. It is also nice to send along a starter-fund of extra allowance for a few new posters or an inexpensive bedspread. If you are coming to registration it never hurts to be an *interior decorator* for a few hours with your son or daughter.

Some of the items that you may wish to purchase for your child's room are: Plastic laundry hamper, plastic bowl, cup, fork, knife and spoon, can opener, scissors, needle and thread, stacking crates, sheets, towels, blanket, bedspread, mirror (if not already in room), wastepaper basket, caddy for toiletries, desk lamp, personal fan, dustbuster, extension cords, and tape for posters.

Computers are important for arts and academic classes. We encourage you to send a computer with your child. Internet service is available at student rates.

### ■ "I Need More Money"

Be sure that allowance funds are arranged with great care. Such matters are nearer the student's heart than you might think. There seems to be more of a psychological dimension to the monetary situation in boarding school than at home. At home, there is the safety valve of Mom or Dad who can usually bail a child out of a problem. At school, feeling safe, secure, and independent partially depends on having enough money. Feeling happy can depend on buying a new Mozart CD, being able to buy a pizza when one more dining hall meal is one too many, or joining a group taking a friend out for a birthday dinner.

Exercising good judgement will provide happiness and security for your child. Excessive allowances can create practical problems like envy among classmates and the temptation of theft. Another important educational consideration is that the management of money develops independence and maturity as well as the proverbial *learning the value of a dollar*. We recommend an allowance of \$20 a week.

### ■ And More Money

Your child will probably ask you for extra funds for relatively good reasons... new instrument parts, Christmas presents, more canvas for a special painting, soap for the laundry, 40 leotards. You know how endless the string of requests is. School supplies, art supplies and toiletries can be charged at the student bookstore. Trips to the Business Office or calls to you to ask for extra money for shampoo, toothpaste, and notebook paper are not in order. Some students feel that allowances are strictly *fun money* and that necessities should come from their parents, whose role is now carried on by the school. Students also need to understand that since some weeks will drain their funds more than others, planning ahead will help them prepare for those extra demands on their budget. It is not advisable to send cash through the mail. The Dean of Students can release extra funds if there is a true need. Please call him to give your permission.

## Expectations

Students arrive at school with many expectations. Some will be fulfilled and others are unrealistic. We know that many of the *rough spots* of the first weeks come from the conflict between idealized expectations and the realities of new rules, smaller rooms than those at home, and different food. We have tried to anticipate many of the areas of adjustment and have described a few potential scenarios.

### ■ The Rules

Many students are capable of more latitude than school rules allow. For example, Susan, a mature junior who sensibly sets her own curfew at home, drinks wine with her parents at meals, and smokes in her room as she studies at home. Susan arrives at boarding school to find that she must be in her room at 10 p.m. and may not drink or smoke. Susan would probably continue to behave maturely and sensibly without any of these rules, but Sally (another student who tends to test the limits) needs those rules.

Both Susan and Sally need to understand that rules cannot be tailor-made to an individual. In a boarding school there are students of all levels of maturity and from many different family backgrounds. At home the adult-to-child ratio is ideal and supervision is very individualized. Also as a parent you have had a life-long relationship with your child and have a pretty good idea of what to expect.

It is an important part of a student's development to learn that it is essential to live within the limits of the society of

which they are a part. We do not permit smoking on campus. Special pleas to lift the smoking rules for a particular student, because of a smoking habit, will not prevail. The student needs to know that the school's standards will not be altered by request. You, as parents, are in the critical position of clarifying and supporting what it means to be a member of the Idyllwild Arts Academy community.

#### ■ **“Community”**

Your child will hear the word *community* used regularly. He will be told that he is expected to contribute to the community and that certain behaviors harm the community. If that notion is new to him, he may become impatient. He will nevertheless be encouraged to think of Idyllwild Arts as a large family which experiences good times and bad times and still functions as a unit. He will be encouraged to develop an awareness of what helps and what hurts the whole. He will be asked to think about what is good for *us* as well as what is good for *me*. (For example, many students have come home from boarding school more sensitive to members of their family and more ready to contribute to the whole, much to the amazement of their parents!)

#### ■ **“My room”**

Think about your child's room at home. The comforts of home and the accommodations of boarding school are often worlds apart. Once again, getting used to the idea can prevent the let-down when the dormitory room just doesn't measure up to home-sweet-home. Try to prepare your child for these changes.

#### ■ **“Yuck — Too Much Fat!”**

If you occasionally fix meals in three sections — one dish of meat loaf with onions for your spouse, another without onion for your son, and a third dish of green peppers and pasta for your daughter the dancer — you may experience some complaints about the school's food. Your child will benefit if he or she understands the challenges of the school's food service in preparing student meals. The menu may not always feature your child's favorite foods, and even her favorite dinner may not be prepared exactly as he or she prefers. However we have a wonderful salad bar and our kitchen manager is always working to satisfy the special demands of our students. Menus are developed by the nutritionist with particular attention to students' special needs.

#### ■ **Every Minute of Every Day**

By definition, boarding school is a total experience and is always in session. The educational program does not end when the classes are dismissed at 6:00 p.m. It continues with activities, rehearsals, evening supervised study, practice, concerts, and field trips on weekends. These are not just options; these are the expectations and requirements of a school which has assumed responsibility in loco parentis for developing the whole child.

#### ■ **Permissions**

The away permission system is designed to provide students with the opportunity to visit home or to take a break from the routine of school on certain limited occasions. It should be remembered that this is a privilege for students in good standing at the school. It is vitally important to the academic mission of the school that students attend academic classes. Absences from class time, whether unexcused class absences or early departure or late return from vacations, can result in a student being dropped from a class and losing credit. Please read the section on absences and away permission in the Student/Parent Handbook carefully.

### *From Day One*

The first day is action packed. After acquiring your child's room assignments and completing necessary registration and class registration procedures, you may wish to attend the evening picnic at the amphitheatre. There, be sure to meet the people who can answer questions for you and your child in the days, months and years to come.

#### ■ **Can you be there?**

Of course, not everyone (particularly overseas parents) can make it to the opening day of school. With the whirlwind of other commitments involved in life, appearing on the school's doorstep at the appointed day and the appointed hour is simply impossible for some. Rest assured that the combination of adult support and the gregariousness of our Student Prefects will make any unaccompanied new students feel at ease.

#### ■ **Back at Home**

In some ways, the worst is over. The practical problems of getting packed off, those awful good-byes, and the return to the empty, quiet house are behind you. But your child is still part of you, and you still worry and want to smooth the way as best you can. Long-distance parting is a highly specialized skill, so the following bits of advice come to you from the real experts: experienced boarding students and parents.

#### ■ **Easing Adjustment**

Don't overwork the telephone. Often a child will have minor difficulties such as a squabble with his roommate, a misunderstanding with a teacher, or a minor disciplinary infraction. When the telephoning goes into extra innings, you feel needed and your child feels cared for, but you may be delaying his complete adjustment to the boarding community.

Understand that “Do something!” usually means “Listen to me.” When asked what they want most from their parents, experienced students will say patience and listening — endless yards of it. One girl admitted that she had often called home and tried to get her parents to fight her battles for her; in the end what she really wanted was the reassurance that her parents still loved her. She admitted later that she

wanted to be listened to and calmed; she needed a time-out before going back to running her own life. When she made the call she thought she wanted Mom and Dad to *do something*. She realized later she could cope just fine as long as she knew they cared.

However, you cannot overburden the mailman...letters are always uplifting. The mail is a low-key way to affirm the family bond without jeopardizing independence. Keeping the mail coming may be the most important morale builder of them all.

Give your child something to look forward to upon his return from school. As one student said, "Whenever I returned home my parents were waiting for me. It didn't matter the time of day or night. If it was at all possible, they would both be there waiting and ready to talk for at least two hours to catch up on all the news and gossip." Another student loved the candlelight dinners with her favorite food especially prepared for her homecoming.

#### ■ **What's happening?**

Frustrating though it may be to anxious parents, it is likely that the first month at school will produce no clear signals. The first phone calls "Do you like it? Are you all right?" may well meet with a variety of answers all of which add up to, "yes and no." Or the answer may be a coherent but not very satisfying, "Pretty good, mom."

#### ■ **Auditions**

During the first days of orientation almost all students are involved in auditions for class placement levels. These are real auditions. The student must perform for the Theatre faculty, dance for the Dance teachers, or play for the Music teachers. We do our best to prepare the students for this experience and to support them if they are disappointed, but audition time is always a time of great stress for students—whether or not they are sure of their abilities.

Auditions occur throughout the year, and it is best to be sensitive to your child's casual comment that "I'm auditioning next Saturday for that part in the play." If she gets the part, you will be treated to one of those great delirious and positive phone calls. If she does not get the part, you might not get a phone call at all or you might be talking with a severely disappointed girl. Call them if they do not call you and if they have been disappointed—ride with them in their hard time, and give them your support and encouragement for the next chance. As artists, the students must learn to work through the disappointment of not being cast in the fall Theatre production or the spring Dance concert. It is a difficult but necessary part of their education.

#### ■ **Making Friends and Learning the Ropes**

During the first few months of school, students are engaged in establishing their positions in a very new environment. First and foremost, students must establish themselves socially. Roommate duos need to click and then branch into small groupings of students who accept one another. Finding a niche is so absorbing that often not much else will register until this social equilibrium is established. Teachers, classes, activities, even inevitable chafing at rules, and routines often take a back seat to the establishment of a social circle.

Once social acceptance and social balance are achieved, the students can respond to the world outside. Again, tremendous energy goes into learning the ropes. It's another task to figure out how much leeway the rules allow, how tough the classes really are, and what the private music teacher expects, etc. Even getting the hang of where to be when and what to wear can be energy-absorbing. When it comes right down to it, during the first four to six weeks of school your child is so busy acting that he may not have much time left over for reacting.

#### ■ **Dormitories**

We do our best to provide a family-like atmosphere in our dorms. Students spend much of their time studying and relaxing in their rooms or the common room when they are not involved in classes, rehearsals or other activities. Students and adults live in the dormitories. Together they create an atmosphere of care and mutual understanding. Personal relationships develop rapidly and make each dormitory a comfortable and friendly home away from home. Dormitories range in size from 10 students in the smaller dorms to 76 students in the largest one. There are two to three dorm parents in each dormitory. Eighth and ninth graders have separate dormitories that are structured for younger students. There is close interaction between students and dormitory staff. Get to know your child's dorm parents and give them a call from time to time.

## Fall Colors

### ■ Parents' Weekend

Please join us for Parents' Weekend October 20–21, 2006. This day allows you to communicate with us in the most direct way possible about what your child has been doing. It is a time for getting reacquainted with your child (do not be surprised if you meet a different little Suzie—who might not like to be called *my little Suzie* any more). It is also a day of class visitations, performances, friendly conferences and get-togethers. We encourage you to join us for that day, but if you cannot, the following section will be of great help to you during the fall months.

### ■ Reaction to Routine

The first four to six weeks of boarding school for most students is a full, exciting, scary, exhausting time. They are meeting new friends, going to a new school, and operating by a new code of rules. In short, they are changing life-styles. For many, this new experience is more restrictive and the pace is faster than any previously maintained, especially during the weekdays.

Our students are inevitably caught up in their arts schedule by this time and have little or no time for anything outside their academic and arts program. Do not be surprised if you do not get any communication during this time. Your child is not ignoring you, he is just fully absorbed in rehearsals, painting, writing or practicing. Be patient and initiate the communication you need.

### ■ Testing Rules

Sometimes testing of rules occurs in the fall after the initial adjustment period. For a very small minority at Idyllwild Arts this can be a time when, after a routine is established, some boredom sets in. This is when the parents may receive the first letter describing the disciplinary episode. If you are such a parent, do not panic! It is normal for adolescents to test rules and to learn from the disciplinary responses they elicit. The Fall is also when amazing stories filter home. One way to generate excitement is simply to make a mountain out of a molehill. Thus, a student may have an unfortunate misunderstanding with a teacher and declare hence forward that “none of the teachers care.” Routine disciplinary cases can be reported as school-wide. Again do not panic, just call the Dean of Students and find out for yourself what another perspective might be.

### ■ The “Alarming Phone Call”

“Mom, Dad, I can't stand this place. I'm going bananas! The food stinks, the people are all jerks. This place is crazy. This school is a prison. There is no free time. They always tell me what to do. There's no closet space. The hot water is not always hot. My roommate comes from the same state we come from. She is also in my theater class, so I have a part-

ner. There's a dorm parent down the hall who is really friendly. During orientation they made the whole boarding school do a stupid group exercise about getting to know each other. I love my dance teacher. The food was okay when you were here, but now it's not so good. And they make us go to study hall. And the nurse will never let me be sick, and I miss you Mommy and Daddy, and I can't stand this place. Oh here comes Susan...I'll call next week at the same time and make sure my tickets for spring vacation are set up. Bye...” click.

### ■ Figuring Out the “Alarming Phone Call”

You hang up from the conversation or something similar to it, not sure whether you're supposed to breathe a sigh of relief or join the panic. Welcome to the world of mixed messages. The demands have been tremendous on your child and his or her rate of change may have accelerated more than you would have expected. Not only is it frightening to begin structuring and accounting for one's life as the intense program at Idyllwild Arts requires, but it also consumes a lot of energy. It is natural to experience the exhaustion of growing rapidly and to want to share this state with Mom and Dad.

On the other hand, that *alarming phone call* is full of good news if your antenna is properly attuned. The opportunity to have a great friend in drama class, the discovery of a friendly adult, the connection with a dance teacher may sound like small potatoes weighed against drastic claims of *going bananas*, but they are very healthy indicators. As long as there is reference to new interests, arts major, friendships, funny anecdotes, reactions to teachers, responses to classes or books or almost any trivia of daily life, there is indication that the acclimation process is well under way. Once you have your first signals that your child has plunged into the ebb and flow of boarding life, you are in a position to take the *alarming phone call* in stride. Ups and downs are survivable as long as there is involvement and interest.

What signals real trouble to an experienced boarding school staff is when a student shows signs of remaining a permanent outsider — no interests, no friends, no fun, no day-to-day plans, no especially close teacher, no vitality — then there is cause for concern. If the normal level of chatter about daily life does not accompany “I'm going bananas,” it is time to activate that contact with whatever person at the school is closest to you and your child. For that matter, if you aren't quite sure how to read the signals, by all means make your own mini-panic phone call to the Dean of Students or any other adult. It may be reassuring to hear another perspective; or you may have wisely initiated the parent/school cooperation that will head off a problem before it escalates.

## Boarding School Classics

The *alarming phone call* or even a chronic grumbly phone call will generally center on certain predictable themes. If you hear them in advance, you may be able to field them or at least help keep them in perspective. They are classic boarding school complaints, and it is the rare parent who will not hear some combination of these during the student's time in any boarding school.

### ■ Food

Food is a chronic issue because it is so central to each student's daily routine. It is bound to be different because food cooked in an institution or on a large scale is just not the same as food at home. International students may also have difficulty adjusting to the different kind of food. Every effort is made to meet the different nutritional needs of our students.

### ■ Rules

Rules are never popular because they are restrictive. Designed for a community of students, rules are less popular because there is less room for individualized treatment. Since they are the main codes by which everyone must live, sooner or later each individual will feel he has a cause for complaint either regarding the rule itself or because of the way it was or it wasn't enforced. Please see the Student/Parent Handbook for the basic rule structure.

### ■ Insufficient Free Time

Boarding school is a very structured environment. During the weekdays literally only the odd half hour or 45 minutes are unplanned.

### ■ Arts Problems

Students may go through trying times in their arts major. They may decide they want to switch majors and agonize about it for weeks. It might be a particular pressing time of rehearsals or just one very difficult one. Whatever the case, it is a natural part of their growth to go through these experiences and persevere. It will teach them what they need to know to be successful in their art. Support them and give them encouragement through these times. By all means call or write the Dean of the Arts if you have any fears about a given situation.

### ■ Student Body

Our artistically gifted student body is drawn from all over the world. As a consequence, at Idyllwild Arts there is exceptional diversity for such a small school. Although the majority of students are from the U.S., often 10 or more nationalities are represented. There is a great range in attitudes, background and cultural patterns as well. Some students are very worldly and speak several languages. Others have never before left the part of the country in which they were born. To some students, this comes as a shock at first. However, as the year progresses it becomes one of the acknowledged strengths of our community.

### ■ Place

For better or worse, *there is no place like home*. If your child is accustomed to the people, the customs, the language and systems of his state or country, then any other place is going to be different and may not measure up, from his point of view. New places necessitate adjustments, and that responsibility falls on your child's shoulders.

### ■ Roommate

Despite the Director of Residential Life's best attempts at matching habits and interests, sometimes roommates just are not meant for each other. But before a conclusion is too quickly drawn, students will be given help with working out differences. Part of the growth process at boarding school is making an honest effort before throwing in the towel. Furthermore, a wise dorm parent knows that the most adamant demands to be removed forever from the contemptible presence of the horrid roommate may blow over in the two days it takes to make up.

### ■ Theft

In a community of adolescents the problems of *borrowing* and theft are inevitable. It often seems that every girl in the dorm has exchanged all her clothing with someone else who has then exchanged it with others. Sorting this all out when relationships shift and change can be difficult at best and an emotional upheaval at worst! A common-sense approach is recommended. Put name tags in clothes and do the best you can to restrain your child from lending her entire wardrobe to friends. Do not let your son or daughter bring unnecessary valuables to school. Parents of international students should not send large amounts of cash directly to the student.

### ■ Nurse/Doctor Competency

Medical service is very different throughout the world. Methods, equipment, and names of medicines will often be different from those at home. This can be disconcerting. A common complaint may be that the nurse sends a student to school even though he complains of a sore throat or the doctor simply prescribes fluids and rest, but not aspirin for a cold. To the student who is accustomed to staying home whenever he has a sore throat, or receiving aspirin whenever he asks for it, these actions seem unsympathetic. Medical service, like food, occasions suspicion when it is different in any way from the accustomed. For that matter, even at home, medical care is a steady source of critical comment. As always, when in doubt, contact the school, but also be aware that students may criticize the nurse and school-associated doctors. Often, the crux of the problem is being sent to school when sleeping late would feel ever so much better.

## The Holidays

The week just before Fall Break often opens the era of alternating highs and lows which characterize the weeks prior to Winter Break. The rehearsals that have seemingly been going on forever are now culminating in performances. Those projects that have been slowly building are now reaching fruition. That piece that has been practiced for so long is being presented in concert. This is a demanding time for our students. During this time there are also many traditional events that draw us close together in many ways.

An awakened sense of community that was not there at the start develops into heightened awareness of valued friendships and experiences as the holidays draw nearer. The seasonal festivities do their part as well. The fall drama production, music performances, Secret Santas, and dorm decorations all do wonders to break the monotony of routine living, as does anticipations of change. Most importantly, there is the exciting prospect of rejoining the family for the holidays.

### ■ Holiday Worries

Flight plans should be arranged well in advance, respecting the school calendar. Do not be taken in by the timeworn "All the kids are leaving early... nothing happens in the last few days anyway..." Orderly vacation openings and closings of school depend on parents and the school cooperating in holding the line with respect to the school calendar.

Although your child may never write you, a source of let-down during the Thanksgiving to Christmas period is the empty mailbox blues. Solicitous families who really kept the mailman jumping during the first two months may be slacking off about now. As the student faces the prospect of returning home, he can really use another flurry of letters assuring him that home is still there and that he still has his place.

The first vacation home from boarding school is long anticipated by parents but can be a period of transition. Mom and Dad hover anxiously. How has Susan changed? What is the school really like? They try to get a reading on all those conflicting signals. They're ready for answers. Chances are Susan is ready to: a) sleep a lot; b) catch up with friends; and c) eat everything in sight. Possibly your child's first objective, understandably, may be to wallow in the luxuries of home before becoming a communicative person, but your willingness to talk will be welcome whenever the time is right.

Or there may be more to it than that. Curiously enough, sensitive students often articulate mixed feelings on the eve of returning home. Often they are dimly aware that the newly won self-confidence and independence are precarious and may not bear up in the context of the old family environment. As one determined young lady said, "They'll try to treat me the same old way, but I'm not the same old me. I've been deciding things for myself and doing pretty well." A certain standoffishness at first may be a simple matter of establishing a new balance in familiar territory.

Sensitive parents may be able to make the slight alterations necessary to permit growth and new found independence to manifest.

### ■ Back-to-School Thoughts

A letter from you to the Head of the School, the Dean of Students, or your child's advisor could be very helpful at this point. What insights, observations, tips, concerns have resulted from this vacation together? Some times parents feel that they ought not to interfere or that they will be seen as troublesome or *hovering* if they express themselves. Nothing could be less true. A parent's-eye-view of a child can be invaluable. That letter describing a recent death in the family or giving some insight into a vacation blow-up with an old boyfriend can be of enormous help to us. We gain precious insight from such parent communication.

### ■ Winter Blues

Post-holidays blues is something we've all experienced. Once the initial excitement of greeting friends and tacking up the new poster is over, the winter blues can occur. It's a long, long time until spring vacation, longer still until summer. No performances for a while. Rehearsals are starting again after those tough auditions. The year felt half-over at Winter Break, but the calendar holds out for more time. Snow is falling and the weather has turned grey. Routines are dragging endlessly into the future. At this time it is good to be aware of the following winter eventualities.

### ■ Grade reports

Most students adjust to our academic program easily. However one should keep in mind the phenomenon of the first semester *adjustment grade*. Boarding school staffs are well aware of this phenomenon, but it can come as a shock to parents. "James never got a grade below an A in his life; now he has three B's." The worried parent comes up with a variety of explanations. Generally this is an adjustment; an adjustment to a more rigorous academic and artistic environment. If there is real concern you will already have received much communication from teachers, advisors and the academic office. So relax a little if the drop is not too precipitous and you have received no communication from the school. Again, if you have any concerns call the Dean of Academics

### ■ The "Winter Group Gloomies"

The stage is now set for another curious phenomenon of boarding school life: the *Winter Group Gloomies*. The *gloomies* usually crystallize around something concrete: ten days without sunshine, the disciplining of a student, or the salad bar not being up to snuff. What happens is that a lot of people talk about how lousy they feel, crediting or not crediting the source. Eventually those who only felt a little lousy find there's more to talk about if they feel a lot lousy. People who felt pretty good suddenly realize they're being left out.

The shrewd parent can spot *gloomies* in several ways. Certain tip-off words occur: *everybody, all the kids, always, every time, and never*. Especially when the reaction seems out of character, sudden, or contrary to other signals your child has sent you may be hot on the trail of rampaging *gloomies*. Keep in mind *This too shall pass* with the advent of spring and performances. In any case, close contact with the school never hurts. There are times when any experienced boarding school administrator knows that the hysteria-factor will soon peak and then diminish. The best advice is to wait, go slow, don't panic, and possibly even squelch the emotional tide with some level-headed parental advice.

### ■ Spring Again!

The best thing about the winter gloomies is that you know that spring break, spring performances, senior recitals, gallery openings, and graduation are on the way. After the many warnings about what might go wrong, you should be ready to hear about things that go right. Maybe yours will be the year when the sun shines away the gloomies. Maybe you never got an *alarming phone call*, or had to deal with a grade adjustment. Be that as it may, the most wonderful time of the boarding school year is upon us.

### ■ Year End

Following the winter blues, spring flowers bloom! Suddenly a variety of things happen all at once. Spring Break usually breaks the gloomies and before you know it—it's time for the Spring Concerts! The weather begins to change. Now students can sun-bathe on the grass and practice outside. Students begin comparing tans as well as grades and performance qualities. Traditional school-wide activities take place and year-end performances do wonders for togetherness.

Finally, faculty and students alike realize that time is running out. Seniors are graduating and suddenly the members of the community become poignantly aware that they have shared much and grown together, and as a result, everyone genuinely realizes that Idyllwild Arts is indeed a family. Now that the year is almost over emotions run high. Year books are being passed out. It is an exhilarating and sentimental time. As parents, you should expect your child to mirror these feelings in their communication.

### ■ Back Together Again

Suddenly the year is over and you and your child are reunited. As you resume your life as a family unit, keep in mind that your child has gone through many new experiences of which you have not been a part. Your child has grown enormously and will act differently. You certainly won't be strangers to one another, but there will be subtle changes. Very likely, your child is noticeably more mature, more able to take care of himself, more able to make sensible decisions and better able to accommodate the needs and rights of others. Allow your child to express his new independence and reinforce his new sense of maturity.

## General Information

### ■ Travel

The Transportation office coordinates travel plans for all students during the Thanksgiving, December, spring and June travel days. Parents are requested to observe the actual travel dates listed on the school calendar (see Student/Parent Handbook.) The Transportation office must have copies of all student itineraries for travel, even those who are being picked up by parents or taking public transportation. Plans may be mailed to the Transportation office at school or faxed. Parents may also ask their travel agent to fax itineraries directly to the school FAX number. Make travel arrangements ahead of time. If you wait until the last minute you may pay more or not be able to have your child travel on the listed dates. Missing classes can be detrimental to a students grades

### ■ Banking

Representatives from our local bank are on campus during registration to assist students in opening bank accounts. There is no charge for checking accounts (except for the checks themselves) for those under 18 and an automatic teller machine is located in downtown Idyllwild.

### ■ Storage

Students may leave their belongings in storage over the summer. There is a small fee for storage.

### ■ Hotels

There are no accommodations for parents staying on campus. Parents who plan to stay nearby when visiting may check with the Academy Secretary in Log Lodge for suggestions for motels and Bed and Breakfasts.

### ■ Day Parents

Although your child is not a boarder, he or she will experience similar issues addressed in this handbook. You will find that much of this information can be helpful in guiding you through our year. This information will give you a sense of the ebb and flow of school life. The Student/Parent Handbook clearly outlines the parameters and rules that affect both boarders and day students. We suggest that you use this handbook for guidance in the way that you organize your child's time at home in the evenings, since they will be under the same pressures as the boarding students to perform both academically and artistically.

Although you will begin to think that your child is a boarder, after you see how much time they spend at Idyllwild Arts during the year, they will have a slightly different experience since they are not here for the more social part in the evenings. After the year gets going you may find that your son/daughter is asking to stay overnight often and is assuring you that they have *required* performances and appointments every night! It is a natural desire on their part

to want to be with their friends as much as possible. However, we very carefully place our *required* performances and appointments so that we do not overload the day students (who have enough difficulties with driving, etc.).

If your child tells you that he simply has to be at school every night until 10 p.m. for rehearsals, required appointments or performances, you should check with his advisor or the Day Student Advisor to get a more balanced view of what is truly *required* or necessary. We respect the positive effect that time at home with parents has on students and we support your desires to have *family* time which is so important to the overall development of your child.

You should call the Dean of Students for permission for your child to stay overnight. In turn we hope that you will host some of your child's boarder friends in your home from time to time.

#### ■ **Parents' Association With School**

Parents eager to play an active role in the Idyllwild Arts community should contact the Advancement Office at school.

#### ■ **The Curriculum Guide and Student/Parent Handbook**

We strive hard to achieve a balance between academic study and arts training for each student. We believe that an Idyllwild Arts education should create options, not curtail them. To this end, we expect every student to take an intellectually and artistically challenging program so that he or she will have a solid educational base no matter what future choices are made. We hope that you will support our recommendations for individual programs at the time of course selection. The Academic and Arts Deans, the college counselors, the student's advisor and teachers, with you, contribute toward building an appropriate course of study for each student.

Parents should familiarize themselves with the Student/Parent handbook. It provides condensed insight into the real life of the school as well as being a working tool employed throughout the year. It is definitive and is explained in its entirety when students first arrive on campus. Every year it is carefully reviewed by all of us at Idyllwild Arts and reflects the mission and goals of the school. In addition to the school's requirements, of course, everyone is expected to abide by the laws of the State of California. Read the Student/Parent Handbook with care and take the time to make sure your child understands it and accepts what it means.

## *Principles Of Good Practice For Parents And Independent Schools*

*Idyllwild Arts Academy belongs to, and is accredited by, the California Association of Independent Schools. The school supports and encourages parents to follow the "Principles of Good Practice for Parents and Independent Schools." We believe that the following practices encourage open and participatory conversation for both parents and the school:*

To be successful, every independent school needs and expects the cooperation of parents, who must understand and embrace the school's mission, share its core values, and fully support its curriculum, faculty and staff. When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, the independent school and its parents form a powerful team with far-reaching positive effects on children and the entire school community.

Working together, parents and school professionals exert a strong influence on children to become better educated; they also help them to mature by modeling adult working relationships based upon civility, honesty and respect.

In practice, the greatest impediment to effective teamwork between independent schools and parents grows out of misunderstandings about school decision-making processes: Who makes decisions in independent schools? How are those decisions made? Independent schools must communicate their procedures to parents who, in turn, share the important responsibility to become informed members of the school community.

#### ■ **Parents and the Board of Trustees**

In most independent schools, decision-making authority at the highest level resides in a volunteer Board of Trustees whose membership often includes current parents. The Board of Trustees does not intervene in the daily affairs of the school, such as curriculum development and hiring, evaluating or firing of faculty and staff. Instead, the Board focuses on three areas critical to the success of any independent school: it selects, evaluates and supports the Head of School, to whom it delegates authority to manage the school; it develops broad institutional policies that guide the Head in running the school; and it is accountable for the financial well-being of the school. In the conduct of its official business, the Board acts only as a whole; individual Trustees, including the Board Chair, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board acting as a whole.

- California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) encourages parents who are interested in high-level decision making to stay informed about the work of the Board of Trustees by reading school publications, talking to the Head of School, and attending appropriate meetings.

- Parents with concerns about the school or with decisions made by the administration or faculty are encouraged to inquire about and follow the school's review process, but they should not expect the Board of Trustees to act as an appeals board. In a day school, trustees often interact with others within the school community and hear concerns about the daily operation of the school. As a matter of good practice, the trustee reports those concerns to the Head of School.

### ■ Parents and the Faculty and Administration

Parents play an essential and positive role in the life of an independent school. Not only are parents advocates for their children, they also support the faculty and administration through extensive volunteer activities and events.

The relationship between parents and the faculty and administration is formally governed by the school's written enrollment contract and handbook, in which its procedures are spelled out. When parents choose to enroll their child in an independent school, they agree to subscribe to its mission, follow its rules, and abide by its decisions. However, most teachers and administrators would agree that trust and mutual respect are the most essential underpinnings of effective working relationships with parents.

- CAIS encourages parents to work productively with teachers and administrators by staying informed about their child and important events in the life of the school. Thoughtful questions and suggestions should be welcomed by the school. It is incumbent upon the school to provide parents with timely and pertinent information.
- Parents best support a school climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns openly and constructively to the teacher or administrator closest to the problem. Efforts by parents to lobby other parents will be viewed by the school as counterproductive.
- While parents may not agree with every decision made by the school, the parent and school will find, in most cases, enough common ground to continue a mutually respectful relationship. In the extreme case, however, an impasse may be so severe that the parent cannot remain a constructive member of the community. In such cases, both the parent and the school should consider whether another school would be a better match for the family.

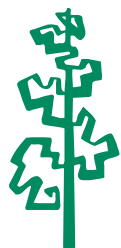
### ■ The Parent Association and the School

The Parent Association in an independent school provides a vital and much-appreciated service to school leadership and the entire school community. Because the Parent Association is so important, and its volunteer activities potentially so wide-ranging, CAIS recommends the following steps to structure and clarify the Association's role.

- The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the administration, should develop a set of written by-laws for the Association that make clear its procedures and role as a service organization.
- The by-laws should clearly state the Association's mission to support the decisions and policies of the Board and administration. The Parent Association neither participates in policy-making by the school nor functions as a lobbying group.
- The Head of School should be closely involved in the Association nominating process. Cooperation and teamwork between the Head of School and the officers of the Parent Association are crucial to the health of the school community.
- It is appropriate that the Parent Association advertise its activities and events. However, the Association is not a public relations arm of the school and should play no role in the school's efforts to communicate about itself.

Mimi S. Baer,  
Executive Director,  
California Association of Independent Schools

## *Notes*



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