

Collegiate School

New York City, United States



Tracing its roots to 1628 in New Amsterdam, this Upper West Side all-boys day school claims the title of America's oldest independent school.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	83/100
Academic outcomes	87/100
University placement	83/100
Prestige & heritage	87/100
Alumni network	84/100
Facilities	73/100
Transparency	78/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Collegiate trades on two things at once: age and edge. Its roots stretch back to 1628 in New Amsterdam, and the school leans hard into that inheritance, framing itself as old but not old-fashioned. That pitch has substance. This is an Upper West Side boys’ day school with an American curriculum for ages 5 to 18, a **10:1 student-teacher ratio** and **18** pupils in the average class: intimate by New York standards, but not indulgently tiny. The school’s own language is steeped in brotherhood, tradition and the explicit business of educating boys as boys. Parents who dislike single-sex education will not be persuaded here. Parents who want a school with a *clear institutional identity* will find one.

What marks Collegiate out is the combination of *historic self-confidence* and academic seriousness. The school states its case plainly: rigorous scholarship, purposeful work and high standards. It also puts unusual weight on belonging and character, with a pastoral vocabulary that is more emotionally direct than many old-line independents. “Known, valued, and loved” is not standard patrician boilerplate. That matters, because schools with deep traditions can lapse into hardness or complacency; Collegiate is trying to hold onto the force of tradition without turning stale. The all-boys setting is central to the offer, not a decorative legacy. The school argues that it gives boys room to develop, test themselves and form durable bonds. For the right child, that is *distinctive*; for the wrong one, it is a non-starter.

This is an expensive school at an average annual fee of **\$68,900**, and families are paying for a *high-conviction* proposition rather than a broad church. Collegiate suits boys who will thrive in a structured, academically ambitious environment with strong peer culture and a pronounced sense of institutional continuity. It will appeal to families who want seriousness without social chaos, and tradition without piety; it is non-religious, accredited by NEASC and NAIS, and sends leavers to selective US colleges, with recent destinations including Bates, Amherst and American University. Boys who want a co-ed atmosphere, a looser culture or a school still working out what it stands for should look elsewhere. Boys who want *intellectual rigour*, a strong male cohort and a school that knows exactly what it is should have Collegiate on the shortlist.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1628, Collegiate is widely recognized as the oldest continuously operating school in the United States, predating Harvard University.
- In 2018 the school consolidated into a single purpose-built ten-story campus at 301 Freedom Place South, replacing a century-old multi-building site with modern classrooms, three gymnasiums, a 40,000-book library and a full theatre with blackbox space.
- Maintains a low student-teacher ratio, cited by the school itself as roughly 6:1 and by third-party trackers as 5:1 to 8:1, within an enrollment of only about 660-670 boys.
- Belongs to established professional networks including the Ivy Preparatory School League, New York Interschool consortium, and membership bodies such as NAIS, NYSAIS and the International Boys' Schools Coalition.
- Notable alumni network spans generations, from John F. Kennedy Jr. and actor David Duchovny to publishing and business figures such as Edgar Bronfman Jr., reflecting long-standing ties to New York's professional and cultural establishment.

TRADE-OFFS

- All-boys only from Kindergarten through Grade 12, which rules out families seeking coeducational schooling at any stage.
- Tuition runs to roughly \$65,900 a year according to recent private-school trackers, before fees, placing it among the most expensive day schools in the city.
- Admissions are heavily weighted toward Kindergarten entry; independent estimates place acceptance rates near 10 percent, and mid-grade openings are rare once a class is established.
- The entire school operates out of one Manhattan building, so families wanting sprawling campuses, extensive outdoor playing fields, or a suburban setting will not find that here.

ADMISSIONS

Collegiate's main entry points are Kindergarten and, to a lesser extent, a small cohort in the lower grades; places rarely open in the middle or upper school once a class is formed. The process follows the standard NYC independent-school pattern: application, standardized testing (ISEE/ERB), transcripts where applicable, parent and child interviews, and school visits. Demand is high relative to the roughly 50-55 seats per grade, and admissions officers weigh family engagement and developmental fit alongside assessments. Financial aid is available and the school waives its own application fee for aid applicants.

WTS RATING 

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