

Lakeside School

Seattle, United States



On a wooded 33-acre campus above Lake Washington, a no-AP curriculum sets a rigor bar that exceeds the College Board's own.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	81/100
Academic outcomes	84/100
University placement	84/100
Prestige & heritage	80/100
Alumni network	80/100
Facilities	80/100
Transparency	74/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Lakeside’s defining choice is the one many ambitious American schools will not make: it runs an American curriculum for Grades 5–12 and rejects the AP treadmill. That matters because the school’s academic identity rests on depth, not badge-collecting. Upper School pupils choose from more than ****140+** classes**, class size sits at ****17****, and the structure points to a place that expects intellectual range as well as stamina. For parents tired of schools that outsource rigour to the College Board, Lakeside has a ***clearer, harder standard***: the school sets its own bar and expects students to meet it.

The setting sharpens the appeal. A ***serious urban independent*** on a wooded 33-acre campus above Lake

Washington, Lakeside combines scale with selectivity: 296 middle school students, 595 upper school students, and students drawn from 256 previous schools. The intake mix matters. With 55% arriving from public schools, 36% from independent schools and 9% from religious schools, this is not a cloistered pipeline school. It pulls from across Seattle and beyond, and that gives the student body a wider civic texture than many fee-charging peers. The racial and ethnic profile is also more mixed than the standard elite-school template, with 32% Asian / Asian American, 28% European American / White, 19% multiracial and 11% African / African American / Black.

Lakeside also has breadth outside the classroom, though not in the inflated way schools sometimes claim it. More than 80% of students take part in arts each year, more than 80% play at least one sport, there are 25 varsity teams, and middle school students all study visual and performing arts every year. College counselling is resourced at **1-to-37** for seniors, which is strong for a school of this size and market. The average annual day fee across the full ladder is **\$52,000**, placing Lakeside firmly in the top tier of the US day-school market. That price buys substance: NEASC and NAIS accreditation, two campuses, lunch included in tuition, and a school with enough scale to offer choice without turning anonymous.

This is a school for students who want *real academic stretch* and can handle a culture that does not lower the temperature for comfort. It suits bright, self-directed children who like discussion, can manage a demanding workload, and want strong peers around them. It will also suit artists, athletes and students whose interests cut across disciplines, because the programme has room for all three. It will not suit families hunting for heavy hand-holding, a narrow exam-drill model, or the social theatre that can dominate some elite independents. Lakeside belongs on a shortlist because it offers something *genuinely distinctive* in the American market: high academic ambition without AP conformity, broad co-curricular participation, and a student body large enough to generate energy but small enough to keep standards personal.

STRENGTHS

- Highly selective day school with roughly a 16 percent acceptance rate, reflecting a strong academic peer group and demand from Seattle's professional community.
- Substantial need-based financial aid program: Lakeside awarded \$10 million in tuition assistance to about 30 percent of students in 2025-26.
- Small-scale teaching environment with a student-teacher ratio near 1:9 and average class sizes around 17 students.
- Notable alumni network anchored by Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen, who met and began programming together at the school.
- Long-established institution (founded 1919, merged with St. Nicholas School in 1971) with a 25-acre north Seattle campus and sizable endowment.

TRADE-OFFS

- Day tuition runs approximately \$52,000 a year, placing full fees among the highest of Seattle-area independent schools.
- Admissions are highly competitive, with published acceptance rates around 16 percent and required SSAT/ISEE testing, essays and interviews.
- Day-only structure means no boarding option, so families must live within reasonable commuting distance of north Seattle.
- American curriculum only, with no International Baccalaureate track, which may not suit expat families seeking IB continuity.

ADMISSIONS

Lakeside enrolls new students mainly into grades 5, 6 and 9, with occasional openings elsewhere in grades 5-12. Applications require school transcripts, teacher recommendations, a student essay, an interview and SSAT or ISEE scores; the deadline falls in mid-January. Acceptance runs near 16 percent, making the process genuinely competitive, drawing heavily from Seattle's professional and technology sector. The school has no religious affiliation. Need-based financial aid is significant, covering tuition and incidental costs for roughly 30 percent of the student body, though families reapply annually.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_7199ef3410.