International Schools: The Relocating Parent

A persona and AI research for the international schools industry: a US family choosing a school in Singapore, the questions they ask AI, and what the answers recommend.



Jennifer Miller

Austin, Texas to Singapore · two children, 8 and 14

Awareness | Consideration | **Decision**

Who she is

Background, goals and challenges

What she asks

Nine questions across her journey

What schools can do

Content and proof that help her decide

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Illustrative persona
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What this research is about

Relocating families can now ask an AI assistant which school to choose. This study follows one realistic parent through her decision and records what ChatGPT and Google AI Mode recommend, which schools they name, and which sources they trust.

INDUSTRY

International schools

K-12 international schools competing for relocating families.

MARKET STUDIED

Singapore

One of the world's largest international school markets.

TARGET PARENT

A relocating US family

Jennifer Miller, moving from Austin, Texas with children aged 8 and 14.

WHO IT'S FOR

School marketing and admissions teams

And the SEO and content teams who support them.

SEARCH LOCATION

United States, in English

Google AI Mode set to the US with English results. ChatGPT ran in a temporary chat from Vancouver, Canada, the tester's location, which can't be changed.

SCOPE

9 questions, 2 AI tools

Three questions at each stage: awareness, consideration and decision. One fresh conversation per question, October 2026.

The goal

To show international schools **how AI assistants shape a family's shortlist**, and what schools can publish so they're named, described accurately and cited when parents ask.

Three research questions

Who gets recommended?
Which schools AI names for a US family, and how often.

Who gets credited?
Which sources the answers rely on: schools, guides or communities.

What changes by stage?
How answers shift from first search to final decision.

Status: preliminary

Google AI Mode: 9 of 9 questions. ChatGPT: 4 of 9 so far; to be updated.



Jennifer Miller

The relocating parent

Background

- 41, lives in **Austin, Texas**
- Moving to **Singapore in six months**; her husband has accepted a regional tech role
- Two children: **Ella, 8** (Grade 3) and **Noah, 14** (Grade 9)
- Works remotely in marketing; she leads the school search
- First international move for the family
- Relocation package covers part of school fees

Where she looks

- Google and ChatGPT, late evenings after work
- Expat Facebook groups and Reddit threads
- The company's relocation consultant
- School websites, virtual tours and admissions calls

How to reach her

- Email first, then video calls across time zones
- LinkedIn and Instagram

A US family choosing a school from 15,000 km away

In her words

Illustrative quotes, based on common relocating-family concerns

> "I need Noah's transcript to make sense to US colleges."

> "Ella has never changed schools. I want somewhere she'll feel at home fast."

> "Every school says it's world-class. I need proof, not adjectives."

> "If there's a waitlist, I need to know now, not after we land."

Goals

- Keep a clear path to **US colleges** for Noah
- A warm, quick **social transition** for Ella
- **Secure places** before the move, mid-year
- Fees that fit the **relocation package**
- A reasonable commute from their new home

Challenges

- **Waitlists** and mid-year entry
- Confusion over **IB vs AP**
- Comparing **total costs**, not just tuition
- Every school's marketing sounds the same
- Can't visit campuses before deciding

What she needs to decide

- Real availability for each grade
- College outcomes for US-bound students
- A full, transparent fee breakdown
- Support for newly arrived families
- Evidence from other American families

What schools can do

- Publish **mid-year availability** and waitlist guidance
- Explain **IB and AP outcomes** with real data
- Show **all costs** on one clear page
- Offer **virtual tours** and a named admissions contact
- Share transition stories from US families

Marketing message

A US-ready education in Singapore: a clear path to American colleges, honest availability, and a team that helps your family settle in before you land.

Illustrative persona built for independent research on how AI assistants answer international school questions. Not based on a real individual. Photo: Courtney Cook on Unsplash (Unsplash License).

The questions Jennifer asks AI

Nine questions across three stages. These become the research questions: each is asked in ChatGPT and in Google AI Mode set to the United States, in English.

Awareness

Exploring options

1. We're moving from the US to Singapore with two kids. What are the best international schools there?
2. Do international schools in Singapore follow an American curriculum or IB?
3. How much do international schools in Singapore cost per year?

Her goal: Shortlist schools and understand the basics

Consideration

Comparing fit

1. Which international schools in Singapore are best for American families?
2. IB or AP: which is better for a teenager at an international school in Singapore who plans to attend a US college?
3. Which international schools in Singapore have shorter waitlists for mid-year entry?

Her goal: Narrow to two or three schools that fit

Decision

Choosing and applying

1. Singapore American School vs Stamford American International School: which is better?
2. How do I apply to Singapore American School, and what are the deadlines?
3. Is Dulwich College Singapore a good fit for a 14-year-old moving from the US?

Her goal: Apply with confidence, on time

What the research will record

- Which schools each answer names, and in what order
- Which sources are cited: school sites, guides, forums
- Which proof points appear: curriculum, fees, accreditation, college outcomes, waitlists
- Whether facts like fees and deadlines are specific and sourced

Conditions

- Google AI Mode with country set to the US and language to English
- ChatGPT in a temporary chat; it uses the tester's own location
- One fresh conversation per question
- Collected October 2026

Jennifer's journey, and where AI shapes it

What she does, where she looks and how she feels at each stage, alongside what the AI answers actually gave her.

	Awareness	Consideration	Decision
Doing	Searches for the best schools late at night after work	Compares curricula, fees, waitlists and commutes	Checks deadlines, books virtual tours, applies
Where she looks	Google AI Mode · ChatGPT · Expat Facebook groups	School guides · Reddit · School websites	Admissions pages · Virtual tours · Admissions calls
What AI gave her	The same five schools, again and again	Smaller schools appear for fees and waitlists	Comparisons built from third-party sources
Opportunity for schools	Accurate facts in guides and directories	Clear fee and availability pages	Comparison-ready facts and US-family answers

How she feels (illustrative)



How AI builds her shortlist



Source counts from Google AI Mode's 68 links; shortlist from the schools named most often.

Results at a glance

Jennifer's nine questions were asked in Google AI Mode (set to the US, in English) and ChatGPT. Google is complete; ChatGPT has answered four of nine so far, so its numbers are early.

6 of 6	**Singapore American School leads the shelf.** Google named it in every open question; ChatGPT named it in all four answers so far.
68	**Google shows its sources; ChatGPT rarely does.** Google linked 68 sources across 8 of 9 answers. ChatGPT linked sources in 2 of 4, only school websites.
37 of 68	**Guides and directories outweigh school sites.** More than half of Google's sources were school guides, directories and blogs; 23 were schools' own websites.
0	**The head-to-head ignored both schools' sites.** Google compared Singapore American School and Stamford American using only third-party sources.
Fees	**Practical pages open the door for smaller schools.** OWIS, Nexus and GIIS appeared only for costs and waitlists, often cited from their own fee and admissions pages.

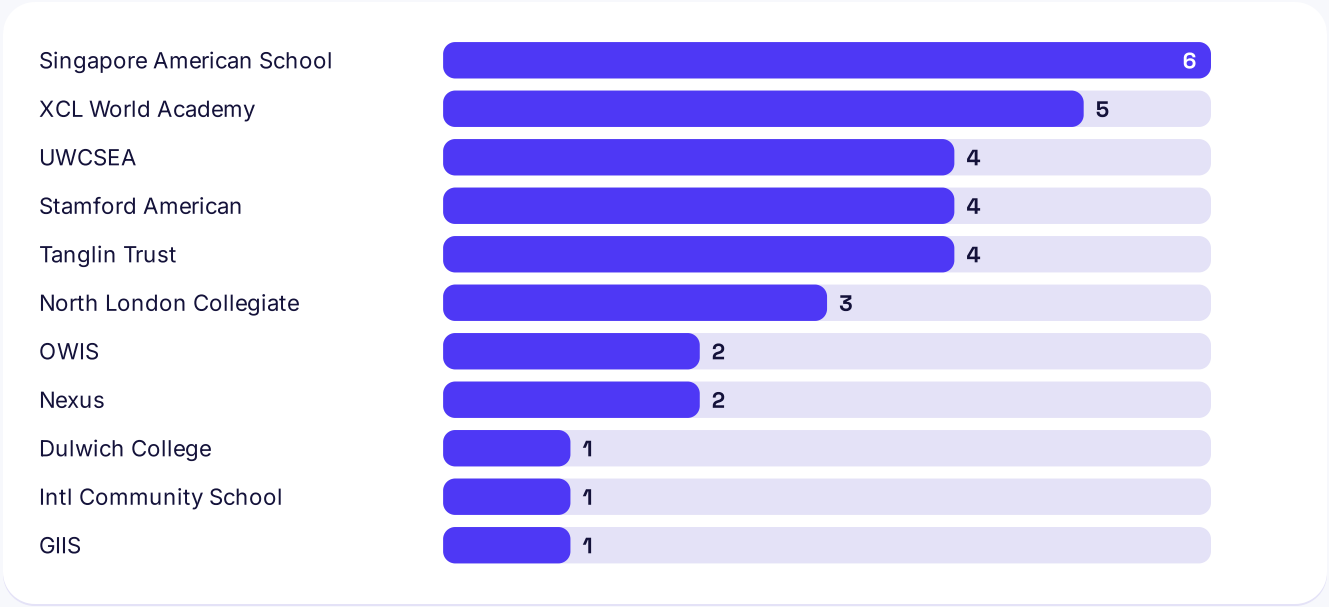
What it means for schools: being well known gets a school mentioned. Publishing clear, specific answers to parents' practical questions gets it cited, and lets smaller schools compete.

Finding 1

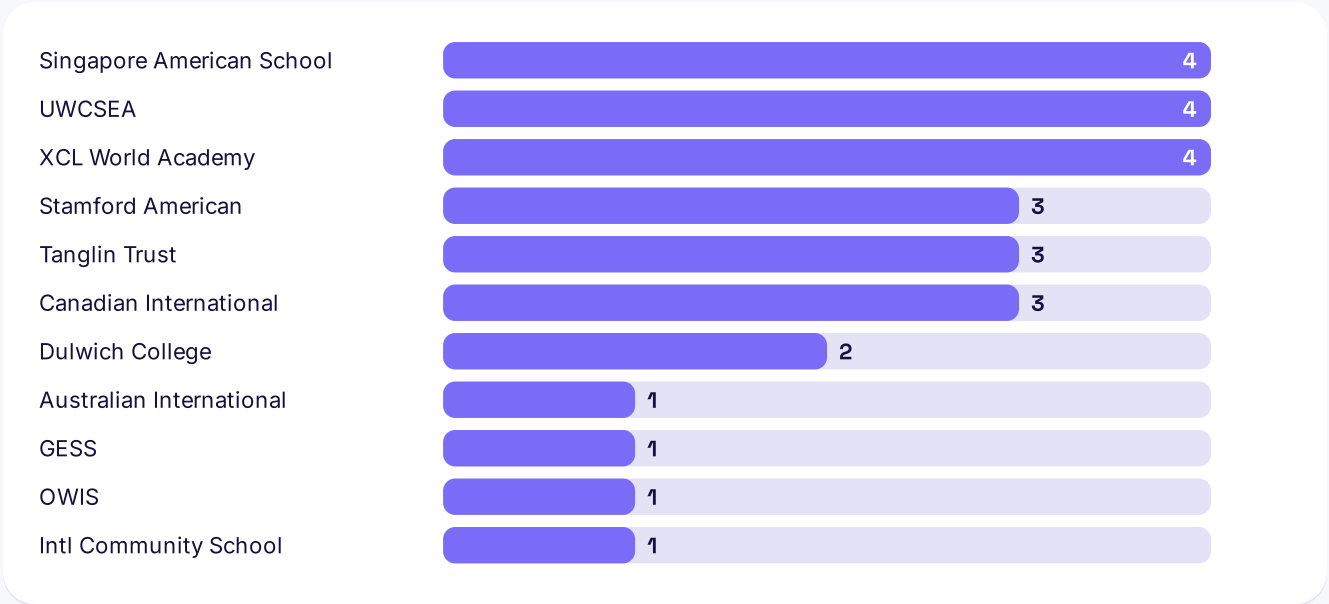
The AI shelf for a US family

Schools named in answers to Jennifer's open questions, the ones that didn't name a school.

Google AI Mode (out of 6 answers)



ChatGPT (out of 4 answers so far)

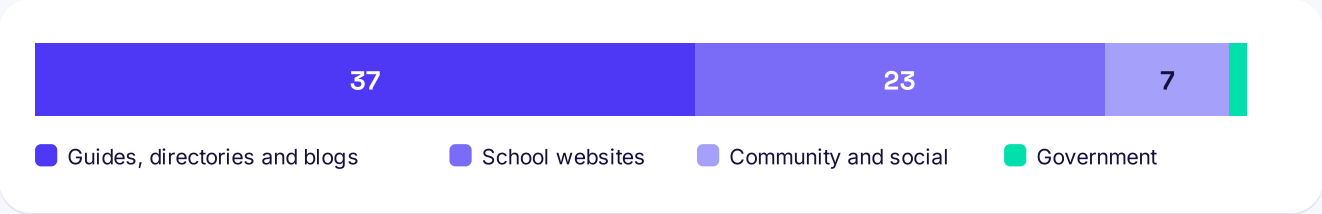


Bar length shows how many answers named each school. ChatGPT's results cover four of its six open questions so far.

Finding 2

Where the answers come from

Google AI Mode linked 68 sources across Jennifer's nine questions. ChatGPT linked sources in two of its first four answers.



Google AI Mode's 68 source links, by type.

Guides set the frame

Google leaned on school guides and directories such as **Good Schools Guide, WhichSchoolAdvisor, International Schools Database, Skoolopedia** and parenting sites like Sassy Mama and HoneyKids. Community voices (Reddit, Quora, Facebook) and a US State Department page also appeared.

ChatGPT cites schools, or no one

ChatGPT linked only **schools' own websites**, for the cost question and for "best for American families", and showed a **map of schools** in two answers. Its other answers named schools without any sources.

Comparison without the schools

For "Singapore American School vs Stamford American", Google built a side-by-side table (curriculum, location, fees) from Reddit, WhichSchoolAdvisor, Sassy Mama and others. **Neither school's own site was cited.**

Advice without credit

"IB or AP for a US-bound teen?" got a full answer from Google with **no sources at all**, the same pattern Study 4 found for general advice.

Finding 3

Answers along the journey

What each of Jennifer's questions surfaced, in both tools.

Stage	Question	Google AI Mode	ChatGPT
Awareness	Best international schools for a US family	SAS, UWCSEA, Stamford, Tanglin, XCL; raised waitlists unprompted; 12 sources, mostly guides	SAS, Stamford, UWCSEA, Tanglin, Dulwich and 3 more; map, no sources
Awareness	American curriculum or IB?	SAS, Stamford, UWCSEA, Tanglin, XCL, NLCS; cited three schools' sites	Same core schools; no sources
Awareness	Cost per year	Dulwich, SAS, Canadian, OFS, OWIS, Nexus, NLCS, XCL; fee databases and schools' fee pages	Fee ranges by school; cited UWCSEA, Tanglin and SAS sites
Consideration	Best for American families	SAS, Stamford, International Community School; Reddit, guides, State Department	SAS, Stamford, UWCSEA, XCL, ICS; school sites and a map
Consideration	IB or AP for a US-bound teen	General advice naming SAS, UWCSEA, Tanglin, XCL, NLCS; no sources	Not yet run
Consideration	Shorter waitlists, mid-year entry	Nine schools incl. GIIS, OWIS, Nexus; schools' admissions pages	Not yet run
Decision	SAS vs Stamford American	Comparison table and map; only third-party sources	Not yet run
Decision	How to apply to SAS, deadlines	Steps, fee, documents, priority; dates shown; SAS site cited first	Not yet run
Decision	Dulwich for a 14-year-old from the US	Curriculum and transition; cited Dulwich's Suzhou school page	Not yet run

A brand-consistency warning Asked about Dulwich College Singapore, Google cited a page from Dulwich's school in Suzhou, China. For school networks, clear school-specific pages and structured data help AI keep campuses apart.

What international schools can do

Publish clear fee pages

All costs for each grade on one page, in plain text.

The evidence: Cost answers cited schools' own fee pages, including smaller schools.

Explain availability and mid-year entry

Current openings, waitlist guidance and timelines by grade.

The evidence: Waitlist answers cited schools' admissions pages.

Answer US-family questions directly

AP and IB pathways, US college outcomes and counselling, transition support.

The evidence: Google answered IB vs AP without citing anyone.

Make comparison facts easy to use

Curriculum, location, class sizes and outcomes in a clear facts section.

The evidence: The SAS vs Stamford comparison came only from third parties.

Be accurate in guides and directories

Check listings in the guides parents and AI rely on.

The evidence: 37 of Google's 68 sources were guides and directories.

Keep each campus distinct

School-specific pages, names and schema across a network.

The evidence: A Singapore question cited a Suzhou campus page.

Status and method

- **Preliminary:** Google AI Mode 9 of 9 complete; ChatGPT 4 of 9 (paused at its usage limit).
- Google AI Mode set to the US and English; ChatGPT in a temporary chat, which used the tester's Canadian location.
- One fresh conversation per question, October 2026. Schools detected by name matching, then reviewed.

Limits

- A snapshot: AI answers vary between runs and users.
- Fees and dates are reported as the AI stated them, not verified against schools.
- Independent research; no school mentioned was consulted or endorsed it.