The information below is an excerpt from the book, "Gifts that Give Back" published by The National Association of Independent Schools.

Q: Let's go right to the bottom line. My family is already paying tuition, and plenty of it. What does my child get when we donate money as well?

A: The bottom line is this: Your gift supports the people and programs that make your independent school so special. This means talented teachers. Small classes. Reading and math resources that many public schools simply can't afford. Up-to-date technology. Accommodations for different learning styles. And exceptional offerings in everything from the arts to athletics.

While your child is in school, all this translates into more personal attention, increased intellectual stimulation, better discipline, and more rigor. In the future, it will mean greater credibility behind the academic credentials your child will possess throughout life.

Gifts are necessary because tuition doesn't cover all the opportunities your student receives. That's why schools need endowments, auxiliary money-making activities such as summer camps, and yes, fund-raising. Inevitably, the special offerings that prepare students for the 21st century drive the budget up. So – just as universities and even public schools now do – your independent school must ask parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends for financial support.

Q: My child's school has beautiful grounds, lovely buildings, and many other pricey features. It sure doesn't look like it needs money. Why should I give?

A: It's easy to overestimate how affluent schools are. If they charge $20,000 or more for tuition and enjoy attractive facilities, you naturally assume that a school must be rich, the teachers are well paid, and the financial needs are minimal. But for the vast majority of independent schools, tuition does not cover the full cost of educating a child. In many boarding schools, tuition covers less than 70 percent of the educational costs. At most day schools in urban settings, tuition only pays 80 to 90 percent of the costs. That's why administrators often say that every independent school student attends on a scholarship.

Q: If independent schools were run in a more businesslike way, couldn't they charge the full cost and avoid having to ask for gifts?

A: A for-profit business, whose mission is to make money, differs from a nonprofit school, whose mission is to provide children with a good education. By nature, high-quality schools are labor-intensive and people-oriented; on average, salary and benefits make up about 70 percent of a day school's budget and 60 percent of a boarding school's. These schools cannot get more efficient by combining classrooms or reducing staff. (And they probably wouldn't serve your best interest by "firing" inefficient students.)

What is comes down to is this: The rising cost of faculty salaries and benefits drives the cost of independent school education. Your school needs to pay its faculty members enough to enjoy middle-income lifestyles and support their families within a reasonable distance of the school. To offer competitive salaries and provide the programs you want your children to have, your school has to raise tuition, offer those summer camps, and ask you for a gift.

Q: How does financial aid fit into the fund-raising picture?

A: Your gifts help your school offer the financial aid that supports a diverse student body. True, many schools do not fund financial aid budgets directly through donations. Instead, they usually allocate a set percentage of the expected tuition revenue. But without donations sufficient to meet operating costs, more tuition dollars would have to go to operations – leaving fewer dollars for financial aid. Your gifts make the school affordable to a wider range of students, bringing your child the many benefits of social and economic diversity.

Q: Are there more reasons to give?

A: Of course. Many people take pride in the recognition that comes with appearing on the list of the school's supporters. Others enjoy being involved in fund-raising activities because it lets them make social contacts. Some view giving as a way to become active stakeholders who help their school achieve goals. And finally, unlike tuition payments, gifts to independent schools are tax deductible.

Q: How much of a difference can my gift make, really?

A: Your independent school has many fewer supporters than a university or a large charity does. Because the number who will give is small but the need is large, every gift counts more. This reasoning leads many families to make their children's school their philanthropic priority. They know their gifts are an investment that truly pays off.