reading math and writing. Many students who attend these schools participate in unique athletics, clubs or activities.

**High expectations**

Students who attend private schools are expecting more than the average school experience. "Kids and families want excellence. They are looking for it everywhere (within the school)," says John Malloy, Gilmour's hockey director and assistant director of admissions. "They have high expectations for us."

For hockey players Ratycz and Joe Lencewicz of Gates Mills, they came to Gilmour for the hockey program. Flexible ice times at the on-campus rinks draw many students who participate in activities in addition to hockey, such as figure skating.

"Playing hockey here, practice is right after school. It makes it a lot easier," Lencewicz says. "Then you can go home and study. You are not being interrupted by early-morning practices. That aspect of it made it really appealing as a student athlete."

Brian Horgan, director of the upper school at Gilmour Academy, says that "scholar athletes like Madison and Joe perform at such a high level and give so much of themselves that they have the same expectations for everything they are involved in, from the classroom to their extracurricular."**

**Real-world experience**

Many private schools are helping their students gear up for fields such as engineering and technology. Programs like at Gilmour and at Hathaway Brown School for Girls in Shaker Heights are ensuring everyone is geared up. The Science Research and Engineering Program (SREP) allows girls in grades 9-12 to work on real-world engineering and technology testing, research and presentations.

Patty Hunt, director of research at Hathaway Brown, has helped place more than 100 students in research labs who take part in the SREP program each year. The girls have worked in labs such as at the Cleveland Clinic, NASA Glenn Research Center and Case Western Reserve University.

In addition to course work and research, Hathaway Brown students also may participate in varsity-like teams for robotics or present their work in publications and in science competitions.

"We have had over 130 students earn finalist in Siemens Competitions, as well as students from Hathaway Brown who have been included as authors or co-authors in over 200 professional publications," Hunt says. "For Hathaway Brown, science is a culture."

The majority of girls who participate in the SREP program continue into STEM (science technology engineering and mathematics) fields.

"We did a 10-year study and found that 58 percent of our students in the SREP program went on to a STEM major," Hunt says. "Nationally, women in those majors make up only 8 percent of the students in the country. We need 100 percent of the..."
available brain power in this country to be working in the STEM fields."

The Catalyst Program at Gilmour gives students an opportunity to do research alongside a scientist in a working laboratory. Ratycz may have gone to Gilmour for the hockey, but she also discovered she loves science and math. Catalyst research has helped give her critical-thinking skills to solve problems and allowed her to tap into this field of study.

"It showed me what I wanted to do," she says.

**Not "horsing" around**

For students with a love for horses, they may have an opportunity to ride in competition at Andrews Osborne Academy. The coed school in Willoughby has more than 60 stalls in a state-of-the-art boarding and performance equestrian center.

The school has two competitive equestrian teams. One serves students, while the other is community-based.

Both teams travel around the country to compete with other equestrian teams in jumping and racing events. Students compete in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association, a school-based equestrian competition program. "Equestrian-talented students come to Andrews Osborne Academy from all over the world and have the opportunity to compete at the national and international level in a sport that they love," says Michelle Rowley, director of marketing and communication.

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**Spiritual activities**

Some private schools offer activities that help students with their spirituality. Our Lady of the Elms in Akron, for example, offers help with liturgical preparation and an opportunity to compete on a Dominican preaching team. The program allows girls to attend a Dominican conference in the summer and create an action plan within the school to "further our Dominic identity," says Shari Kavlick-Benz, director of admissions.

With many unique activities, most students still achieve a high level of academic success. Ratycz has a 4.0 GPA at Gilmour, for example, but still manages to stay involved in the travel hockey team.

"(The students) realize they can do more," Malloy said. "They can branch out and do other things."**

*Michelle Collins is a freelance writer and mother of five in Richfield.*