

HOW TO PICK YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

A Guide to Selecting the Best School to Meet your Child's Educational Needs

Many people look for an easy way to choose a school. There is no easy answer or a single number that can be used to choose a school. Your child has unique interests and needs. A school that may be best for your child may not be the best school for another child. It is important, therefore, to consider all of the aspects of a school, especially those of most interest to you and your child, when picking a school. This guide suggests some of the questions to ask when selecting a school that is the best match for you and your child.

Step 1: Evaluating Your Needs

Consider the unique learning needs of your child. Determine the general criteria and type of school experience you want for your child such as: academic and arts programs, gifted program, athletics, location, available transportation, and extracurricular opportunities.

Step 2: Research Your Schools

Look at the information available from Communications and Marketing, on the MPS Internet pages and/or from individual schools. Ask to look at recent copies of the school report card, a parent/student handbook, a school newsletter and information about the school's parent organizations. These documents, or the principal, can help answer any specific questions. Other questions you may want to ask include:

- ❖ What are some recent accomplishments of the school?
- ❖ What is the school's educational philosophy and goals?
- ❖ What materials and methods of instruction are used in the school?
- ❖ How does the school provide for the unique learning needs of each child?
- ❖ What tools are used to measure student achievement? (All MPS secondary schools use writing sample assessments and spring district exams to measure mastery of the MPS curriculum along with state-mandated tests).
- ❖ Does the school provide activities suited to your child's interests?
- ❖ How are students recognized for achievement?
- ❖ What is the class schedule of a typical day?
- ❖ How can parents become active members of the learning team?
- ❖ Does the school encourage parents to become involved in school activities?
- ❖ Are individual parents involved in decisions regarding their own child's program?
- ❖ How are parents kept informed of school activities and of changes in school policy?

Step 3: Ask Questions

Once you have narrowed your choice to one or two schools, schedule a visit to the school. During your visit, ask the principal if you may visit a classroom. Ask yourself:

- ❖ Do you and your child feel welcome in the school?
- ❖ Do the staff and students appear to be happy and friendly?
- ❖ Does the school seem to be well organized and to reflect a sense of purpose?
- ❖ Do the students seem to be well supervised?
- ❖ How much instruction do you see going on?
- ❖ Are classrooms pleasant and well cared for?
- ❖ Do you sense that high expectations are commonly shared among the staff for the performance of all students?

Step 4: Making a Decision

You have now gathered information about the schools on your list. You have also seen the schools for yourself. As you consider the alternatives and make a choice, keep in mind that what is most important is how well you think each school will meet your child's unique needs.

And once you have chosen a school for your child, don't forget that your task of ensuring that your child gets a good education has only started. Once your child is enrolled, keep in contact with the teacher, supervise homework, and make sure your child knows that working hard in school is important.

Working together, we can ensure that your child gets the most out of school.

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