



TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD

By the time a child in the U.S. graduates from high school, they will have spent over 13,000 hours in school—so it's no surprise that parents across the country spend a lot of time choosing a school where their child is likely to thrive.

Some parents find themselves facing numerous options for where to send their child, from their district schools, to magnet schools, to local charter schools or private schools. Below, we've outlined some tips we think will help parents choose the right school for their family as they approach their child's school-aged years.

1. Know your child. Does your child thrive in a more or less structured environment? Do they enjoy classroom discussions or prefer to learn by listening? Do they need individual attention to support their learning? Knowing the answers to some of these questions will help you frame your search and find a school environment that supports your child reaching their highest potential.

2. Visit a variety of schools. Maybe your neighbor or family friend sends their child to a particular school where they are thriving—and you're convinced your kid will excel at that school, too. That might be the case. But exploring new options and touring other schools is an important way to either reaffirm what you knew all along, or uncover another, new option that works even better for your kid.

3. Gauge student engagement. When you visit a school, be sure to ask yourself whether children are engaged in their learning. Do they have opportunities to read lots of books during the day? Do children look happy to be in school? Are there warm relationships between students and staff? If you feel bored sitting in on a class, chances are your child will feel that way, too.

4. Curriculum counts... Every school follows a curriculum or educational philosophy, and often puts their own spin on an existing method. What's the school's secret sauce for how they inspire learning and encourage children to demonstrate what they know? Ask teachers or school leaders how do they approach

teaching math, English, or science—and then ask them why they use that method. Are students encouraged to find connections across subjects? Does the school offer extracurricular activities like art or music? Do your research and see if the school's specific 'formula' might work for your child.

5. So does character... While a lot of learning takes place inside the classroom, students often have their character shaped during interactions that take place throughout the school day. Do teachers and staff encourage children to be honest and own up to their mistakes? Is respect to others modeled by teachers inside and outside the classroom? Are children encouraged to treat others like they would prefer to be treated? Ask staff on your tour what school policies support student's developing into well-rounded, kind people.

6. ...And culture! When you join a school, you join a community. The atmosphere of a school should feel conducive to learning and joy. Is student work proudly displayed on the bulletin boards? Are staff—from the principal, to the school office manager—warm and helpful? Reach out to other parents and ask them how they feel about the school. During your tour, be sure to ask about the school's communications policies. Can teachers text parents? Can parents schedule a time to observe a class in progress during the school year? Are there school events or opportunities to engage with other families? The answers to these questions often reveal a lot about the type of community your family would enter.

We hope these tips will help you and your family discover a school that prepares your child to become a lifelong learner! **Learn more about KIPP New Jersey schools at kippnj.org.**

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