

In the public school system, with the exception of a geographic exemption, you do not choose a school. You are assigned one.

With private schools, the selection process is critical. If you fail to do your own research or you apply to a private school just because your golf partner or accountant said it was a good school; that is not much different than being assigned a school.

Even before you look at private schools, look at your child.

Different children have different needs. Where one shines, another shies away; where one requires structure, another seeks freedom; where one is an independent worker, another is a team builder.

The Family Questionnaire

Your family's lifestyle, current situation, and priorities need to play an important part in choosing a school for your child. Take the time to evaluate your family's needs carefully. You probably have family commitments, work-related commitments, outside activities, and sports that eat up time. Consider your budget. Sit down with your spouse, and if your child is old enough, include his input. Consider the following criteria. Answer the questions and compare notes.

- ♦ **Priorities.** What are the most important things to you, your spouse, and your child in selecting a school? Is it solid academics? A nurturing environment? Religious instruction? Does your child have special needs or talents? Is it important that your child has structure, or that he or she is given the freedom to make his or her own choices? What type of setting does your child blossom in? A small school or a big school? Same sex or coed? Traditional or progressive? Collaborative or individual classrooms? Make a wish list: pick four or five specific desires for your child's education to keep in mind when shopping for schools. Look at each school's mission statement to see if the school has goals and beliefs similar to your family's goals and beliefs. If the most important thing for you is that your child be accepted to and graduate from a particular school, examine what it is that made you pick that school and write down those qualities. You may find more than one school that has similar things to offer.
- ♦ **Logistics.** What are your physical limitations in getting your child to and from school every day? Your child can be accepted to the best school for her