

Public School or Private School

- Create a list of possible schools and ask each for a prospectus or brochure.
- Conduct on-the-spot assessments.
- Attend open houses and parent meetings.
- Talk to existing parents.
- Ask for old copies of the school newsletter.

Achievement/Accountability

- Does the school have a written academic mission that guides the behavior of both adults and students?
- Does the school set high standards and stress continuous improvement over time?
- How many students in the school are performing at grade level in reading or mathematics?
- Are test scores rising or falling compared to the previous year?
- Has the percentage of students achieving proficiency increased or decreased?
- What percentages of students graduate from the high school? How many attend college?
- What percentages of students are taking challenging pre-college courses?
- Does the high school offer programs to prepare graduating students for the workforce?
- What percentage of juniors and seniors took college entrance tests?
- What accreditation does the school hold?

Philosophy/Curriculum

- Does the school have a philosophy on learning that is shared by all teachers and the administration?
- How are subjects taught?
- Does the school offer specials such as music, art, physical education, and/or a foreign language?

Students

- Do parents receive information from the school? Is it also available on the internet?
- Does the school inform parents when their child is falling behind academically?
- Does the school offer afternoon, weekend or summer school instruction if needed?
- Does the school welcome parental involvement and make it easy for parents to participate?
- Does the school offer interpreters for parents who do not speak English?
- Does the district inform parents of the choices and options available to them under the *No Child Left Behind Act*?

Teacher Training and Quality

- Are teachers required to have their teacher certification?
- Does your child's teacher hold a degree in the subject he or she is teaching?
- Does the district have a policy to encourage qualified professionals from other career areas to become classroom teachers?
- If a teacher is doing his or her job poorly, what procedures are in place for retraining, reassigning or replacing him or her?
- What types of support systems are in place for new teachers?

Student Discipline

- Is there an explicit student disciplinary policy? How does the school inform parents when their child has misbehaved and been placed in detention, suspended or expelled?
- Does the school track attendance? What are the penalties for unexcused absences?
- How many incidents of violence, vandalism, or substance abuse occurred on school property last year?

Resources

- United States Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/>
- National Education Association: <http://www.nea.org/home/1125.htm>
- Great Schools: www.greatschools.com
- Accreditation: http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg7.html