Understanding K-12 School Options in Metro Atlanta

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Overview

- Perspective
- School Factors to Consider
- Considering Your Child
- Educational Settings & Terminology
- Research Suggestions
- Resources
- *NOTE: AAAIS Standard*
Although parents are often most comfortable with what they have experienced in their own schooling, it is helpful to consider all options based on your child.

The best predictor of how a child will do next year is how he or she did in the spring of the previous year. A crystal ball is the only predictor for young children.

Each school has pros and cons, opportunities and limitations. No school offers everything. It is important to have this understanding about public & private education.
Perspective

- Parents want their children to have a challenging, hands-on, engaging, fun, safe, school with caring and bright teachers.

- Schools aim to provide the above.

- Therefore, selecting a school is about the details. Not the mission statement.
School Factors to Consider

- What philosophies, ideologies, and experiences are important to you and your family?
  - Must be public education, charter or only private/independent?
  - Religious schooling or secular?
  - Diversity (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, gender, learning styles)?
  - Type of curricular design and delivery (by age)?
  - Structure of the learning environment?
  - Emphasis on the arts, sports, test scores, or community service?
  - Tracking?
  - How a school responds to a student’s outside activities?

- What is the financial situation for your family?
School Factors to Consider

- What role do you want to play in your child’s education? Does that match with what the school asks of its parents? Check.

- Logistics
  - Location and transportation
  - Extracurricular (JH & HS)
  - After care options
  - Facilities
School Factors to Consider

- Organizational structure of the school and the role teachers and parents play in decision making.

- The school community
  - Who attends the school?
  - Is it a neighborhood school or do most commute?
  - What kind of community activities exist?
  - How does the school communicate with families?

- What support can you provide at home vs. what do you want from the school?
Considering Your Child

• How much of each does your child need (we all need some & this will evolve over time):
  ◦ Structure and routine?
  ◦ Independent choice?
  ◦ Guidance and reinforcement?
  ◦ Challenge?
  ◦ Learning support for special issues? If so, what kind?
  ◦ Movement in a day?
  ◦ Behavioral support?

• How does your child respond to adults?
• How does your child respond to learning?
Educational Settings & Terminology

Settings:
- Public School
- Charter
- Magnet
- Private/independent
- Home School

Key terms:
- Gifted
- Inclusion
- Exceptional
- Twice-Exceptional
- Counseling
Research Suggestions

- Visit schools.
- Sit in classes!
- Talk with parents – more than 1-2.
- Learn about level of parent involvement.
- Go to open houses.
- Attend school events (concerts, plays).
- Find out about admissions process.
- Volunteer – when/where appropriate
- Consider test scores with caution.
Resources

- Atlanta Public Schools (charter school information)
- Dekalb County Schools
- Fulton County Schools
- Gwinnet County Schools
- Atlanta Magazine “Best High Schools”
- Greatschools.org (info & rankings)
- Abetterchance.org (application support)
- AJC – Ed scene (i.e. Maureen Downey)
Questions?

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