



Understanding K-12 School Options in Metro Atlanta

Brett Hardin, Ph.D., Teaching & Learning
Paideia High School Principal

Overview

- Perspective
- School Factors to Consider
- Considering Your Child
- Educational Settings & Terminology
- Research Suggestions
- Resources
- *NOTE: AAIS Standard*

Perspective

- 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
- Gwinnett County Schools
- Atlanta Magazine “Best High Schools”
- Greatschools.org (info & rankings)
- Abetterchance.org (application support)
- AJC – Ed scene (i.e. Maureen Downey)

Questions?

Brett Hardin, Ph.D.
High School Principal at Paideia School
hardin.brett@paideiaschool.org