

Parents have the important responsibility of choosing the right school for their children. It is one of the most important decisions parents make. Selecting a school that matches a family's faith traditions, values and the needs of the child all play an important role in this decision.

The following information is a document for parents to use as a baseline when considering schools for their children. It contains sample questions about faith traditions, academics, student responsibilities, the vital role of teachers and parent involvement.

FAITH FORMATION

- Which religious textbooks are used?
- Is religion just a class, or is it faith modeled, nurtured throughout the day?
- How are students involved with liturgy and sacramental preparation?
- What faith development and community service opportunities does the school offer?

APPROACH TO LEARNING

- What is the school's mission?
- Does the school have a special focus or theme for the curriculum?
- How current are the textbooks?
- What is the average class size?
 - Are there split classes?
- Are classes self-contained? (stay with teacher all day for core classes)
- Is the school's tenor traditional (lecture based lessons) or non-traditional (e.g. group activity, peer work, writing workshops, active learning)?
- What classes are offered in addition to core subjects (e.g. English, math, history and science)?
- Is there departmentalization at certain grade levels? (students exchange for each class period)
- What are the accommodations for students with diverse learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and gifted students)
- What are the school's expectations of parental involvement?
- What extracurricular activities are offered?

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Is the school accredited? By whom? When?
- Are standardized tests given? How often?
- How are test results used?
- Are recent test results available to be seen?
- How do test scores compare to surrounding schools?

FACULTY

- What is the principal's educational philosophy?
- What is the staff size and turnover rate?
- Are teachers certified in their subject areas?
- How do teachers grade student work?
- Are services available to address students' special learning needs? (e.g., school psychologist)
- When is the next open house?
- Are building tours available?

TERMINOLOGY

Accreditation – A “quality assurance” process conducted by an external team of peers based on an internal study submitted by the school. This process determines the degree a school adheres to standards set by an accrediting agency who then grants “accreditation” status for meeting or exceeding said standards

Alternate student assessment – Combines traditional grading with a student's portfolio to show learning outcomes

Centers – Students move from station to station specific activities related to the lesson

Manipulatives – Children use cubes, pattern blocks and concrete items to learn math

Split Classes – Two different grade levels are taught together

Whole Language – Lessons create links to other subjects (e.g. reading coursework involves social studies and math)

Classroom workshops – Students have designated time to accomplish class assignments