

Elementary School Tours

Once you have selected a group of schools in which you are interested, you will want to visit them. Most schools offer tours; however, some might ask you only to visit during an open house. If possible, visit the school during the school day when classes are in session. You will learn a great deal about the school by simply observing the classrooms, facilities and school walls as well as the sounds from the students and teachers. The following are questions to ask during the tour as well as a survey to complete after each visit.

General Questions

What is the kindergarten's separation policy?
At what age are students departmentalized?
How is technology used at the school?
What happens when children are sick?
Are there before-school and after-school programs? How much do they cost? What is the content of the programming?
What is the racial and economic makeup of the families enrolled at the school?
Does the school provide transportation?
What happens during lunch time and recess? What happens during poor weather?
How often do students take field trips? Where do they go?

Teachers and Administration

How long has the principal worked at the school?
How long is the average tenure of a teacher?
Is professional development available for teachers? Do they take advantage of the opportunity?
Do the teachers work collaboratively?
What is the student/teacher ratio? Are there assistant teachers?

Skill Development

How is math taught (i.e., rote memorization, workbooks, manipulatives, or practical problems)?
How is reading taught (i.e., phonics, whole language)?
What kind of writing is required in each grade? How is it taught?
How is science taught (i.e., in class or lab)?
Is there musical instruction? How many days/hours per week?
How much homework is required daily at each grade level?

Parent-School Communications

How often during the year are parent-teacher conferences scheduled?
How long do parent-teacher conferences last?
What does the school see as the role of the parent?
What happens when children misbehave? How are parents informed about their children's behavior?

Observations

After you have completed each tour, it is often helpful to reflect on your experience. By completing this questionnaire, you will have stored some thoughts about this elementary school and can later compare your impression about this school to your satisfaction with various aspects of other schools that you will visit. Please indicate the extent that you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The children look happy.	1	2	3	4	5
The children seem involved in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
The classrooms are too noisy.	1	2	3	4	5
The school's environment is too formal.	1	2	3	4	5
The teachers are very involved with the students.	1	2	3	4	5
The teachers seem to be well qualified.	1	2	3	4	5
The teachers seem approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
The teachers are in control of their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
The children seem to like their teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
There is a good student/teacher ratio.	1	2	3	4	5
The classroom walls are covered with nice examples of the students' work.	1	2	3	4	5
The school is technologically equipped.	1	2	3	4	5
The teachers seem approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
The school is safe.	1	2	3	4	5
The facilities are adequate (i.e., toilets, outdoor space, temperature).	1	2	3	4	5
The facilities are clean.	1	2	3	4	5
There is sufficient space inside and outside for the children to be active.	1	2	3	4	5
The school is at a good location.	1	2	3	4	5
The class sizes seem appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
The school size seems appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
The school's director is approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
The school director's presence is evident.	1	2	3	4	5
I like the school's educational philosophy.	1	2	3	4	5
The school's schedule meet our needs.	1	2	3	4	5
The school has a good after-school program.	1	2	3	4	5
The school has a good summer program.	1	2	3	4	5
I would be comfortable sending my child to this school.	1	2	3	4	5

Other Impressions:
