



5 Key Questions to Ask When You Have a Choice of Schools—

And 5 Key Strategies to Use If You Don't

By Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, M.Ed.

5 Key Questions to Ask When You Have a Choice of Schools

1. How will I know my child is successful?

The answer will give you an indication of the priorities of this school, and it can also provide insight into what they do to prepare your child for the future.

2. What are some of the most important advantages of attending this school—what makes it a better choice than other schools?

Look for the distinctive traits or unique perspective this school has, and think about how all that might match the needs and temperament of your child.

3. What kind of students seem to do best in this school?

Listen to the words the administrator uses--*academic, mature, hard-working, well-balanced, flexible, self-disciplined*, etc. Again, how well do they fit your child's nature?

4. What tends to get students in trouble most often at this school? (And how does the discipline system work?)

This will provide insight into how the school establishes and communicates authority and whether they have a formal and uniform discipline process. Of course you want your child to have a safe and disciplined environment, but it's important to know how students are disciplined.

5. What kind of role does this school expect the parents to play?

Some schools may operate on a "co-op" basis, meaning parents are required to participate and share responsibilities on a regular basis. On the other end of the spectrum, some schools may prefer parents only show up for scheduled meetings and events unless there's a problem. When you're trying to find out how welcome your input would be, use a positive approach, i.e. "What's the best way we can encourage and support the school and our child's teachers?"

5 Key Strategies to Use If You Don't Have a Choice of Schools



1. Awareness is at least half the battle. Make sure you and your child understand what will be needed to be successful in this school—then ask your child for some input on what might make it easier to adjust.
2. Discuss how your child can be advantaged by going to this school—both with what is comfortable and what is not. Point out how important it is to learn to recognize and adjust to variable situations and circumstances and how valuable it is to have those skills once you leave school.
3. Do a little research—online and in person—about the school. Talk about what kind of students would probably do best with the environment and education this school offers. Focusing on how your child's strengths, even if they don't seem to fit, can build confidence in their ability to cope.
4. Find out what kind of trouble students in this school get into most often. Ask for a written statement of the discipline policy and the student handbook. Go over it with your child and talk about what he or she can do to be sure and stay out of trouble.
5. Ask the school if they have any formal guidelines for what they expect from parents, and what kind of involvement they like to see. Talk to your child about how he or she would be most comfortable having you involved.

For more information, order [*I Hate School! How to Help Your Child Love Learning*](#),
By: Cynthia Ulrich Tobias. (Available in paperback or [ebook](#) editions.)