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CHOOSING A SCHOOL

*A guide for parents, guardians
and caregivers*



RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS.

- Go to the annual School Choice Expo, which in 2016 is on Saturday, January 9.
- Visit informational websites like www.jaxpef.org/learn to find out what public school your child is zoned for and find information and academic reports on all public schools (including charters). Go to www.duvalchoice.com to learn about what other options are available. Every public school has a website that can be accessed through www.duvalschools.org.
- Ask for information about the application process and deadlines for magnet or choice-based public schools, and private or charter schools if they are of interest.
- Talk to your child about their interests and goals, especially rising sixth and ninth graders.
- Ask other parents, teachers or volunteers about their experiences at different schools.



INTERACT WITH SCHOOLS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.

- **Tour the school.** Call to request a tour. Don't hesitate to ask for the information you need.
- If you can't visit, call the school and ask to speak to the principal or other contact to get your questions answered.
- You can also email the principal — their email addresses are on jaxpef.org/learn.
- If you aren't sure where to start or have questions the school cannot answer, call the DCPS School Choice Office at (904) 390-2082.



MAKE A DECISION AND PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR.

- Ensure the school you choose fits your family's schedule, especially with transportation.
- Complete all applications before deadline — in 2015, the magnet application deadline is **Monday, February 29** and the choice application deadline is **Monday, May 16**.
- Check bell times and bus schedules. Arrange for transportation if your child's school doesn't provide it. Questions? Call the school or DCPS Transportation (904) 858-6200.
- Not happy with your current option? It is not set in stone. Don't be afraid to ask the school or the district for what is best for your child. There is a special transfer option that can help your child attend another school (see duvalchoice.com for more information).



WHAT TO ASK

A checklist of questions to ask yourself, your child and prospective schools



WHEN YOU RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS ...

- ✓ What school is my child zoned for based on my address?
- ✓ What options is my child interested in? What subjects does my child like and dislike?
- ✓ Do I live within 1.5 miles of my home school? If so, how will my child get there without bus transportation?
- ✓ If you have the opportunity to talk to someone you know with personal experience about a school, go beyond the basics. Ask questions that are relevant to your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ If my child is interested in a magnet option, what are the school start and stop times? Is transportation offered? If not, how will my child get to school?
- ✓ Does my child have special needs? If so, how will the prospective school meet those needs?
- ✓ For magnet, choice-based, charter and private schools, what are the application requirements and deadlines? Can my child meet them?



WHEN YOU GO ON A VISIT ...

TAKE THIS CHECKLIST WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO ON THE VISIT OR INTERVIEW THE PRINCIPAL

- ✓ Are the front office staff friendly and helpful?
- ✓ Try to sit in a classroom during a lesson. How are the teachers interacting with students? Are the students engaged?
- ✓ Is the administration visible? Are they willing to answer questions?
- ✓ What are the extracurricular activities and enrichment programs offered? What do they cost?
- ✓ If the school has a theme, how is that evident?
- ✓ What communication tools does the school use? How is the website? Is there a newsletter?
- ✓ How does the school help children navigate key transitions such as VPK to kindergarten, fifth to sixth grade and eighth to ninth grade?
- ✓ After the visit, don't be afraid to ask follow up questions.

