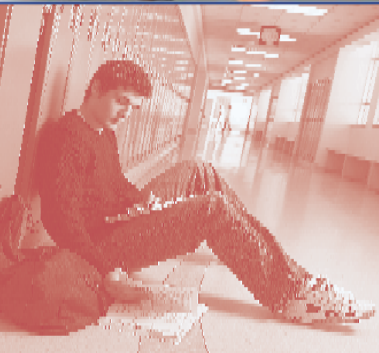


Choosing a School for Your Child in Florida



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Choosing a School for Your Child in Florida

OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT EDUCATION AND PARENTAL CHOICE

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to Dr. Carlo Rodriguez, Ed.D., for his leadership and professionalism, his passion and commitment to improving education for all children, and his perseverance in increasing the quality of school choice options.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This guide is also available on the Department's web site at: <http://www.fldoe.org>.

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Table of Contents

Message from the Commissioner	4
Choosing a School	5
Learn What Choices Are Available to You	6
Public Schools	6
Charter Schools, Magnet Schools, Career Academies, Virtual Schools, Controlled Open Enrollment, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate Programs, Dual Enrollment, ABC School Programs	
Nonpublic Schools	8
Scholarship Programs, Home Education	
Selecting a School for Your Child	11
Four Steps for Selecting a School That is Right for Your Child	
Step 1. Consider Your Child and Your Family	12
Step 2. Gather Information About Schools	15
Step 3. Visit and Observe Schools	26
Step 4. Apply to the School(s) You Choose	32
Parent Tips	
Know Your Options Under the <i>No Child Left Behind</i> Act for Children in Public Schools That Are “In Need of Improvement”	14
Knowing Your Options Under the <i>No Child Left Behind</i> Act for Children in Public Schools That Are Unsafe	16
Check the School District’s Report Card for Public Schools	19
Locating Schools	22
Helpful Resources For Parents Considering Home Education For Their Children	25
Ten Things to Look for in a School	31
Start Early and Cover All the Steps	33
Find Helpful Resources at the Florida Department of Education and the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Web Sites	34
Congratulations	33
Resources	
Web Sites that Provide Information Related to School Choice	35
Recently Published Books	36
Organizations that Provide Information to Parents	37
Listing of District School Board Offices	38
Map of Florida School Districts	41
Your Contacts	42

Message from the Commissioner



As a parent, selecting a school for your child is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. You want your child's school to have the same goals of high academic achievement you have set. You may want your child's school to reflect the family and community values that you consider important. In other words, you want a school that is a good fit for your child.

This booklet, *Choosing a School for Your Child in Florida*, will help guide you through the process of finding the most appropriate educational setting for your child. It explains the public school choices that many school districts offer your child as well as private school options that may be available. The booklet also outlines steps and includes important questions that you may want to ask when going through the process of selecting a school in Florida.

School choice is a key component to ensuring that all children have access to an excellent education. Florida is a national leader in providing an array of school options to meet the educational needs of families. As an informed parent, you will be better equipped to manage your child's educational career. I am confident you will find the information in this guide to be most helpful in your search. I wish you success in choosing a school that will provide the best learning environment for your child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanine Blomberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeanine Blomberg
Commissioner, Florida Department of Education

Choosing A School

Parents have a growing array of options in choosing a school in Florida, though the extent of the options varies from district to district. The enactment of the landmark *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001; the rapid growth of the charter school movement; the increasing number of voucher, scholarship, and tax credit programs; the expansion of privately funded scholarship programs for low-income children; and the growing acceptance of home education have all increased the choices available to families.

Parents can exercise choice in many ways. The most common way may be in choosing where to live based on the public school district or neighborhood schools. In many areas, parents can choose from neighborhood schools, charter schools or other public schools of choice, or transfer their child to another public school (in or out of district). They can also select a private school (religious or secular) or teach their child at home.

Choosing a School for Your Child in Florida offers step-by-step advice on how to choose among the schools available to your child. It identifies important factors you may want to consider before making a decision. As you and your child visit different schools, you may want to consider the questions in each section of this booklet.

WHY SHOULD YOU CHOOSE YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?

No one cares more about your child's welfare than you do. No one else will be more careful to see that your child is well-educated and well treated in school. You know your child's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. You know the interests that light up your child's eyes. You know the values that your family wants a school to respect.

Choosing your child's school may also make you more confident that she will be taught effectively and treated fairly. Choosing your child's school carefully is an important way you can help your child achieve all that he can be. This is a head and a heart decision. Don't be afraid to heed your own informed and intuitive wisdom.

Learn What Choices Are Available To You

Different schools offer alternatives in teaching styles, content, and learning opportunities. This section briefly describes some types of schools you may find.

Public Schools

NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Many parents choose to send their children to the public school in their neighborhood, according to an assignment system developed by the school district. Attending a neighborhood public school can make it easy for your child to get to school, to work with classmates on group projects, and to visit friends. These schools are often anchors in a community.

OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

You may want to investigate other public schools. In an increasing number of school districts, you can choose to send your child to a specialized public school. These schools of choice often emphasize a particular subject or have a special philosophy of education. One school might emphasize science, art, or language study. Another might offer a firm code of conduct, a dress code, or a rigorous traditional academic program.

Another option may be an alternative school designed to respond to students who are insufficiently challenged by the regular school program, who are likely to drop out, or who have behavioral or substance abuse problems. These schools, often small, work to make students feel they belong. Below are descriptions of the various public school options offered throughout Florida.

• Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools of choice. They are very popular and among the fastest growing school choice options in Florida. Charter schools are largely free to innovate, and often provide specialized programs and choice to diverse groups of students. Florida's charter schools are currently educating over 100,000 students each year, each school offering its own unique educational approach.

• Magnet Schools

Magnet schools offer a particular theme or academic focus, such as mathematics, science, technology, business, or performing arts. The main purpose of magnet schools is to provide families with the option of choosing a school that matches their child's interests. Magnet schools offer students specialized programs to promote academic achievement and create innovative learning approaches in a diverse environment.

• Career Academies

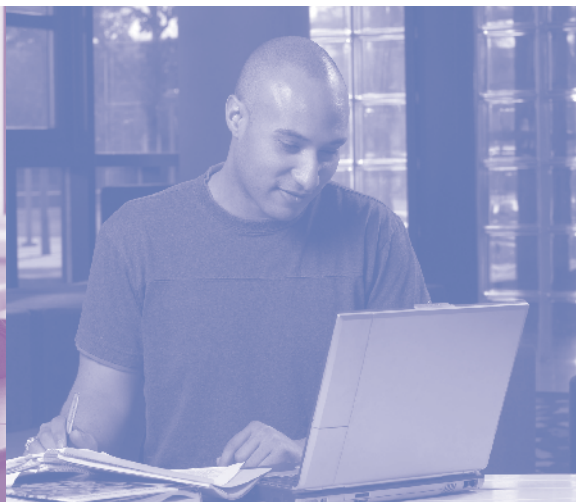
Career academies are small, personalized learning communities within a high school that select a subset of students and teachers for a two-, three-, or four-year span. These schools take a school-to-work approach to education combining academic and occupational courses based on a career theme such as business, health or electronics. Students enter the academy through a voluntary process; they must apply and be accepted with parental knowledge and support. Career academies are designed to help young people become more engaged in school and prepare them for postsecondary education and/or additional training and employment.

• Virtual Schools

Virtual schools are internet-based. Florida offers two types of virtual programs, a full-time program for students in kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) and a primarily supplemental program for students in grades six through twelve (6-12). The K-8 Virtual School Program allows eligible virtual schools to provide an on-line education program to full-time students in K-8. The two K-8 virtual schools in Florida are Florida Connections Academy and Florida Virtual Academy. Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a public virtual middle and high school offering over 90 online courses to students in grades 6-12. Courses are free to Florida middle and high school students, which include public, charter, private, and home educated students.

• Controlled Open Enrollment

Each district school board may offer controlled open enrollment within the public schools in addition to the existing choice programs such as magnet schools, alternative schools, special programs, advanced placement, and dual enrollment. Controlled open enrollment emphasizes the rights for families to choose among existing public schools. Instead of being assigned to a public school by a school district based on attendance zones, parents may choose a school from anywhere within the district or, if not geographically feasible, from within established zones or boundaries within the district. Controlled open enrollment varies among districts, therefore it is important for parents to confirm with their local school district the guidelines and timelines.



• Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate Programs

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program is a nationwide program consisting of more than 30 college-level courses. Students who earn a qualifying grade of 3 or above on an AP exam can earn college credit or advance placement, depending on the college and university. The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a program of rigorous pre-university course of study. Students who graduate from the program receive an International Baccalaureate diploma that is recognized by colleges and universities throughout the world. Other students may choose not to take the full IB curriculum but pursue certificates in individual areas. Elementary and middle schools may also offer components of the IB program.

• Dual Enrollment

Eligible high school students can enroll in postsecondary courses to earn credit toward high school graduation and at the same time earn credit toward a college degree or technology certificate. All of Florida's public community colleges and some of the state's universities participate in dual enrollment. Students are permitted to take dual enrollment courses on a part-time basis during school hours, after school, or during summer term.

• ABC School Programs

The A-Business Community School (ABC) program encourages businesses to partner with school districts to house a public school at the business location. ABC Schools help reduce school and classroom overcrowding throughout the state, offset the high cost of constructing educational facilities, and use due diligence and sound business practice in using available educational space. Instruction is offered from kindergarten through third (K-3) grade for the children of the employees at the site. Florida school districts provide the teachers, curriculum, text-books, and other materials.

Nonpublic Schools

In addition to public schools, there may be a variety of religious and other nonpublic schools available in your area or boarding schools away from home. These schools of choice have been part of the fabric of American education since colonial days. These schools have been established to meet the demand to support parents' differing beliefs about how their children should be educated. Private schools are required by Florida law to complete an annual survey that is maintained by the Department of Education as an informational database for public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties. The state of Florida does not require to verify the accuracy of the information submitted and inclusion in the database does not imply state accreditation or approval.

RELIGIOUS PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The majority of nonpublic schools are religious, affiliated with a denomination, local church, or various religious faiths.

SECULAR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

There are also many nonpublic schools without a religious identity or affiliation. Some of these private schools are preparatory schools designed to prepare students for college. These schools often have a traditional or elite reputation and a long history. Other schools are based on a particular educational philosophy or approach to learning, such as Montessori or Waldorf schools; have a special education focus, such as schools for the deaf or blind; or have been established for families and children who may be dissatisfied with various aspects of conventional schools.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Florida's variety of school choice options for parents and students includes scholarships that give parents choices so their children are offered the best opportunities to learn. Florida's current scholarship programs allow parents unprecedented choices among public and private schools. The following is a brief description of each scholarship program.

• **John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities**

John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program was designed to provide students with disabilities the option to attend a public school other than the one to which assigned, or to provide a scholarship to attend a private school of choice that accommodates the student's academic, social, and environmental needs. Eligibility requires the student to attain an individual education plan written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education, have spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school, and have been enrolled and reported by a school district for funding during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys.



• Corporate Tax Credit Scholarships

The Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program was established to encourage private, voluntary contributions from corporate donors to non-profit scholarship funding organizations that award scholarships to children from low-income families. The program expands educational opportunities for children of families that have limited financial resources and enables children in the state of Florida to achieve a greater level of excellence in their education.

• Opportunity Scholarship Program

On January 5, 2006, the Florida Supreme Court issued a ruling declaring the private school option of the Opportunity Scholarship Program unconstitutional. Students assigned to a failing school are no longer offered the opportunity to transfer and enroll in a participating private school. The option to attend a higher performing public school remains in effect. The Opportunity Scholarship becomes available to students at a public school when that school has received two “F” grades, including the current year, within four school years. For further information about this program within the public school choice options, contact your local school district.

HOME EDUCATION

Home Education is a parent-directed educational option. Some parents prepare their own materials and design their own programs of study, while others use materials produced by companies specializing in home education materials. Some take advantage of virtual school programs or other educational resources available on the Internet. Of course, exercising this option may require major changes in your family’s schedule. Teaching your children at home is an ambitious undertaking, requiring time, planning, creativity, and commitment. Resource and support information for families beginning home education programs in Florida is available from local school district home education contacts and from the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice.



Selecting A School For Your Child

How do you pick the best school for your child? Whether you are choosing a public or private school or home education, whether or not you are paying tuition, careful planning is a must. The following sections have questions for you to consider, with workspace for you to write down your thoughts, as you go through the process of choosing a school for your child. Remember, you are looking for a school that will make the educational experience for your child and you as rewarding as possible.

WRITE DOWN FIVE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU

You may wish to write down five things that are most important to you as you consider the choice of a school. As you go through the selection process, you may want to add to and revise your list.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

4 Steps

FOUR STEPS FOR SELECTING THE SCHOOL THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOUR CHILD

STEP 1. CONSIDER YOUR CHILD AND YOUR FAMILY

Start your search for the best school by thinking about what you want a school to do for your child. Perhaps your child has special language or education needs. Keep these in mind. After all, you know your son or daughter better than anyone else does.



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Your Child's Needs

Does your child need a more structured environment?

Does your child need a less structured environment?

Does your child need more challenging work?

Does your child need more individual attention?

Does your child generally need extra help or time to complete an assignment?

Does your child have any special learning needs?

Does your child need an environment that fosters creativity?

Does your child need an English language acquisition program?

Your Child's Learning Style

Does your child learn best by seeing how things work?

Does your child learn best by reading about how something works?

Does your child learn best by listening?

PARENT TIP

Know Your Options Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* for Children in Public Schools That Are “In Need of Improvement”

Parents of children in public schools designated as “in need of improvement” can choose another public school or supplemental educational services such as tutoring.

If your child’s public school receives federal Title I funds, it must let you know how well the students in the school are learning. The school district must contact you if the school does not meet the academic standards set by the state of Florida for two consecutive years. You can find out how well your school is doing by looking at the school’s report card. The *No Child Left Behind School Public Accountability Reports* are available online at <http://doeweb-prd.doe.state.fl.us/eds/nclbpar/index.cfm> and school grades are on the web at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/default.asp>.

If your child’s school has been identified by the state as in need of improvement, the school district must give you the choice of keeping your child in that school or sending him or her to another public school.

If your child attends a school that has needed improvement for more than a year, your school district is required to give you a list of organizations and institutions that provide tutoring or extra help outside of the regular school day. This extra help is called “supplemental educational services.” Such services may include before and after school tutoring in reading, other language arts, or math.

If you have not heard from your public school about whether the school is “in need of improvement” and whether your child qualifies to receive supplemental educational services, contact the school or the school district and ask for the person(s) in charge of choice and supplemental services programs. You can also go to the Florida Department of Education web site for a list of schools in need of improvement and approved supplemental educational services providers. This list is available at http://www.firn.edu/doe/flbpsi/nclbchoice/ses/ses_title1.htm.

Please contact the Bureau of Public School Choice Options at 850.245.0479 if you have any questions or visit their website at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/flbpsi/>.

STEP 2. GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS

If you were looking to buy a car, vacuum cleaner, or refrigerator, you could talk to friends and family and find information on the Internet, in consumer magazines, or in other published resources. Similarly, when investigating schools, you may also have to make phone calls, collect written material from different schools and look for reports in your local paper to get the information you need. You can check public school report cards (see Parent Tip) and go to parent fairs and school open houses.

You can find reliable school information online on sites such as www.greatschools.net and www.schoolmatters.com, as well as other sites listed in the Resources section of this booklet. The hard work will be worth your while if you find a school that brings out the best in your child. Use the following web sites to assist you with collecting useful information when considering a school for your child.

Bureau of Education, Information, and Accountability:

<http://www.fldoe.org/eias/>

Bureau of Public School Choice Options:

<http://www.fldoe.org/flbpso/>

No Child Left Behind School Reports:

<http://doeweb-prd.doe.state.fl.us/eds/nclbspar/index.cfm>

School Grades:

<http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/reports/>

Along with the schools' curricula and philosophy, you will want to know about school policies and services. Parents may also wish to consider the after-school programs a school offers, for example, sports, clubs, tutoring, or academic enrichment. Some schools have after-school activities funded by the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. These centers provide educational activities outside of the regular school hours—before and after school or during summer vacation—that complement what is taught in school. You may also want to ask if the school has supplemental educational services, including free tutoring, that are offered outside of the regular school hours under *No Child Left Behind*.

Know Your Options Under the *No Child Left Behind* Act for Children in Public Schools That Are Unsafe

Parents of children in unsafe public schools may have the opportunity to transfer their children to safe public schools.

Children should not have to attend unsafe schools. *No Child Left Behind* requires public schools to offer parents the opportunity to transfer their children to safe public schools if the state designates their public elementary or secondary schools as unsafe. Your children must also be offered opportunities to transfer to other public schools in the district if they have been the victims of violent crimes while in school or on school grounds. To find out if your child's school has been designated as unsafe by the state, you can contact either your local school district office or the Florida Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Schools at <http://www.firm.edu/doe/besss/safehome.htm>.

NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Curriculum

Does the school have a strong program of core academic subjects such as English, history, mathematics, science, arts, and foreign languages?

What courses does the school offer in addition to the core subjects?

What evidence is there that the school is effectively teaching students to read?

Does the school have a special focus or theme for the curriculum?

Does the school offer challenging courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and high school honors courses?

Does the school provide enrichment opportunities for all students? For gifted students?



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

In the past few years, have test scores risen or declined? How does the school explain the rise or decline?

How well have children similar to yours performed on these tests?

How do students moving on to the next level of schooling perform in their new schools?

How many students leave the school before completing the last grade?

What special achievements or recognition has the school received?

Behavior Policy

What does the school do to help develop character and citizenship?

What is the discipline policy? How does the school handle students who misbehave?

Are teachers fair in their responses to students? Does the school have a program and supports to prevent and address behavior problems?

Are students allowed to leave school by themselves?

What measures has the school taken to ensure safety? What security measures are in place?

What is the policy on school absences? How does the school encourage daily attendance?

Do school personnel call parents when students are absent?

Does the school have a drug and alcohol abuse prevention program?

Does the school have a dress code? Do students wear uniforms?



PARENT TIP

Check the School District's Report Card for Public Schools

No Child Left Behind requires school districts that receive federal funds to provide a report card on how its schools and the school district are doing. For individual schools, the report card will include whether the school has been identified for school improvement and how its students performed on state tests compared to other students in the school district and the state.

For the district, the report includes the combined test scores of the students at all the district's schools. Florida's *No Child Left Behind* School Public Accountability Reports are listed on the web at <http://doeweb-prd.doe.state.fl.us/eds/nclb-spar/index.cfm>.

Public school report cards should include:

Students' scores on state tests, broken out by student subgroups;

How many students performed at the "basic," "proficient," and "advanced" levels on the tests;

Graduation rates;

Numbers and names of schools that need to improve in the district;

Qualifications of teachers; and

Percentage of students who were not tested.

For more information on legislation and reporting requirements pertaining to *No Child Left Behind*, please visit the website at <http://www.fldoe.org/NCLB>.



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Safety

Is the school safe?

How does the school prevent and handle problems with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco?

How does the school prevent and handle violence, bullying, harassment, and other forms of abusive behavior?

What measures does the school take to ensure safety? What security measures are in place?

What is the school's relationship with the local police?

Is there a police officer on duty during school hours and for extracurricular activities?

What information is available on serious crime in the school?

What information is available on students bringing weapons to school?

Does the school have an emergency plan for local and national emergencies?

What does the school do to ensure that parents and all school administrators know the emergency plan?

Are there drills?

How does the school notify parents about emergency closings? How does the school communicate with parents in other languages?

Special Offerings

What extracurricular activities does the school offer after school or on weekends?

Do all students have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities?

What interscholastic activities are available to students?

PARENT TIP

Locating Schools

Parents choosing the best private school for their child typically locate all possible candidate schools in relation to the home address. The Florida Private School Directory on the web at <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/directory/schoolreport.asp> will help you find schools in various locations throughout the state.



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Admissions Procedures for Public Schools of Choice and Private Schools

Is there an application process?

What is the application deadline?

Is anything else required in the application (test scores, interview, recommendations, application fees, etc.)?

Are test scores required for admission?

What are the ranges of scores for admitted students?

Do admissions requirements include a portfolio, an audition or statement of interest?

Are there any other admissions requirements?

Are admissions requirements published in languages other than English?

PARENT TIP

Helpful resources for parents considering home education for their children.

The Florida Department of Education provides technical assistance and information to home education parents and school district home education contacts (See www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Home_Education). Several independent organizations also provide resources and support for home educators:

Florida Parent Educators Association (FPEA) (www.fpea.com) is an independent organization that exists solely to serve home education families in Florida.

Learning Is For Everyone (LIFE) (www.learningis4everyone.org) is an inclusive state support and networking group for home and alternative learners.

Home Education Foundation (www.flhef.org) is known as the “Home Educators’ Voice at the Capitol.”



STEP 3. VISIT AND OBSERVE SCHOOLS

Contact the schools you are interested in and make an appointment for a visit. If possible, tour the schools during regular school hours and visit a few classes. Avoid visiting schools during the first or last week of a term in order to get a realistic sense of how the school operates.

A good way to have your questions answered is to schedule an appointment with the school principal. If possible, attend an open house, parent-teacher meeting, or other school function that would also provide valuable information about the attitudes of staff, students, and parents.

Listen closely to what teachers say about the school. The teachers will be the adults closest to your child, and you will want to know if they are well prepared, dedicated, and happy in their work.

Culture

How are the students with diverse learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency) treated?

How does the school communicate with students and parents (weekly/monthly newsletter, e-mail, Web site)?

Is the school secretary helpful and friendly?

Is the school orderly and neat?

What do the bulletin boards look like?

How is student work displayed?

Do the students appear to be courteous, happy, and disciplined?

Is there a welcoming attitude toward all parents?

Do the teachers appear to be helpful and friendly?





NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

When and how frequently are teachers available for parent conferences?

Do teachers assign homework? Is it rigorous?
Frequent?
Sufficient?

Are the teachers highly qualified to teach in their subject areas (do they know the subjects they are teaching)?

Do teachers have the skills and knowledge to address students with special learning needs?

Are specialized staffs available to address the special learning needs of a child (e.g., speech therapist, psychologist or aides)?

Do the teachers know the individual students in their classes?

Are teachers willing to provide extra help to students?

What is the school's policy regarding teacher response to parent inquiries?

Do teachers have Web sites with class notes and other information for students and parents?

Students

What is the attendance rate for students?

What do students say about the principal?

What do students say about the teachers?

Do the students have school spirit?

What do students say about homework?

Do students participate in and enjoy field trips?

Do students feel safe and secure at the school?

What do student publications say?

What else do students say about the school?



Parent and Community Involvement

How does the school encourage parental involvement?

What are the ways parents can get involved?

Are parents encouraged to volunteer?

Does the school have an active parent-teacher organization?

Does the school hold meetings and events at times when parents can attend?

How well attended are back-to school nights by parents?


Are families expected to be involved with home-work?

How frequently does the school communicate with parents?

Are community leaders involved with the school?

Does the school partner with local businesses and organizations?

Are parents involved in the development of school policies?



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.





NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Reputation

How is the school regarded in the community?

How is the school viewed by other parents?

Is the school respected by other schools, particularly those that receive its students (when they move to the next level)?

Has the school won any awards?

Do people move to the community to go to the school?

What do the graduates of the school say?

Have graduates from the school made significant contributions to the community and their field of choice?





PARENT TIP

Ten Things to Look for in a School

High expectations

Busy students

Great teachers

Great principal

Vibrant parent-teacher organization

Children are neither invisible nor scared to be at school

Gut reaction that this is the school for your child

Rigorous curriculum

Families like yours are welcome, and their concerns are acknowledged

You are satisfied with the school's results on standardized tests and school report cards

Source: Minnesota Department of Education, Office of Choice and Innovation

4 STEP 4. APPLY TO THE SCHOOL(S) YOU CHOOSE

Once you select the school(s) that you think will be best for your child, you will go through a process of applying to a school (or schools) of your choice and enrolling your child. Consider applying to more than one school, in case your child is not admitted to their first choice.

You will want to begin this process as early as possible in order to ensure you meet all the deadlines.

Admissions processes can vary. Your child may need to be tested or interviewed, and you may need to provide a school transcript, recommendations, or other information.

It would be helpful to learn about admissions criteria for the schools. You will want to double check to be sure you have accurate information on when and how to apply.



NOTE PAD

Read the questions and jot down some notes to help you with your decisions.

Select One or More Schools to Apply To

To which schools do you want to apply?

What is the application deadline at each school?

Submit Paperwork and Applications Before the Deadlines

Have you completely filled out the application for each school?

Have you included all of the required additional information with the application (deposit, student transcript, test scores, letters of recommendation)?

Have you submitted applications before the deadline set by each school?

Follow Up

Have you contacted each school to check on your child's application status?

When will the schools notify you that your child has been admitted?

When will you need to notify the school that your child plans to attend?

When will you notify the schools that your child will not attend?

Start Early and Cover All the Steps

Begin the process of choosing a school as early as possible.

Find out as soon as possible about the deadlines for applying to the schools you are considering.

Note that some schools require applications much earlier than others.

Keep These 4 Steps in Mind:

Step 1. Consider your child and your family.

Step 2. Gather information about schools.

Step 3. Visit and observe schools.

Step 4. Apply to the school(s) you choose.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on all the planning you have done to reach this point. Your child will benefit tremendously from your active concern and involvement with his or her education. By collecting information, talking to other parents, visiting schools, and exercising your right to choose, you can now take the lead in making sure your son or daughter gets the best possible education. However, this is only the beginning. By staying involved in your child's education, encouraging your child to work hard, and providing additional opportunities to learn at home and in the community, you can help your child go further still. Remember it is your right, as well as your responsibility, to seek the very best education for your child.



PARENT TIP

Find Helpful Resources at the Florida Department of Education and the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Web Sites

Florida Department of Education – Florida Department of Education’s main Web Site is www.fldoe.org. The Departmental Offices and Phone Numbers is <http://www.fldoe.org/k20/>

Bureau of Public School Options focuses on closing the achievement gaps affecting students whose educational opportunities are limited by low-performing schools. Information for school choice options and supplemental educational services (SES), is available at <http://www.fldoe.org/flbпсо/>

The Florida School Indicators Report (online edition) is a searchable database, which provides data on public elementary, middle, and high schools for each of Florida’s 67 school districts. The FSIR provides numerous indicators of school status and performance over the last seven school years. <http://data.fldoe.org/fsir/>

The **Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice** provides information regarding the choices available to parents seeking the best educational opportunities for their children. Detailed information about the school choice options described throughout this booklet can be found at www.floridaschoolchoice.org.

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 522
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Toll-free Hotline: 800-447-1636

Resources

ADDITIONAL WEB SITES THAT PROVIDE INFORMATION RELATED TO SCHOOL CHOICE:

Florida School Choice Resource Centers – The Parent Resource Centers provide parents, schools, and organizations working with families with training, information, and technical assistance to understand how children develop and what they need to be successful in school. <http://www.fpscc.net/index.htm>

ScholarshipFunding.Org offers families information about the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program. The Web site outlines eligibility requirements, provides listing of eligible participating schools, and allows parents to apply online. <http://www.scholarshipfunding.org/en/index.php>

Choice Web Site at www.ed.gov/nclb/choice/index.html?src=ov

U.S. Department of Education has information for parents at www.ed.gov (Click on the “Parents” tab.)

National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (search for public and private schools) <http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator>

Office of Non-Public Education, U.S. Department of Education (links to nonpublic school organizations, private school locator, and other information about nonpublic education) www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oi/nonpublic/index.html

SchoolMatters.com (comparative performance data) www.schoolmatters.com

U.S. Charter Schools (information about charter schools) www.uscharterschools.org

NOTE:

The lists on this and the next two pages provide resources that may be useful for parents. Inclusion of these resources is not necessarily meant to convey endorsement by the Florida Department of Education.

Recently Published Books

Here are just a few of the many books that discuss issues related to choosing a school for your child and offer additional tools that parents can use to help them make the decision.

Hassel, Bryan C. and Hassel, Emily Ascue, (2004). *Picky Parent Guide: Choose Your Child's School with Confidence, The Elementary Years (K-6)*. Ross, Calif.: Armchair Press.

Henderson, Anne T. and Mapp, Karen L., (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, (2002). Austin, Tex.: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Henderson, Anne T., (2002). *No Child Left Behind: What's in It for Parents*. Lexington, Ky.: Parent Leadership Associates.

Office of Innovation and Improvement, (2004). *Innovations in Education: Creating Strong District School Choice Programs*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Office of Innovation and Improvement, (2004) *Innovations in Education: Creating Strong Supplemental Educational Services Programs*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Office of Innovation and Improvement, (2004) *Innovations in Education: Successful Charter Schools*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Office of Innovation and Improvement, (2004) *Innovations in Education: Successful Magnet Schools*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Organizations That Provide Information To Parents

There are many organizations that can provide valuable information to assist parents seeking to choose a school. The following are a few examples:

Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)

1710 Rhode Island Avenue, NW • Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
202-544-9870 • www.baeo.org

Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation (GEO)

302 S. Meridian Street • Suite 201
Indianapolis, IN 46225
317-524-3770 • www.geofoundation.org

Center for Education Reform (CER)

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW • Suite 204
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-9000 • www.edreform.com

Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (Hispanic CREO)

2600 Virginia Avenue, NW • Suite 408
Washington, DC 20037
202-625-6766 • www.hcreo.org

Council for American Private Education (CAPE)

13017 Wisteria Drive #457
Germantown, MD 20874
301-916-8460 • www.capenet.org

WestEd

730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94017
1-877-4-WestEd • www.wested.org

Education Leaders Council (ELC)

1225 19th Street, NW • Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
202-261-2600 • www.educationleaders.org

District School Board Offices in Florida

District	City	Zip	Phone	Web Site
Alachua	Gainesville	32601	(352) 955-7880	http://www.sbac.edu/
Baker	Macclenny	32063	(904) 259-0401	http://www.baker.k12.fl.us/
Bay	Panama City	32401	(850) 872-7700	http://www.bay.k12.fl.us/
Bradford	Starke	32091	(904) 966-6018	www.mybradford.us
Brevard	Viera	32940	(321) 631-1911	http://www.brevard.k12.fl.us/
Broward	Ft. Lauderdale	33301	(754) 321-2600	http://www.browardschools.com
Calhoun	Blountstown	32424	(850) 674-5927	http://www.paec.org/calhoun/district/
Charlotte	Port Charlotte	33948	(941) 255-0808	http://www.ccps.k12.fl.us/
Citrus	Inverness	34450	(352) 726-1931	http://www.citrus.k12.fl.us/
Clay	Green Cove Springs	32043	(904) 284-6510	http://www.clay.k12.fl.us/
Collier	Naples	34109	(239) 377-0212	http://www.collier.k12.fl.us/
Columbia	Lake City	32055	(386) 755-8003	www.columbia.k12.fl.us
Dade	Miami	33132	(305) 995-1430	http://www2.dadeschools.net/index.htm
De Soto	Arcadia	34265	(863) 494-4222	http://www.desotoschools.com/
Dixie	Cross City	32628	(352) 498-6131	http://dixieschools.dixie.k12.fl.us/
Duval	Jacksonville	32207	(904) 390-2115	http://www.dreamsbeginhere.org
Escambia	Pensacola	32502	(850) 469-6130	http://www.escambia.k12.fl.us/
Flagler	Bunnell	32110	(386) 437-7526	http://www.flagler.k12.fl.us/
Franklin	Apalachicola	32320	(850) 653-8831	www.franklincountyschools.org
Gadsden	Quincy	32351	(850) 627-9651	http://www.gcps.k12.fl.us/
Gilchrist	Trenton	32693	(352) 463-3200	www.gilchristschools.org
Glades	Moore Haven	33471	(863) 946-2083	http://www.firn.edu/schools/-glades/glades/
Gulf	Port St. Joe	32456	(850) 229-8256	http://www.gulf.k12.fl.us/

Hamilton	Jasper	32052	(386) 792-1228	http://www.firn.edu/schools/hamilton/hamilton/
Hardee	Wauchula	33873	(863) 773-9058	www.hardee.k12.fl.us
Hendry	Labelle	33975	(863) 674-4642	www.hendry-schools.org
Hernando	Brooksville	34601	(352) 797-7001	http://www.hcsb.k12.fl.us/
Highlands	Sebring	33870	(863) 471-5564	http://www.highlands.k12.fl.us/
Hillsborough	Tampa	33601	(813) 272-4050	http://apps.sdhc.k12.fl.us/
Holmes	Bonifay	32425	(850) 547-9341	http://www.hdsb.org/
Indian River	Vero Beach	32960	(772) 564-3150	http://www.indian-river.k12.fl.us
Jackson	Marianna	32447	(850) 482-1200	http://web.jcsb.org/
Jefferson	Monticello	32344	(850) 342-0100	http://www.firn.edu/schools/jefferson/jefferson/home.html
Lafayette	Mayo	32066	(386) 294-4107	http://hornet.lafayette.k12.fl.us/
Lake	Tavares	32778	(352) 253-6523	http://www.lake.k12.fl.us/
Lee	Fort Myers	33901	(239) 337-8301	http://www.lee.k12.fl.us/
Leon	Tallahassee	32304	(850) 487-7147	http://www.leon.k12.fl.us/
Levy	Bronson	32621	(352) 486-5231	http://www.levy.k12.fl.us/
Liberty	Bristol	32321	(850) 643-2275	http://www.firn.edu/schools/liberty/liberty/
Madison	Madison	32340	(850) 973-5022	http://www.janusgroup.com/madison/
Manatee	Bradenton	34206	(941) 708-8770	http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/
Marion	Ocala	34478	(352) 671-7702	http://www.marion.k12.fl.us/
Martin	Stuart	34994	(772) 219-1200	http://www.sbm.org/
Monroe	Key West	33040	(305) 293-1400	http://www.monroe.k12.fl.us/
Nassau	Fernandina Beach	32034	(904) 491-9901	http://www.nassau.k12.fl.us/
Okaloosa	Ft. Walton Beach	32548	(850) 833-3109	http://www.okaloosaschools.com/
Okeechobee	Okeechobee	34974	(863) 462-5000	http://ocsb.okee.k12.fl.us/web.nsf
Orange	Orlando	32802	(407) 317-3202	http://www.ocps.k12.fl.us/
Osceola	Kissimmee	34744	(407) 870-4008	http://www.osceola.k12.fl.us/
Palm Beach	West Palm Beach	33406	(561) 434-8200	http://www.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/
Pasco	Land O' Lakes	34638	(813) 794-2651	http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/
Pinellas	Largo	33770	(727) 588-6011	http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/

Polk	Bartow	33831	(863) 534-0521	http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/
Putnam	Palatka	32177	(386) 329-0510	http://www.putnamschools.org/
St. Johns	St. Augustine	32084	(904) 819-7502	http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/
St. Lucie	Ft. Pierce	34947	(772) 429-3925	http://www.stlucie.k12.fl.us/
Santa Rosa	Milton	32570	(850) 983-5010	http://www.santarosa.k12.fl.us/
Sarasota	Sarasota	34231	(941) 927-9000	www.sarasota.k12.fl.us
Seminole	Sanford	32773	(407) 320-0004	http://www.scps.k12.fl.us/
Sumter	Bushnell	33513	(352) 793-2315	http://www.sumter.k12.fl.us/
Suwannee	Live Oak	32064	(386) 364-2604	www.suwannee.k12.fl.us
Taylor	Perry	32347	(850) 838-2500	http://www.taylor.k12.fl.us/
Union	Lake Butler	32054	(386) 496-2045	http://www.union.k12.fl.us/
Volusia	Daytona Beach	32720	(386) 734-7190	http://www.volusia.k12.fl.us/
Wakulla	Crawfordville	32326	(850) 926-0065	http://www.wakullaschooldistrict.org/
Walton	Defuniak Springs	32435	(850) 892-1100	http://www.walton.k12.fl.us/
Washington	Chipley	32428	(850) 638-6222	http://www.firn.edu/schools/washington/wash



MAP OF FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICTS



- | | | |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Alachua | Hardee | Osceola |
| Baker | Hendry | Palm Beach |
| Bay | Hernando | Pasco |
| Bradford | Highlands | Pinellas |
| Brevard | Hillsborough | Polk |
| Broward | Holmes | Putnam |
| Calhoun | Indian River | St. Johns |
| Charlotte | Jackson | St. Lucie |
| Citrus | Jefferson | Santa Rosa |
| Clay | Lafayette | Sarasota |
| Collier | Lake | Seminole |
| Columbia | Lee | Sumter |
| Dade | Leon | Suwannee |
| De Soto | Levy | Taylor |
| Dixie | Liberty | Union |
| Duval | Madison | Volusia |
| Escambia | Manatee | Wakulla |
| Flagler | Marion | Walton |
| Franklin | Martin | Washington |
| Gadsden | Monroe | |
| Gilchrist | Nassau | |
| Glades | Okaloosa | |
| Gulf | Okeechobee | |
| Hamilton | Orange | |

YOUR CONTACTS

HELPFUL NAMES

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Web Site: _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Web Site: _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Web Site: _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Web Site: _____

Detailed information about the school choice options described throughout this booklet can be found at www.floridaschoolchoice.org.



Florida Department of Education
Jeanine Blomberg, Commissioner
www.fldoe.org



Florida Department of Education

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 522
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