

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

A guide for parents, guardians and caregivers



1 RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS.

- Go to the annual School Choice Expo, which in 2015 is on Saturday, January 10.
- Visit informational websites like www.schoolfactsjax.org to find out where your child is zoned and www.duvalchoice.com to learn what other options are available. Every public school has a website that can be accessed through www.duvalschools.org.
- Learn 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 about their experiences at different schools.

2 INTERACT WITH SCHOOLS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.

- Visit 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 schoolfactsjax.org.
- 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 or 390-2144.

3 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 February 27 and the choice application deadline is May 15.
- 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 an administrative 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 is my home zoned school?
- ✓ 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, and if so, how will my child get there without bus transportation? If my child is interested in a magnet option, what are the school start and stop times? Is transportation offered?
- ✓ Does my child have special needs? If so, how will the prospective school meet those needs?
- ✓ For magnet, charter and private schools, what are the application requirements? Can my child meet them?

✓ WHEN YOU GO ON A VISIT ...

- ✓ 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.

Still have questions? Not sure what to do next? Contact us!

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