

SCHOOL EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Your Guide to Choosing the Right School Without Losing Your Mind

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST:

Print this out before school tours. Save it on your phone. Use it when talking to administrators. Cross off questions as you get answers. Trust your gut on what matters most for YOUR family.

QUESTIONS FOR ANY SCHOOL TYPE (Public, Private, or Charter)

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- ☐ What's the student-to-teacher ratio?
(Get specific numbers, not vague "small class" promises)
- ☐ How do you handle students who are ahead or behind grade level?
- ☐ What support exists for students with learning differences?
- ☐ Can I see test scores and graduation rates?

SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ What's the discipline policy? (Ask for the actual handbook, not just a summary)
- ☐ How do you handle bullying or conflicts between students?
- ☐ What does a typical school day look like?
- ☐ Can I tour during school hours and see classes in action?

TEACHER QUALITY

- ☐ What are teacher qualifications? (Certification requirements vary by school type)
- ☐ What's your teacher retention rate? (High turnover = red flag)
- ☐ How long has the current staff been here?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- ☐ How do you communicate with parents?
- ☐ What does parent involvement look like here?
- ☐ How accessible are teachers and administrators?

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- ☐ What does your student population look like demographically?
- ☐ How do you address issues of race, culture, and identity in the classroom?
- ☐ Do students who look like my child see themselves in the staff and curriculum?

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- ☐ What special programs do you offer? (Gifted, special ed, ESL, etc.)
- ☐ What happens if my child needs additional support?
- ☐ What extracurriculars are available, and what do they cost?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

- ☐ What is the TOTAL cost, including fees, activities, uniforms, etc.?
(Get the real number, not just base tuition)
- ☐ What financial aid is available, and how do I apply?
- ☐ What is your policy on students with IEPs or 504 plans?
- ☐ Can you connect me with current families I can talk to honestly?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

- ☐ What's your charter renewal status? (Charters can be closed for poor performance)
- ☐ How do you handle special education services specifically?
- ☐ What happens if my child struggles behaviorally or academically?
- ☐ What's your waitlist situation and enrollment process?
- ☐ Who manages this school? (Management companies run some, research them)

TRUST YOUR GUT QUESTIONS

After visiting, ask yourself:

- ☐ Did I feel welcomed, or did I feel like an inconvenience?
- ☐ Did the staff answer questions directly, or did they dodge?
- ☐ Did I see kids who looked engaged, or did they look stressed/bored?
- ☐ Could I see my child thriving here, or does something feel off?

Your instincts matter. If something feels wrong during a tour, please pay attention to that.

THE REALITY CHECK

Not every school will have perfect answers to every question. That's okay.

What matters:

- Do they answer honestly, or do they sell you a fantasy?
- Are they transparent about limitations?
- Do you get the sense they actually care about kids, or just about numbers?

You can modify this checklist based on what matters most to YOUR family. There's no one-size-fits-all answer.

From The Thoughtful Nook, where we make space for the conversations that matter.

www.thethoughtfulnook.com