
CSFP's Step-by Step Guide to Selecting a Private School for Your Child

Step 1 - Identify your needs

Step 2 - Do your research

Step 3 - Visit private schools

Step 4 - Submit applications

STEP 1: Identify what your child needs in a school.

What kind of school are you looking for? What are your child's educational needs? Think about your child's learning style. Are small class sizes important? Do you prefer a traditional curriculum, or will a progressive, hands-on approach work better for your child? Do you prefer religious or non-religious instruction? Think about the facilities and programs which you expect a school to have. For example, not every school is going to offer a tech lab or an after school sports program. Decide what you and your child need most from a school, then proceed to STEP 2.

STEP 2: Do your research!

CSFP offers over 150 schools to fit every need. Doing your research beforehand will lead to a more informed and thoughtful choice. Our full list of partner schools may be found on www.csphiladelphia.org under "CSFP Approved Schools", or by clicking here: <http://www.csphiladelphia.org/scholarships/schools/csfp-approved-schools/>

In order to create a list of 2-4 schools you want to contact:

- Get started by checking out school websites as soon as possible.
- Don't just rely on the experiences of others. Check school ratings on GreatPhillySchools.org.
- Contact schools directly and ask them to mail you an information package.
- Attend open houses: Schools usually schedule these throughout the year.

Step 3: Visit schools.

Open house events are excellent opportunities to tour the school and meet teachers. Schools are also happy to arrange a tour upon request. Plan on making at least two visits: once for an initial look and, if you like what you see, plan to go back again with your child.

On your visit, feel free to:

- Ask for an outline of the school's curriculum or to look at some teaching materials.
- Ask for the names and numbers of current parents whom you can contact as references.
- Try to meet the principal or head of school. Don't limit yourself to just meeting the admissions team.
- Ask if your child can meet other students or if a student could take your child on a tour of the school.
- Ask to observe a class or other activities.
- Ask what aid or other financial support may be available.
- Allow your son or daughter to ask questions of school staff during visits.

Step 4: Complete the formal admissions application.

A typical application packet includes:

- An application form, which you can download from the school website or request from the admissions office
- Past or current admissions test results
- Teacher recommendations
- An interview with your child
 - Most schools will want to interview you and/or your child to confirm that the school is a good fit for your family. Plan for these important school visits to involve some sort of testing to provide a useful measure of your child's readiness and developmental abilities.

What private schools are looking for:

- To ensure they will be a good fit for your child and your family
- A clear sense of your child's abilities
- You and your child to fully understand the school's philosophy, vision, and expectations

Important Tips!

Submit Applications Early: Once you identify your desired school choices, apply right away.

Be Open to Options: Try to choose at least two schools that might be an appropriate fit for your family. If your first choice isn't available, you'll have a back up.

Be Honest and Upfront: Disclose all pertinent information about your child and his or her learning needs. The goal is to ensure his or her needs can be met at the school.

Ask About Extracurricular Activities: These vary from school to school. Consider how each school's options will suit your child.

Find Out What's Expected of Parents: Expectations vary. Be comfortable with the level of involvement and type of contribution.

Inquire about Additional Financial Assistance: School aid or financial support might be available from the school.

Ask Questions: Schools will expect and welcome them. Here are a few questions you might consider asking:

- What kind of curriculum does the school use?
- What is the average class size? Student to teacher ratio?
- What teacher qualifications are required at this school?
- Where do the school's graduates attend after they leave this school?
- What kind of leadership or governance does the school have?
- What is the school's approach to discipline?
- Are extended-care hours provided before and/or after school?
- How does the school measure student achievement?
- What is the school's homework policy?
- What resources does the school offer students who need extra help or have a special need?
- Is transportation available to/from school?

Choosing a private school takes time and patience, and the return in terms of your child's education and his or her future is worth it!