

Key Questions to Ask on a School Tour

School Philosophy

Does this school have a particular educational philosophy or mission?

School Environment

What is the “feel” of the school? Is it a welcoming place? Is public access limited?

Academic Performance

How do the students test on standardized exams?

What % are grade level proficient in Reading and Math?

Have they experienced growth or decline in these areas over the past couple years?

Diversity

What are the demographics of the school?

Is the student body and faculty diverse?

What schools do the students come from?

Class Size

What is the average number of students in each classroom?

What is the student-teacher ratio? Here are Arizona’s maximum ratio guidelines.

Curriculum

How do the arts fit into the curriculum?

Is there a school theater, choir, band, or orchestra?

Are World Language courses built into the curriculum and if so... how often?

Academic Support

How do you support a child who isn’t meeting academic expectations or who has gaps in their knowledge?

What kind of tutoring or extra academic support is offered?

Homework Policy

Do you have a homework policy?

How much time is typically required for homework daily?

Extracurricular Opportunities

What extracurricular opportunities (sports, clubs, community service, competitions) are available for students?

School Placement

Where do most of your graduates go?

Facilities

What kinds of facilities and resources do you have?

Is there a gymnasium, library, sports field, playground, music room, art studio, and the like?

Discipline & Safety Policy

What is your approach to discipline?
How do you address behavior issues?
What are your safety policies and regulations?
Who oversees these?

Transportation and Free/Reduced Lunch Program

How do students get to school?
Is free school busing available?
Is there a Free or Reduced Lunch Program available for low-income families?

Other Questions

What does your model student look like?
How does the school support students who have academic, social, or emotional difficulties?
What are some of the school's biggest challenges?
How has the school adapted to learning during the pandemic?
What were the successful lessons learned from educating through a pandemic?
How are you addressing potential Learning Loss coming out of the pandemic?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Is quality childcare available before and after school?
What are the costs and hours of before and after-school care?
How does this school keep parents informed of school information and activities?
How much homework do students typically have daily?
Does the school offer extracurriculars and for what grade levels?
Does the school build Art, Physical Education, and World Language classes into the daily curriculum?
How does the school handle behavior issues that start to affect learning in the classroom?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS

How does the school guide and prepare students for options in high school and beyond?
Does the school offer tutoring or other support if students need extra help?
Are their courses taught on campus that can earn High School credit (e.g., Spanish, Algebra, or Geometry)?
What sort of extracurricular opportunities do the students have on campus?
Does the school make an effort to provide activities that create a sense of community?
How do the students do on standardized testing as compared to state or local averages?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Does this school have a particular curriculum focus, such as STEM or the arts?
What kind of emphasis is placed on college preparation and is college counseling support available?
Does the school have a good selection of Advanced Placement (AP) and honors classes?
What are the AP score averages in the classes of interest? What are the ACT/SAT score averages?

Where do students go after they graduate?
How many students attend four-year VS two-year college?
Does the school offer a variety of career planning options for students who are not college bound?
Does the school have a tutoring program so students can get extra help if they need it?
Does this school have any school-to-work programs or specialized academies and tracks?
What are the dual credit options at the school?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Does the school have a specific focus?
Is an admissions test required?
What are the metrics for accountability at the school?
What data represents success and who oversees that process?
Are the teachers state certificated?
What sort of extracurricular opportunities do the students have on campus?
How do the students do on standardized testing as compared to state or local averages?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

What can I expect my overall yearly costs to be?
Do they offer financial aid/scholarship? What is the average amount of scholarship received?
How do you measure individual achievement and progress?
Does the school have a specific focus?
Does religion have a role in the curriculum?
What are the demographics of the school (geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic)?

QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

What is the student-to-teacher ratio (particularly in self-contained classrooms)?
What are the school/principal's thoughts on inclusion?
Do students with special needs spend all or part of their time in self-contained classrooms?
Are special needs students included with their peers for some subjects and special activities?
What is the school's behavior plan and is it different for students with special needs?
Are the teachers and staff trained to meet your child's needs?
Is there a nurse on site full-time?