

How to select the right school for your child?

Each year, thousands of parents go through the struggle of selecting the right school for their child. The advent of new age schools coupled with parents' own exposure to new pedagogies being followed across the world has changed the expectations of each parent. Add to that, Google search throwing hundreds of schools at you will only make your job a bit more difficult. Though it may sound cumbersome, if you are a bit careful & do a structured research, finding the right school might, after all, not be such a difficult task. Here are a few pointers:

First, let us take care of the misconceptions:

1. **The school most suited to your friend/neighbour would be most suited to your needs too:** Just like each child is different, so is each school. What you want from the school of your child might be vastly different from what your friend/neighbor wants. Your friend/neighbour might be happy with a school which has the academic rigour with least of extracurricular facilities. You, on the other hand might prefer a school which has a balance of academics & extracurricular. So, if your friend/neighbour speaks highly about a school, please check the reasons for their recommendation.
2. **You should select the school closest to your house:** On an average, a child spends only 5-15% of the total school time in commute. Though short distance of travel should be preferred, compromising 85-95% of the child's schooling (time spent at the school) over travel time might not be the wisest decision.
3. **You can decide the school for your child just by reading on internet & talking to parents:** Though as a first step, talking to other parents & searching the net might be a good idea, there is nothing like visiting the school yourself, talking to the Principal or / and Management & taking the decision post that.
4. **It is advisable to select the school which has multiple branches across the country:** The future is unpredictable & so are the number of years you are going to stay in a city. The first criteria of selection for the school should be quality of curriculum/teachers the school has, in the city of your current stay. The child should enjoy & learn in each year of his/her schooling. So, selecting a school

which has multiple branches across the country only makes sense if the quality of all the branches is consistently good.

5. **Low student teacher ratio is the most important thing:** How does it help your child if the school has one teacher for every 5 children but the quality of teacher is not good at all. Though low student teacher ratio is advisable for individual attention (especially in lower grades), that is not the be all & end all of good quality education.

6. **Whatever is written on the internet blogs is true:** Just like there are genuine postings on the internet, lot of postings on the net are there due to various other reasons like:
 - i) A competing school writing ill about another school
 - ii) The Blog owner trying to extract money out of a school/institution
 - iii) Just like there are different types of schools, there are different types of parents. Some parent might be trying to get back to the school as the school has not given him/her preferential treatment (*I though multiple times before writing this point but trust me, this is true*)
 - iv) An old staff who was asked to leave due to his/her incompetence or attitude trying to get back to his/her organization

It is always advisable to verify these postings by mailing/talking to these parents & checking out whether they genuinely send their child/children to that school (and if they actually have children ☺).

Criteria for selecting the right school:

1. **Quality of teacher inside the classroom:** Everything else in a school is secondary to the quality of teacher inside the classroom. Your child will spend 70-100% of his/her time with the teachers. So, it is pertinent that the quality of teachers the school has is fantastic. Most of the parents say that school does not allow them to talk to the teacher before admission. Talk to the Principal/Management of the school & understand how they train & retain their staff, how do they go about recruiting & motivating their teachers. You will have a fair idea on the competence of the Principal/Management in hiring & retaining the best talent.

2. **Management/Principal's vision:** It is extremely important to understand the vision of the Management/Principal because that is what is going to drive the teachers in the school & curriculum inside the classroom. Do not look for big words. Look for how easily or effectively can the vision of the school be implemented.
3. **Balance between academics & extracurricular:** You do not know what your child is going to become when he/she grows up. To understand the child, it is important that the child has ample amount of exposure to academics & extracurricular activities. The spark in the child will get ignited only if the child gets exposure to various things.
4. **Understanding & cross checking "Individual Attention":** Individual attention does not mean "knowing the name of your child." Individual attention means that the teacher/coach of your child should know your child reasonably well & should be able to help the child academically & non-academically. The school should have processes in place to facilitate the teachers in understanding children & bringing out the best in them.
5. **Transport, Cafeteria, response system:** Facilities like Transport & cafeteria & services like quick response from the school are extremely important factors as the ease /convenience on these points will ensure that you do not go through unnecessary pain during the initial few weeks of your child's school. Understand if the school has a well trained maid inside each bus & the drivers too go through proper training & are not over speeding or driving rashly. If the buses have GPS (Global Positioning System), it only eases your life in terms of not waiting unnecessarily at the bus stop every day.
6. **Visit all shortlisted schools:** Make it a point to visit all shortlisted schools & meet the principal. Do not hesitate to ask questions. Check the infrastructure with your own eyes. If possible (and the school allows it), visit the school when classes are on. You would get a much better idea on students, environment, quality of teachers & various other aspects of the school which you may otherwise not notice. Visit to schools will also ensure that you are making an informed decision & you do not have to look out for a different school every year. This is the minimum we can do for our children

The above article is to help the parents select the right school for their ward, whether it is Chrysalis High or any other school you have shortlisted. Please feel free to write to me at sawaldas.jethani@chrysalishigh.com if you have any query or wish to share your feedback. All correspondence would strictly be kept confidential.