

Helpful Hints When Choosing Schools In Denver

1. Make a list of what is important to you about the school your child attends. Consider these: sports, before and after school care, enrichment programs, level of teacher education, test scores, diversity, and programs like foreign language, gifted talented, art, and outdoor education.
2. Look at the neighborhood school in your area. Go to its' website, and the District website to do some research. Find out if student's academic skills are growing, and look at the Colorado Growth Model data. How much improvement has the school made in the last 3-5 years? Look at the programs they are using. Meet with the principal or offer to volunteer for a couple of days to learn more. Spending time in a school tells you much more about the quality of education than data on a spread sheet.
3. Is your neighborhood changing? Are young families moving there? Would you be willing to work with your neighbors and raise money for the school's professional development, library resources, or additional music teachers? Good schools improve property values and it doesn't take long for a school with a committed staff and parent community to make significant contributions to a school.
4. If your neighborhood school doesn't seem like the right fit, what do you do next? In Colorado you can choice into any school in the state regardless of where you live. However most schools give priority to students within the same school district. There are many charter schools, magnet programs, special interest schools and special programs within given schools. For example, no two schools in Denver are they same, and the district has put together some very good resources to help families decide. <http://soco.dpsk12.org/>
5. If your child has special needs, or needs more or less structure than a traditional school can offer, talk to someone in the district about specific programs for children with special learning needs. Spend some time in classrooms of special education teachers.
6. Sometimes the best choice for a child may be in a different district. Each school district has specific requirements for choice enrollment. Look at the district website to find out more information.
7. There are also consultants who work with families to navigate the school choice process and help families find the best fit for their children. E-Merging is one group that helps families assess their children and their needs to find the best school fit. <http://e-merging.org/>



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