

Questions To Consider When Choosing a New School

Choosing a new school can be an exciting, fascinating, and sometimes overwhelming process. This can be even more true for families of students with disabilities, as they may have additional questions about programming, supports, school-wide systems, and more. **Use the questions below to help you decide exactly what to ask when you chat with potential schools for your child!**

SCHOOL POLICIES & CULTURE

- What is your attendance policy?
- What is your school's approach to behavior supports and discipline? What have you done in the past for students who need additional behavior supports?
- How do you engage with families? Do you have a PTO or Parent Advisory Committee?
- What are the biggest challenges your school has faced recently? How did you address these challenges?
- Do you offer before and after care? How do I apply? Are they provided in-house or through a contractor? How do you ensure these services are accessible for students with disabilities?
- What extracurriculars do you offer? How do you ensure they are accessible to students with disabilities?
- How do you communicate with families? How often should I expect to hear from my student's teacher?

ACADEMICS & CURRICULUM

- What is your instructional model? How can I learn more about what my student is learning?
- What electives or specials do you offer? How are these made accessible for students with disabilities?
- How much homework should my student expect? How are students with disabilities supported with homework?
- How is your curriculum modified for special education students?
- How do you monitor student progress? What assessments do you use (MAP, ANET, I-Ready, etc.) and how often are they administered?
- What technology do students use in class? Are they able to bring technology home?
- Do you use any blended learning programs (Lexia, I-Ready, ST Math, etc.)? How are these programs used in class?

SCHOOL STAFF

- Do you have a full-time nurse on staff? If not, what systems are in place to support students with medication or other medical needs?
- What is your average class size? How many staff are with the typical class for my student's grade? Is this different for special education students?
- Who provides behavior support services for special education students (counselor, social worker, etc.)? How many of these staff do you have?
- My student required speech therapy/occupational therapy/physical therapy/etc. Who on your staff will provide this service?
- Do you have a behavior specialist, school psychologist, or other specialists who may work with my student?

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Do you offer tutoring, study hall, or other extra academic supports? How can my student take advantage of these supports?
- What academic intervention programs do you use (Read 180, Seeing Stars, etc.)? How are students assigned to intervention programs?
- What do I do if I suspect my student may need additional or different supports?
- What extracurriculars do you offer? How do you ensure they are accessible to students with disabilities?
- How do you communicate with families? How often should I expect to hear from my student's teacher?

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Who is in charge of special education compliance (special education coordinator, LEA representative, etc.)? How can I contact them?
- How will my student's case manager be assigned? How often should I expect to hear from them?
- Who should I connect with if I have concerns about my student's IEP/504 plan?
- How have you supported students with my student's disability/similar needs in the past?
- What options do you currently have for inclusion/push-in classes, resource room/pull-out classes, or self-contained classes?

TRANSITIONS

- My student has a disability and is starting school for the first time. How do I ensure they have the supports they need?
- My student is transitioning from elementary school to middle school/middle to high school/etc. What changes can we expect?
- My student is starting high school. What is the different between a diploma track and an IEP certificate of completion track? How do we decide which track is the best fit?
- Do you offer vocational training, certification courses (cosmetology, etc.), AP/IB classes, or dual enrollment? How are these opportunities made accessible for students with disabilities?
- How do you support students with disabilities in preparing for college and/or careers post-graduation?
- My student is moving from a private to public school or from a public to private school. How will their special education supports look different?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/NOTES

Have more questions about special education in DC? Contact the DC Special Education Hub for more support!