



Achievement Preparatory Academy PCS

## DC School Chooser Workbook

*This is a companion guide to help families choose a school. There are many schools to choose from, including DCPS schools, public charter schools and private schools. This Workbook will help you explore options and find the right school.*



### Five Steps to Choosing a School

- Step 1: Think about needs
- Step 2: Understand the choices
- Step 3: Visit your top choices
- Step 4: Make your decision
- Step 5: Apply and enroll



Great Schools DC at The HIVE  
2027 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE | #101  
Washington, D.C. 20020  
Parent Hotline: 202.431.5538 | [dc@greatschools.org](mailto:dc@greatschools.org)

# Step 1: Think about needs



*Where a student goes to school will affect the family as a whole. Students' needs must balance with important factors that affect the entire family.*

1. Talk together about what matters in a school, and list the 5-7 factors that matter most in the table below. Consider factors such as: school/class size, learning style, special education needs, arts, sports, other extracurriculars, school culture, languages, themes, location, transportation, school calendar, tuition/fees, friends, parental involvement, safety, playground, hot lunch, uniforms, etc.
2. Talk about how important each factor is to the student and to the family, and fill in "very," "sort of," "not," "do not want," etc. next to each factor.
3. Rank the factors you've listed in order of importance (1 is most important, 7 would be least important, etc.)

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Factors (ex. academic program, gym, small class sizes, etc.)</b>	<b>Important to STUDENT</b>	<b>Important to FAMILY</b>
(Example) 2	<i>Good math program and/or pre-engineering classes</i>	<i>VERY</i>	<i>VERY</i>

## Step 2: Understand the choices

*There are many schools in the city, so it will take a little time and effort to narrow down choices to the 2 or 3 schools to visit.*

1. List the 2-3 schools you've already heard about that you think might be good and that you want to find out more about:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Use available resources to find information and narrow down choices. The following resources have different information, so use all of them if you can!

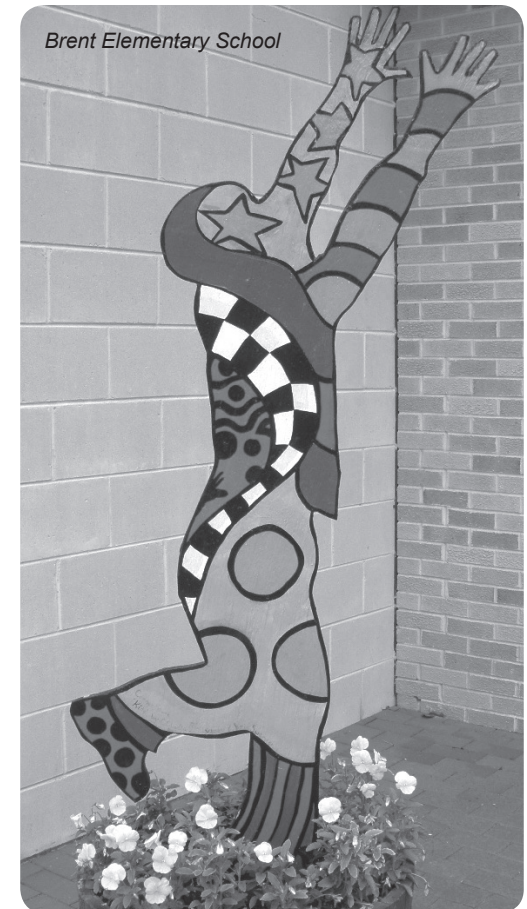
**GreatSchools School Chooser:** The School Chooser is a print guide that contains basic information about almost all the schools in the city. If you want a free copy, call the phone number on the cover of this guide.

**[www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org):** The GreatSchools Web site has even more information about schools, and you can search for specific features and compare among schools you want to know more about.

**GreatSchools staff and volunteer coaches:** Call the number on the front of this guide if you want free help with the research process. They will help you one-on-one and/or direct you to free workshops in the community.

**School staff:** It's always a good idea to make a list of what you want to know and call the school directly for answers.

3. Use the worksheet on page 4 to list schools you are interested in and what you learn about them.



## Schools to Visit Worksheet

<i>School Name</i> <i>(ex: Martin Street School)</i>	<i>Does have...</i> <i>(ex: gym, Spanish, AP class)</i>	<i>Doesn't have...</i> <i>(ex: before/after care)</i>	<i>Need more info on...</i> <i>(ex: graduation rates, credits)</i>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			



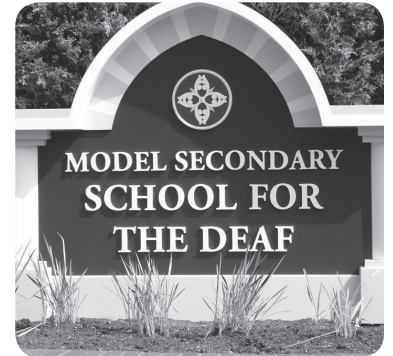
# Step 3: Visit your top choices

*Now that you have narrowed your choices, it is time to visit. This is really the only way you will be able to tell if a school is a good fit for your child and for you.*

## How to make your visit a success:

1. ***Schedule your visit.*** Call the school ahead of time and set up a date and time for your visit. Find out if you will be able to speak to the principal (or vice principal) and teachers (if they are able). You also want to ask to watch classes not only at your child's grade, but the next one up. DO NOT just show up to the school.
2. ***Think about what you want to see.*** Look over the worksheets you filled out on pages 2 and 4, and use the worksheet on page 6 to help guide you. You should have 5 questions ready when you walk in the building. The more you do ahead of time to be ready, the better the visit will be.
3. ***Arrive early.*** You made the effort to schedule the visit, so it is good to show respect for the school and the staff by being on time. By arriving 10 minutes early, you have a chance to check out the neighborhood the school is in and watch how the front office works.
4. ***Ask and observe.*** The point of this visit is to get the information you need to make a choice, so asking questions is a good thing. Don't feel shy, speak up!
5. ***Make sure to write things down.*** Using the worksheet on page 6, make sure you take notes on the things you see as you as you are walking through the building/classrooms and write down the answers to your questions.
6. ***Say thank you.*** Make sure to thank everyone you spoke to during your visit (even if you just mouth the words to a teacher in a classroom so you don't disrupt anything).

If you get home and suddenly have some more questions to ask, that is ok. Write them down first, and then call the school to get the answers. Remember, the more questions you ask and the more answers you get, the easier it will be for you to make a good choice! **BE SURE TO VISIT MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL BEFORE YOU DECIDE!**



# Things to Watch for When Walking Through the School and in the Classroom

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Visit Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>ITEM</i>	<i>√ = Yes, X = No</i>
Is the front office friendly?	
Are the building/classes/grounds clean?	
Is there a gym or playground or field?	
Is there an art room?	
Is there a music room?	
Is there a computer lab(s)?	
Is there a science room(s)?	
Does the school feel safe?	

<i>ITEM</i>	<i>√ = Yes, X = No</i>
Are teachers active in the class?	
Does it look like the teacher has a plan?	
Are teachers respectful of students?	
Are students respectful to the teacher?	
Are students respectful to each other?	
Are students focused on their work?	
Are students working in groups?	
Is student work posted on the walls?	

Your questions (write in questions you have – see page 2 and 4 worksheets or the School Chooser for help)

Question 1:	Answer:
Question 2:	Answer:
Question 3:	Answer:
Question 4:	Answer:
Question 5:	Answer:

# Step 4: Make your decision



1. List the top 5 priorities you named on page 2 in the first column.
2. Write the names of the 2-3 schools you visited across the top row.
3. In the column below each school, write "Yes" in a square if that school met the priority in that row or "No" if it did not.
4. If the schools you visited did not meet your priorities, return to Step 2 and research more schools or else visit more of the schools you already researched until you find at least 2 schools (3 is better) that meet your priorities.

<i>Top 5 Priorities (from page 2)</i>	<i>School Name:</i> _____	<i>School Name:</i> _____	<i>School Name:</i> _____
Example: <i>Good math program and/or pre-engineering classes</i>	YES	YES	YES
<b>1.</b>			
<b>2.</b>			
<b>3.</b>			
<b>4.</b>			
<b>5.</b>			

# Step 5: Apply and enroll



*You are all set! You have made your choices! Now what? After all that good work you and your family did, it is time to fill in the applications for the schools (at least 2 or 3) that you chose as the best fit (if they are not already your neighborhood school).*

## Tips:

1. If you are interested in an independent charter, private school, or specialized public school program, call the school to get an application (or go to the school's Web site as they may have an online version you can fill out and send).
2. If you are interested in a traditional public school that is not your neighborhood school, contact your district office or check out their Web site for an application.
3. Make your own list of the items in each application and check them off as you get them done. Make sure you know when each application is due!

<i>School Name</i>	<i>Application Items</i>	<i>✓</i>	<i>Application Due Date</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>		

And always remember, the GreatSchools staff is here to help, so please don't hesitate to call us!