



THE ELEMENTARY YEARS (K-6)

Choose your child's school with **CONFIDENCE**

INCLUDES
Easy to Use
Tool Kit



religious?
magnet?
home?



Which School?



public?
private?
charter?



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PUBLIC IMPACT



CONFIDENT CHOICE Tools

This downloadable PDF is an excerpt from:

*Picky Parent Guide:
Choose Your Child's School with
CONFIDENCE*

Get all the chapters in electronic form, for free, at *PickyParent.com*, or
purchase the paperback at *Amazon.com*.

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CONFIDENT CHOICE Tools



These are the three tools you need to complete your research, compare your Target Schools and make your choice. We've repeated them here for easy access.

- 363 ***Personalized Great Fit Checklist*** (see also examples, pages 176, 266–267)
- 364 ***Great School Quality Checklist*** (see also examples, pages 268–271)
- 366 ***School Comparison Worksheet*** (see also examples, pages 294–295)

Other tools included in this Appendix:

- 368 ***Know Your Child's Needs*** table
- 375 ***Know Your Family's Needs*** table
- 380 ***Child Needs: What to Look for in a School*** table
- 400 ***Family Needs: What to Look for in a School*** table
- 409 ***Quality: What to Look for in a School*** table
- 416 ***Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School*** table
- 428 ***Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School*** table
- 433 ***Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School*** table

For a complete list of *Confident Choice Tools*, see page ix.

Personalized Great Fit Checklist

School Name: _____

- In the first blank column, list in pencil the precise names of your top child & family needs based on your *Child* and *Family Needs Summaries* (pages 38 and 110) and on your reading of Chapters 2–9 and related tables. For example, write: “Basic Learning Capability, Typical.” See a complete example on page 176.
- Check whether each of your needs is a Must Have or Nice to Have.
- In next big column, make note of the characteristics a school must have to meet your need based on your reading of Chapter 10 and related tables.
- Include specific questions to ask school principal, teachers, parents, and others (or use our *Interview Forms* on page 273).
- Make an extra copy and fill in notes for each school you consider.
- After you gather the information you need, grade each school on how well it fits each Must Have and Nice to Have item:
A perfect fit **B** very good fit **C** halfway fit **D** poor fit **F** very poor or no fit

FIT FACTOR	CHILD & FAMILY NEEDS: Must Haves & top Nice to Haves	MUST HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	WHAT TO LOOK FOR <i>and</i> QUESTIONS TO ASK	NOTES ABOUT THIS SCHOOL	GRADE
What Your Child Learns						
How Your Child Learns						
Social Issues						
Practical Matters						

Great School Quality Checklist

PAGE 1

School Name: _____

- Complete a separate *Great School Quality Checklist* for each school you consider.
- In Notes column, make notes about each school. Which factor elements are strengths? Weaknesses?
- After gathering available information, grade each school on each overall Great School Quality Factor:
 - ✓ **A** school has all of the elements
 - ✓ **B** school has most of the elements
 - ✓ **C** school has about half of the elements
 - ✓ **D** most of the elements are missing
 - ✓ **F** school has none or almost none of the elements

GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTORS	NOTES ABOUT THIS SCHOOL	GRADE
<p>1. Clear Mission Guiding School Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Written mission communicating focus and priorities● Staff, parents & written materials state same mission● School-wide goals support mission● Student goals, curriculum & teaching support mission		
<p>2. High Expectations for All Students: <i>High Minimum Expectations for All</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Challenging but achievable student learning goals (standards) for each grade level● School-wide plan and actions ensure that all students achieve at least grade level in basics, no excuses● All or near all children achieve grade level● Progress scores high for all, including lowest scorers <p><i>Higher Expectations for Students Who are Ready</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learning goals raised for ready students● Clear, written progression of goals beyond grade level● Plan and actions ensure students meet higher goals● At least gifted students achieve very high test scores● Progress scores are high for top students		

Great School Quality Checklist

PAGE 2

School Name: _____

3. Monitoring of Progress and Adjusting Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School assesses individual student progress (weekly is ideal) ● Teachers change teaching approach to ensure that every child achieves his or her learning goals 	
4. Focus on Effective Learning Tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instruction approach proven to work ● Class time allocated according to subjects' importance ● Materials & facilities allocated in line with importance ● Principal and teachers limit class interruptions 	
5. Home-School Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School tells parents what children will be learning ● School tells parents how to help own children learn ● School updates parents on own child performance ● School works with parents to resolve problems 	
6. Safe and Orderly Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students know how they are expected to behave ● Students focus on work in the classroom ● Consequences for behavior are clear and consistent ● School keeps students safe from harm 	
7. Strong Instructional Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear performance expectations for teachers ● Principal recruits, keeps great teachers ● Teachers work together within & across grades ● Principal monitors individual teacher performance ● Staff regularly identifies problems, improves school ● Professional development focused on school goals ● Principal acts on high and low teacher performance 	

School Comparison Worksheet

PAGE 1

- Use the information you have gathered about schools to do a side-by-side comparison of both fit and quality. If you are comparing more than five schools, you will need to use two of these worksheets.
- List school names at the top of the school columns to right (use school initials or abbreviations to fit).
- Page 1: Transfer information to the first three blank columns from your *Personalized Great Fit Checklist*. Place your grades for each school on each Fit Factor below school name. Compare how well schools fit your child and family needs.

FIT FACTOR	CHILD & FAMILY NEEDS: Must Haves & top Nice to Haves	MUST HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	SCHOOL #1	SCHOOL #2	SCHOOL #3	SCHOOL #4	SCHOOL #5
What Your Child Learns								
How Your Child Learns								
Social Issues								
Practical Matters								

School Comparison Worksheet **PAGE 2**

- Page 2: Transfer quality grades from your *Great School Quality Checklist* below each school name. Compare the quality of your school options.
- Review pages 1 and 2 and compare the schools. Highlight particular strengths and weaknesses of each school. Remember, not all items listed here are equal in importance for you and your child.
- ✓ Must Haves and quality should weigh more heavily in your decision than Nice to Haves.
- ✓ Use the *Child, Family and Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School* tables to help you decide which Must Haves and quality weaknesses you can best accommodate outside of school, if needed.

GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTORS	SCHOOL #1	SCHOOL #2	SCHOOL #3	SCHOOL #4	SCHOOL #5
1. Clear Mission Guiding School Activities					
2. High Expectations for All Students					
3. Monitoring of Progress and Adjusting Teaching					
4. Focus on Effective Learning Tasks					
5. Home-School Connection					
6. Safe and Orderly Environment					
7. Strong Instructional Leadership					

Know Your Child's Needs

How to Use This Table:

- Use this table to help identify and clarify your child's top needs that should be addressed at school.
- This table is organized by the four Fit Factors: *What Your Child Learns, How Your Child Learns, Social Issues and Practical Matters.*
- You do not need to read all items here. Instead, focus on characteristics you think *might be* Must Haves and Nice to Haves for your child at school. Use Chapters 2 – 5 and the *Child Needs Summary* on page 38 to help narrow your reading of the table.
- Search for Fit Factor items by name in the far left column.
- Based on the criteria listed, record Must Haves and Nice to Haves on your *Child Needs Summary* (page 38).

<i>Child Characteristic</i>	<i>Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Basic Learning Capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extremely Challenged ➤ Challenged ➤ Typical ➤ Bright/Gifted ➤ Highly Gifted 	<p>Your child's readiness for learning in core academic subjects. A Must Have for all children. All parents should determine the best-fit categories for their children. (When identification is not possible, seeking both Great School Quality Factors #2 and 3 in a school becomes essential.)</p> <p>Basic Learning Capability is a combination of your child's <i>mental processing</i> capability and the knowledge and skills developed through prior <i>academic exposure</i> in the core academic subjects. Mental processing, for this purpose, includes analytical thinking (problem solving) and conceptual thinking (comparing, contrasting, seeing similarities and differences) in both language and math. Core academic subjects include at least reading, writing and math in the elementary years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Basic Learning Capability may be measured using traditional I.Q. (intelligence quotient) testing or, even better, a combination of this and assessments of demonstrated learning in language and math compared to same-age children. ➤ If your child's I.Q. and academic learning are different, use the higher of the two to choose a school. ➤ If your child tests differently in math and language, use the higher of the two to choose a school. ➤ If your child's academic learning is far below I.Q., consider further testing for specific disabilities, disorders, motivation challenges, need for additional academic exposure, or other barriers that may keep your child from absorbing or expressing knowledge. ➤ The categories below are guidelines. If your child falls near a border, you should read about the categories on both sides to determine which best fits your child currently. ➤ Opt for the higher category if uncertain, but read advice for both levels so that you will be prepared for academic and social challenges your child may face. ➤ I.Q. and language/math testing is quite accurate, but does <i>not</i> measure a child's creativity, motivation or other competencies needed to use intelligence in work and life.
Basic Learning Capability: Extremely Challenged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tests below 70 on standard I.Q. test, and/or ➤ Is significantly delayed in all language and mathematical areas compared to others same age ➤ Has extreme difficulty interacting independently as peer of Typical children ➤ Difficulty learning self-care and daily routines compared to most same-age children ➤ Future challenge: may have trouble living independently unless educated to meet specific needs
Basic Learning Capability: Challenged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tests between 70 and 85 on standard I.Q. test, and/or ➤ Is consistently somewhat delayed in language and mathematical areas ➤ May have difficulties interacting as peer of Typical children ➤ If child is already in school: child consistently has been a low performer in all academic subjects ➤ Despite academic challenges, child learns self-care and daily routines adequately

Know Your Child's Needs ...continued

<i>Child Characteristic</i>	<i>Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves</i>
Basic Learning Capability: Typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tests between 85 and 120 on standard I.Q. test, and/or ➤ Is close to expected development and achievement in most language and mathematical areas; may be somewhat ahead or behind in some areas ➤ Most children (about 7 out of every 10) are in this category
Basic Learning Capability: Bright/Gifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tests between 120 and 130 on standard I.Q. test, and/or ➤ Is developmentally advanced, or learns more quickly than most peers, in most language and mathematical areas; or is advanced and learns quickly in at least one major area, and/or ➤ Scores between 90th and 97th percentile on language and/or math achievement tests. ➤ If child is already in school, may display one or more symptoms of inadequate academic challenge at school: May say schoolwork is easy. May say school is boring generally. May say basic subjects are boring (reading, math). May have trouble listening, paying attention or sitting still in whole-class learning activities in basic subjects, yet be very focused in small achievement-level groups, individual work, and subjects introducing new topics (breadth). May perform well in basic academic subjects without seeming to study very much. May learn new school material quickly once introduced.
Basic Learning Capability: Highly Gifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tests above 130 on standard I.Q. test, and/or ➤ Is developmentally advanced in most language and mathematical areas or extremely advanced in at least one major area, and/or ➤ Scores at or above 97th percentile on language and/or math achievement tests, and/or ➤ Displays most behaviors below, when compared to children of same age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very large vocabulary • Able to read early, often before elementary school • Longer attention span, persistence, intense concentration in areas of interest • Learns basic skills quickly, with less practice • Wide range of interests • High curiosity level; asks limitless questions • Likes to experiment, do things differently • Puts ideas or objects together in new, unusual, not obvious ways • Remembers a great deal of information • Unusual sense of humor • May express feeling of "being different" from other children in abstract ways (e.g., "other kids not interested in my ideas" or "I am different") beginning at very early ages (3 – 4 years). • If child is already in school, also may display one or more symptoms of inadequate academic challenge at school: May say schoolwork is easy or boring. May say basic subjects are boring (reading, math). May have trouble listening, paying attention or sitting still in whole-class learning activities in basic subjects, yet be very focused in small achievement-level groups, individual work, and study of new topics. May perform well in academic subjects without seeming to study much. May seem to know new school material before it has been taught or learn immediately once taught. Because they tend to go unchallenged early in life and become accustomed to being "the best" always, may develop perfectionist tendencies when faced with challenges later (e.g., won't try new skills if aren't sure they'll be the best, won't finish projects unless they are certain they are "perfect," avoid competition from equally gifted students). ➤ Future challenge: may have difficulty using intelligence in adult life unless learns to face challenges and develops strong social and emotional skills.

*Adapted from *Guiding the Gifted Child* (Great Potential Press, 1994).

Know Your Child's Needs ...continued

Child Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS ...continued	
Other Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language 	<p>These are Must Haves only if they are extreme strengths or weaknesses of your child and you cannot help your child with continued development outside of school. Weakness in English as Second Language is a Must Have need that should be addressed at school in nearly all cases. See Chapter 3 for more detailed descriptions of strengths and weaknesses in each capability listed here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical: senses, appreciates, composes, and/or performs music, including rhythm, pitch, and tone ➤ Artistic: understands and appreciates others' art; creates original works of art pleasing or interesting to others ➤ Physical & Hands-on: displays strength, agility, speed, balance and/or flexibility; or uses all or part of the body to create ideas or objects and to solve problems ➤ Social & Leadership: understands & interacts well with many kinds of people; or organizes & leads other children ➤ Creativity: thinks of new ideas and ways to do things, rather than imitating others or using standard methods; may apply to varying activities ➤ English as Second Language: understands, speaks, reads, and writes English at age-appropriate level, and English is the child's second language. <p>Note: If there is a content area that <i>you as a parent</i> value highly, it may be a Must Have for family Fit Factor #1 regardless of your child's capability or personal interest. In addition, you are not limited to considering the capabilities listed here; you may want to include any other <i>strength</i> of your child's that <i>you consider valuable</i> and in which your child also has a strong <i>interest</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengths: A strength is an area (other than the core academic ones addressed in Basic Learning Capability) in which your child has shown strong or early capability beyond most peers of the same age. Consider these capabilities to be school Must Haves only if your child is also <i>interested</i> in using the strength. Otherwise, you may want to nurture the strength outside of school until (s)he develops a strong interest, as well. ➤ Weaknesses: Weaknesses in these areas are Must Haves if your child has shown very weak or late capability <i>and</i> you either do not have time or resources to help your child develop the capability or the weakness is one that may prevent your child from fully using other capabilities (Physical & Hands-on, Social & Leadership, and English as Second Language). In general, the capabilities listed are ones that can bring joy and fulfillment even to those who are not masters of the craft. For that reason, you should help your child develop (through school or family life) at least the level of capability and skill that will allow him/her to function as a happy, healthy person. English as a Second Language should be addressed at school in most cases.
Interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Subjects or topics ➤ Ways of thinking (analytical, conceptual or creative thinking) ➤ Other interests, regardless of talent or current skill (e.g., interpersonal, musical, artistic) 	<p>An interest is something that your child loves to think about or do, regardless of capability or current skill level. A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interest is strong: child voluntarily spends large amounts of time on interest, and ➤ Interest is long-held: one or more years for child 6 or under; two or more years for child over 6, and ➤ Interest will continue: your child wants to continue pursuing the interest, and ➤ Interest is unusual: your child's interest is not shared by many others of similar age/grade (so unlikely to be addressed in typical school curriculum), and ➤ Child's interest is one that would be difficult to satisfy without support of the school, or ➤ For child already in school: child is not motivated in school unless interest is major part of curriculum <p>Assume that a very extreme level of interest, even in a traditional academic subject, is unusual, period.</p>

Know Your Child's Needs ...continued

<i>Child Characteristic</i>	<i>Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves</i>
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Learning Styles ► Visual ► Auditory ► Kinesthetic/Tactile	A Must Have if: 1. Child is very strong in one style only (and weak in other two) or Child is very weak in one style And ... 2. Child has trouble learning, is not interested in school, or is easily upset when needs of dominant style are not met
Learning Style: Visual	► Like to see things written down or in a picture: • Remember what they see well • Want to see and show others timelines, illustrations, charts, diagrams • Learning aided by copying and organizing notes ► Very attuned to physical environment – desk or table arrangement, things on walls, how things look: • Bored by lack of things on walls • Excited by stimulating, but neatly organized, physical environment • Overstimulated and bothered (may become upset) if classroom materials and equipment are disorganized • Has trouble focusing without own workspace that child can organize neatly – own desk or assigned place at table • May have difficulty with changes involving new physical surroundings
Learning Style: Auditory	► Like to talk: • Remember what they say well • Want to discuss and talk through what they have heard, what they are thinking • Thrive on classroom discussion • Like to read out loud • Will repeat ideas and words aloud when they are trying to remember • Will assume you remember what they've told you (because they will) • Silence rare – they are bored by silence and will interrupt it with talk • Difficulty working quietly at desk for a long time – need to talk to selves or others ► Stimulated by sound: • Remember what they hear without visual or physical cues, without writing it down • Like teachers to explain things orally • Like and ask for storytelling without books • Overstimulated and bothered by extreme or poorly organized noises – crowds, loud music, very noisy classrooms
Learning Style: Kinesthetic/Tactile	► Like to move their bodies ("kinesthetic"): • Like to act out a situation or do simulations • Like to be busily moving while working • Like to do hands-on projects to represent their ideas • Express enthusiasm with large physical movements (jumping, running in circles) • May wiggle body constantly; may be labeled hyperactive • Difficulty sitting still for long periods ► And/or like to touch ("tactile" aspect of Kinesthetic style, also called "fine motor skills" and "small motor skills"): • Like to build, do detailed work by hand, and handle materials constantly • Understand ideas best when they can touch a physical object • Like to write, take notes or doodle to keep hands busy, even though may not look at notes later • Like to make a physical product by hand • May fidget constantly; may be labeled hyperactive • May have trouble focusing and completing tasks unless holding something in hands

Know Your Child's Needs ...continued

Child Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS ...continued	
Motivation	<p>Your child's self-motivation to achieve (learn and perform) academically. A Must Have if motivation is a strength or weakness. May be a Must Have if child is typical and parent cannot provide general supervision of child's work and progress at school.</p> <p>Summary identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strength: child sets challenging goals for self, tries hard things on own, works to overcome barriers and problems ➤ Typical: child works to meet goals set by teachers, parents; or sets achievable goals for self; stops if problems arise ➤ Weakness: child not bothered when does not perform well; or is bothered but takes no action to improve <p>Levels of Motivation (lowest to highest):*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child not bothered when does not perform as well as (s)he or others expect on tasks 2. Child is bothered when (s)he does not do as well as (s)he or others expect on tasks, but takes no steps on own to improve 3. Child works to meet goals set by parents or teachers; stops when problems or barriers arise 4. Child sets achievable goals for self; often lowers goal or stops when problems or barriers arise 5. Child sets challenging (but achievable) goals for self; or tries to do new hard things on own; and often works to overcome barriers and problems to achieve goals 6. Child thinks of entirely new, unusual, or very challenging goals for self, makes a plan, involves others as needed for help, usually works to overcome even difficult barriers to achieve the goal. <p>Your child's current level is the highest number that describes how your child acts with regularity (often when needed, but not necessarily always).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If your child is at level 1 or 2, then motivation is a weakness. ✓ If your child is at level 3 or 4, your child's motivation is typical. ✓ If your child is at level 5 or 6, your child's motivation is a strength. <p>Signs that motivation is a weakness for your child who is already in school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your child's school performance is usually below capability in most subjects (and no recent or recurring emotional upset, disability or disorder explains the low performance), or ➤ Your child is rarely bothered by below-capability performance on school work (tests, quizzes, papers, etc.), or ➤ Your child is bothered by below-capability performance, but does not take steps on own to improve performance during the year (e.g., studying more before tests, completing homework correctly more often) <p style="text-align: right;"><small>*Adapted from <i>Competence at Work</i> (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1993).</small></p>
Physical or Mental Health Challenges ...continues	<p>A Must Have if either of the following might keep your child from participating effectively in daily school life or from developing academically, socially, emotionally or physically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Physical Health Challenges: Your child has a physical handicap, ongoing illness or other physical condition that could prevent your child from participating fully in school life, that requires treatment during school hours (at school or elsewhere), or that is noticeable to other children; or ➤ Mental Health Challenges: Your child has experienced ongoing or recurring emotional upset, such as severe depression, extreme anxiety, bi-polar disorder, or other debilitating mental health illnesses (may be related to specific events such

Know Your Child's Needs ...continued

Child Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS ...continued	
Physical or Mental Health Challenges ...continued	<p>as death of parent or divorce, or may have unspecified causes). Seek professional diagnosis if you suspect mental illness. Some signs of mental illness include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big changes or ongoing problems in your child's sleep – sleepy all the time, not able to sleep, or suddenly begins erratic schedule (e.g., sleepy all day, awake all night). • Big changes or ongoing problems in your child's eating – packing it away in gorging sessions or prolonged loss of appetite. Extreme or sudden weight gain and loss are also signs of a problem. • Loss of joy – your child always seems to be unhappy, laughs very little. • Loss of excitement – your child loses interest in school and activities that used to get her excited. • Loss of self-control – your child is lashing out in anger frequently, acting violent towards siblings or parents, or wildly excited for extended periods. • Social changes – your child is suddenly not interested in former friends, without explanation. Your child suddenly stops talking with you and/or siblings. • Changes in academic performance – your child's grades drop suddenly.
Behavior Challenges	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your child has had <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant, unresolved behavioral or discipline problems in group settings, or • behavior problems that prevent your child or others in classroom from learning effectively, or • behavior problems that have lead to serious or multiple formal disciplinary actions against your child (or you believe might lead to formal disciplinary actions in the future) in school, preschool or child care
Learning Disabilities & Disorders ...continues	<p>In general, a <i>disability</i> is a problem with an important, basic part of a child's physical or mental functioning that is significantly different from your child's other capabilities or that significantly hampers your child's learning. A <i>disorder</i> is a problem with an important, but not necessarily basic, part of your child's physical or mental functioning. Visit PickyParent.com for links to more information about disabilities and disorders.</p> <p>This is a Must Have for any recognized learning disability (see <i>Special Needs Table</i> on PickyParent.com) and any disorder severe enough to require special services at school in order to meet your child's academic, social, emotional or physical needs.</p> <p>Signs that your child may have a disability or disorder include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your child does well in most or all <i>subjects</i>, except one. ➤ Your child does well with most <i>aspects</i> of his school work, except one that may cut across many subjects (e.g., reading, writing, speaking aloud). ➤ Your child speaks well, but <i>does not write well</i> compared to others of same age (e.g., takes a very long time, makes many errors, gets very frustrated). ➤ Your child writes well but <i>does not speak</i> so that others understand (compared to others of same age). ➤ Your child follows written instructions well, but <i>not spoken instructions</i>. ➤ Your child follows spoken instructions well, but <i>not written ones</i>. ➤ Your child <i>does not focus</i> on his school work for long enough periods of time to accomplish what is expected of children his age. ➤ Your child is unable to work and learn in a <i>group of children</i>; behavior problems or emotional outbursts regularly prevent him from doing his school work. ➤ Your child has extreme difficulty forming relationships with others his own age. ➤ Your child has trouble <i>moving or working his body</i>, so that typical, day-to-day

Know Your Child's Needs

Child Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS ...continued	
Learning Disabilities & Disorders ...continued	<p>activities are difficult.</p> <p>This may be a Nice to Have rather than a Must Have if your child has a learning disorder or disability that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resolvable with appropriate development, and ➤ You as parent have the ability yourself or means, through a counselor or tutor, to address your child's developmental needs outside of school <p>Consider the following characteristics of your child in deciding what kinds of school to seek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The <i>severity of the disability</i> and the resulting level of <i>specialized services</i> your child requires to meet academic, social, emotional and physical needs ➤ Your child's <i>ability to function socially</i> in a group with typical children (the higher this ability, the more likely that your child will fare well in some activities of a typical classroom)
Self-Understanding	<p>Child's demonstrated ability to understand self, including own strengths, weaknesses, interests, wants and needs and to use that understanding in making life decisions. This is a Must Have if your child is very weak in this area.</p> <p>Signs that this is a Must Have include your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focuses little time on activities she enjoys and does well, or ➤ Spends too much time on activities that are of little consequence (no enjoyment for child, no help for schoolwork or other achievements, and no help to others), or ➤ Has few interests of her own (usually lets a sibling, parent or friend choose) ➤ Chooses friends who are unkind to her or who do not bring out the best in her, or ➤ Expresses little recognition of her own strengths and weaknesses
SOCIAL ISSUES	
Friends	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Child has well-established friendship(s) with child(ren) attending a certain school, and ➤ Child does not have friends attending other schools you might choose, and ➤ Your child does not have social skills needed to meet and make new friends and ➤ You are unable to help your child continue current friendships outside of school or establish new friendships <p>Here are some signs that your child may have difficulty making new friends in a new school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your child often chooses not to play with other children ➤ Your child never approaches new children, or is rarely successful when trying to do so (at the park, at school) ➤ Your child sticks rigidly with the same friend every day, refusing to make other friends or let others join in
PRACTICAL MATTERS	
Essential Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Must Have if child has non-school interests or activities that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot be addressed fully at school, • must continue, and • often conflict with typical school scheduling. <p>This is a Must Have for very few children. Let your child's interest, capability and own motivation lead the way.</p>

Know Your Family's Needs

How to Use This Table:

- Use this table to help identify and clarify your family's top needs that should be addressed at school.
- This table is organized by the four Fit Factors: *What Your Child Learns*, *How Your Child Learns*, *Social Issues* and *Practical Matters*.
- You do not need to read all items here. Instead, focus on characteristics you think *might be* Must Haves and Nice to Haves for your family at school. Use Chapters 6 – 9 and the *Family Needs Summary* on page 110 to help narrow your reading of the table.
- Search for Fit Factor items by name in the far left column.
- Based on the criteria listed, record Must Haves and Nice to Haves on your *Family Needs Summary* (page 110).

<i>Family Characteristic</i>	<i>Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Values about what content is important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Core academic subjects ➤ Other academic subjects (list) ➤ Morals, ethics, character, religion ➤ Other non-academic subjects ➤ Other topics important to you 	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You very strongly value a particular subject or set of subjects <i>and</i> you need for school to cover the subject(s), including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core academic subjects (reading, writing, math) • Other academic subjects (foreign language, etc. – make your own list of subjects you value) • Morals, ethics, character, religion • Other non-academic (for example: social, emotional and physical development) • Other topics important to you <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If your child is already in school: you are concerned that subjects important to you are getting short shrift at your child's school
Goals for your child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Grade progression ➤ Academic performance ➤ College opportunity 	<p>A Must Have only if both of these are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This is a goal you have for your child, <i>and</i> ➤ Your child is at risk of not meeting the goal. <p>(If goal is learning a particular subject, use <i>Values about Content</i> above.)</p> <p>Common examples of goals parents are concerned about include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Grade progression: Your child is at risk of failing a required subject or not meeting the required standards for progressing from grade to grade. Some of the risk factors include single parent, parents did not finish high school, child's family is below or near federal poverty line, language or cultural barriers, child is challenged in Basic Learning Capability (see <i>Know Your Child's Needs</i>). You or your child may have other factors that put your child at risk of not meeting this goal. ➤ Academic performance: Your child is capable of performing above grade level, but is at risk of not performing as well academically as (s)he is able. Some of the risk factors include single parent, parents did not finish high school, child's family is below or near federal poverty line, language or cultural barriers. You or your child may have other factors that put your child at risk of not meeting this goal. ➤ College opportunity: You would like your child to attend college, you believe your child is capable of getting into college, but you believe that this goal will be difficult to attain. Some of the risk factors include single parent, neither parent attended college, child's family income below or near federal poverty line, language or cultural barriers.
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct ...continues	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <p>You have a strong opinion about school <i>rules and expectations</i> regarding children's social behavior and general conduct (based on religious, moral, ethical, or other values), <i>especially if...</i></p>

Know Your Family's Needs

...continued

Family Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
<p>Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct ...continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manners with other children ➤ Manners with adults ➤ Dress ➤ Discipline ➤ Honor code ➤ Other behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your time with your child after school is very limited, or ➤ You have difficulty teaching the religious, moral or ethical lessons you want your child to learn, or ➤ Your child is particularly susceptible to peer influence, or ➤ If child is already in school: you are concerned about the values and behavior your child seems to be adopting from other students at current school <p>May be less important if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You feel comfortable reinforcing religious, moral and ethical beliefs at home, and ➤ Your child is an independent thinker who is able to withstand peer influence, or ➤ Your child is already in school: your child often describes and evaluates other students' behaviors and expresses how his/her own values and behavior are different (or asks for your help understanding and evaluating others' behavior)
<p>Values about how children should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teaching method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-directed • Student discovery • Mixed approach ➤ Classroom behavior management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling/Strict • Developmental 	<p>A Must Have if you have a strong opinion about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teaching method: how children should be taught in school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-directed: You want teachers to play the role of "expert," transferring their knowledge to children directly, and "director," guiding all of children's activities in detail. • Student-discovery: You want teachers to play role of "facilitator," helping students figure out new knowledge for themselves and allowing students to make some choices about their own activities. • Mixed approach: You want some of both teacher-directed and student-discovery learning. ➤ Classroom behavior management: how teachers should manage student behavior in the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling/Strict: You want a school where teachers are expected to maintain order through clear behavior rules, punishments and rewards. • Developmental: You want a school where teachers are expected to maintain order by improving students' self-control, coaching students about how to improve behavior, and indirect pressure through peers, parents and principal. • Mixed Approach: You want a school where teachers are expected to maintain order by using a combination of controlling and developmental approaches. ➤ If your child is already in school: you are concerned about the effectiveness of either the teaching method or classroom management (as defined above) in your child's current school
<p>Your role as advocate</p> <p>for child (understanding, communicating and influencing school to address <i>your</i> child's learning needs).</p> <p>The greater your ability, the less important for school to help you.</p>	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You have difficulty <i>understanding</i> or <i>responding</i> to your child's academic, social, emotional, or physical needs, or ➤ You believe that you will have difficulty <i>communicating</i> with your child's teacher and principal about your child's needs, or ➤ Your child is already in school: you are having difficulty communicating with your child's teacher and principal, and your child's current school does not fit your child's Must Have needs <p>You may feel challenged in these areas because of lack of time (if you are a single parent, working or otherwise occupied), lack of confidence in your own abilities to understand or communicate about your child, language barriers, cultural differences or other reasons.</p>

Know Your Family's Needs

...continued

Family Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
SOCIAL ISSUES	
<p>Parent Community</p> <p>I want my child's school to have parents with particular characteristics</p>	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You have a strong opinion about the kinds of parents, and families, with whom you want to associate through your child's school or ➤ Your child is already in school: you are concerned about the negative impact on yourself and your child of other parents <p>Make a list of characteristics important to you, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Friends: Parents you already know? ➤ Neighbors: Neighborhood parents? ➤ Location: Parents from a particular neighborhood other than your own? ➤ Values: Same values as you? Which values? ➤ Social behavior and manners: Ways you want, or don't want, other parents to act? ➤ Social and economic status: Do you have preferences about the diversity or make-up of the parent community? ➤ Race and ethnicity: Do you have preferences about the diversity or makeup of the parent community? ➤ Other parent characteristics you do or do not want?
<p>Parent Involvement in School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Helping ➤ Decision-making ➤ Fundraising activities 	<p>A Must Have if you have a strong preference about the type or level of parent involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Types of parent involvement include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping with school's daily life (e.g., volunteering for classroom activities, helping in the media center, chaperoning field trips, organizing a book fair, and the like) • Decision-making (e.g., volunteering as a member of a school advisory or governing board and similarly empowered roles) • Fundraising (e.g., organizing or participating in fundraising activities, such as school carnivals, book fairs, dances, candy and wrapping paper sales, giving campaigns and so forth) ➤ Levels of parent involvement you might prefer include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You strongly want to participate personally in school, or • You strongly want a school where most or all <i>other</i> parents participate in school life, or • You do not want to or cannot participate significantly in school life (due to work, health, preferences, or other constraints)
<p>Student Community</p> <p>I want my child's school to have students with particular characteristics</p> <p style="text-align: right;">...continues</p>	<p>A Must Have if:</p> <p>You have a strong opinion about the kinds of students with whom you want your child to associate at school, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your time with your child after school is limited, or ➤ You have difficulty teaching the social, religious, moral or ethical lessons you want your child to learn, or ➤ Your child is particularly susceptible to peer influence, or ➤ Child is already in school: you are concerned about the values and behavior your child seems to be adopting from other students at current school <p>May be less important if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You feel comfortable reinforcing strongly held social, religious, moral and ethical values at home, or ➤ Your child is an independent thinker who is able to withstand peer influence, or ➤ Your child is already in school: your child often describes and evaluates other students' behaviors and expresses how his/her own values and behavior are different (or asks for your help understanding and evaluating others' behavior)

Know Your Family's Needs

...continued

Family Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
SOCIAL ISSUES... continued	
Student Community I want my child's school to have students with particular characteristics <i>...continued</i>	Make a list of characteristics important to you, including: ➤ Friends: Do you want to keep your child with current friends? Are you seeking new friends for your child? ➤ Neighbors: Your child's neighbors? ➤ Location: Students from a particular neighborhood other than your own? ➤ Values: Same values as you? Which values? ➤ Social behavior and manners: Ways you want, or don't want, other students to act? ➤ Student achievement: Higher, lower or same-performing students compared to your child? ➤ Social and economic status: Do you have preferences about the diversity or makeup of the student body? ➤ Race and ethnicity: Do you have preferences about the diversity or makeup of the student body? ➤ Gender diversity: Do you want an all-boys or all-girls program for your child? ➤ Other student characteristics you do or do not want?
I want my child to attend certain school, school type, or school design	A Must Have only if: ➤ You would choose this school (or school type or design) over other schools of better quality and fit. A Nice to Have if: ➤ You would choose this school (or school type or design) over other schools only in the case of a close "tie" in overall fit and quality
PRACTICAL MATTERS	
Child Care ➤ Before school ➤ After school ➤ Holiday ➤ Summer	A Must Have if: ➤ You have no other affordable child care options of acceptable quality for the hours and days needed A Nice to Have if: ➤ You have at least one other affordable option of acceptable quality for the hours and days needed Determine your needs in the following areas: ➤ Hours and days of care ➤ Transportation to/from school and to/from home ➤ Snacks or meals for child ➤ Safe supervision of child ➤ Academic or developmental assistance for child ➤ Structured or unstructured time for your child ➤ Care for your multiple children ➤ How much you can pay
Schedule ➤ Daily hours ➤ Yearly (start/finish and holidays) <i>...continues</i>	A Must Have if: ➤ You have unchangeable commitments, such as work or other children's schedules, that must be accommodated and ➤ You do not have access to other child care and/or transportation for child that would accommodate your scheduling needs A Nice to Have if: ➤ You have other commitments that would make it less convenient, but not impos-

Know Your Family's Needs

Family Characteristic	Criteria for Determining Must Haves and Nice to Haves
PRACTICAL MATTERS... <i>continued</i>	
Schedule ➤ Daily hours ➤ Yearly (start/finish and holidays) <i>...continued</i>	sible, for you to deal with certain school schedules Consider: ➤ Timing of morning and afternoon transportation for child(ren), especially with regard to multiple school schedules and conflicts with parents' work ➤ Impact of schedules on children's non-school activities ➤ Desirability of having time alone with each child ➤ Desirability of your children having time together or with friends ➤ Impact of schools with differing vacation schedules on your family's vacations and time together ➤ Other schedule issues you may have
Transportation Needs ➤ To school ➤ After school ➤ After school activities	A Must Have if: ➤ You have unchangeable commitments that prevent you from providing transportation for your child, and ➤ Your child does not have access to (or is too young for) other non-school sources of transportation (e.g., carpool, city bus, subway)
Location Proximity to your home or work	A Must Have if: ➤ You have unchangeable commitments that prevent you from considering schools farther away from home, work, or other critical location, <i>or</i> ➤ Your child has unchangeable needs that prevent you from considering schools far away from home (or other critical location), <i>or</i> ➤ You plan to visit your child's school very frequently (e.g., for volunteer work, observation) And: ➤ Transportation provided by school would not change the need for having school in certain location.
Your other children	A Must Have if: ➤ You definitely want child to go to same school as siblings (for other than logistical reasons above), <i>or</i> ➤ You definitely do not want child to go to same school as sibling(s) Consider: ➤ Impact on child of positive or negative reputation of your other child(ren) at school ➤ Independence of this child and her ability to "be true to self" in shadow of sibling(s) at same school ➤ Personal support your other child(ren) might lend to this child at school
Money available to pay for school	A Must Have if money available for school each year is less than the most expensive school option (minus any scholarship funding your child might obtain). Use Heads or Tails Money Worksheet to calculate your financial situation. Current = Amount you <i>actually</i> spend yearly on your child's education now (tuition, fees, child care during school hours, supplies, donations): _____ Target = Amount you could spend yearly <i>without major changes</i> in work, lifestyle, or debt (may be same as Current or Maximum): _____ Maximum = Most you are willing to spend yearly, <i>with acceptable changes</i> in work, lifestyle and debt: _____

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

How to Use This Table:

- Make sure you have identified your child's top needs for school before using this table.
- For each of your child's Must Haves and Nice to Haves, find the companion section of this table.
- Read general information about the characteristic where provided (e.g., Basic Learning Capability, Learning Styles).
- Then read specific information about your child's category (e.g., Basic Learning Capability: Typical, Learning Styles: Visual).
- **Bolded** questions and things to seek are the most important. Focusing on them will help you quickly target the best-fit schools and eliminate poor-fit schools.
- Note top things to seek and ask at schools on your *Personalized Great Fit Checklist* (page 59).

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS		
Basic Learning Capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extremely Challenged ➤ Challenged ➤ Typical ➤ Bright/Gifted ➤ Highly Gifted <p>...continues</p>	<p>Using the information below for your child's specific BLC category, look for right combination of the following for your child's Basic Learning Capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Your child is both <i>challenged</i> to learn new things <i>and able</i> to learn what is taught, particularly in basic subjects. Look for school either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused primarily on children of your child's Basic Learning Capability, or • With frequent monitoring of individual children's progress and frequent changes in teaching approach and individual child's learning goals (may be done one-on-one with teacher or in very small groups of up to 4 children grouped by <i>current</i> level, maybe more if children are very similar), or • With significant time spent on supervised independent work in basic academic areas. <p>Schools should not put children into one level of learning group for the entire year. Instead, students should be moved to different learning groups when monitoring shows they've made extra progress or are lagging behind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Breadth: Multiple topics and subjects are taught. Look for time spent on multiple subjects – e.g., science, foreign languages, geography, art, music. Breadth may be used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce basic areas: provide new, interesting contexts for learning reading, writing, math (topics should be connected to or "integrated" with math, reading and writing), • Motivate students: keep students interested in school with interesting topics, especially important when basic subjects are too easy or too hard, and/or • Broaden knowledge: taught for intrinsic value of the special subjects. 	<p>See questions below for your child's Basic Learning Capability</p>

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extremely Challenged ➤ Challenged ➤ Typical ➤ Bright/Gifted ➤ Highly Gifted <p>...continued</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>➤ Critical thinking: Children learn to use the basic knowledge they are acquiring to make judgments, solve problems, apply ideas across topics and subjects, and create new ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical Thinking: problem solving by breaking ideas and objects into orderly steps and parts • Conceptual Thinking: connecting existing ideas in new ways; comparing and sorting things or ideas for similarities and differences • Creativity: creating new ideas and objects <p>Look for the following common ways to teach critical thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised research by individual students or small groups; • Projects by individuals or small groups; • Writing: not just describing an object, book or event, but also evaluating, creating steps, comparing, connecting ideas, and creating new ideas; • Teaching method in which students must formulate own questions, think of possible answers, and evaluate own and others' ideas and work; • Academic exercises and materials specifically intended to develop thinking skills. <p>➤ Social Environment: Your child's successes and challenges in developing positive relationships with other children, both one-on-one and in groups. Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social opportunity: time during school day when students may work or play in unstructured groups or pairs without adults setting rules (except safety, basic behavior rules) • A significant number of students of your child's Basic Learning Capability also attending same school (and at least two or three others in your child's classrooms), and if your child is different from norm of school ... • Social tolerance for students of differing capabilities (children discouraged from teasing others who are more or less academically capable than norm of school) <p>➤ Test Score Indicators: Standard results of academic testing that allow you to compare across schools, overall for whole schools, for children in your fam-</p>	<p>See questions below for your child's Basic Learning Capability</p>

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extremely Challenged ➤ Challenged ➤ Typical ➤ Bright/Gifted ➤ Highly Gifted <p>...continued</p>	<p>ily's economic and racial group, and for children with previous performance similar to your child's. <i>Overall</i> school scores may not be a good indicator unless schools you compare have similar student populations. Types of scores include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent (%) of students at grade level, which tells you how many children have met at least grade level on tests. • Growth scores, which tell you how much progress each child has made on average. Should be at least one full year's worth on average, ideally more (since some students may be catching up and others can learn faster). Sometimes called "progress" scores. (Do not confuse this with "Adequate Yearly Progress" which is a technical term in federal legislation requiring schools to increase percent of students achieving grade level.) 	<p>See questions below for your child's Basic Learning Capability</p>
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Extremely Challenged</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>In general, look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets <i>individualized</i> learning goals for students <i>or</i> school has <i>alternative set of challenging but achievable</i> learning goals for students testing into this category. ➤ School monitors students' individual learning frequently during year (<i>at least</i> every 6 weeks; weekly ideal) ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met ➤ School provides breadth: independent living skills taught; multi-sensory activities used to stimulate learning (art, music, dance) ➤ Social Needs: school includes some other students who are similarly challenged <p>Pace, Breadth, Critical Thinking, Social and Testing Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. School sets individualized learning goals for students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School admits only children in this category and focuses on their special needs, or • School groups these children together for most learning, or • School has some other viable method for ensuring that extremely challenged students' needs are met in the 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are learning goals set for each child? Do they change during the year? • How are children grouped for learning? • How do you monitor individual progress during the year? How often? • What changes do you make for children who are struggling? ➤ Breadth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What subjects are taught? How are life skills addressed? • How much time is spent on each subject weekly? • What is the purpose of each "special" class? How is that purpose achieved? • How is each special subject taught? Separate class or woven into basic subjects? ➤ Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many children in each classroom do you think will be at a learning level similar to my child's? • Do children have a chance to interact informally with each other at school? When, and how much time per day is that? With children from other classrooms?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Extremely Challenged ...continued</p>	<p>regular classroom.</p> <p>Few if any schools can make one set of learning goals appropriate for all children in this group, as their needs are very diverse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Breadth: Must Have. School focuses on skills for independent living as well as academic content, and school uses multiple sensory activities to stimulate learning (art, music, dance). Look for mix of hands-on, visual and listening/talking exercise to round out your child's skills. ➤ Critical Thinking Skills: Less important ➤ Social Needs: Must Have. School should have some similar-ability peers in your child's class. ➤ Test Score Indicators: Look for high growth/progress scores for similar students. <p>Note: See PickyParent.com to learn more about your child's eligibility for special education services in public schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about this if you have not been able to get information elsewhere • Ask about any problems you see with test score results – does the principal have a plan for addressing problems? Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and consistent across teachers within each grade level. Parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and teachers'. ➤ Speak with other parents of extremely challenged children. Ask how well their children's academic and other developmental needs have been met. Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers, and parents. Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place? ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child; are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Do teachers deal with children like yours effectively?
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Challenged ...continues</p>	<p>In general, look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets high minimum expectations for all students ➤ School vigorously pursues goal of all students meeting grade level, trying different approaches when needed ➤ School spends significant portion of school time on basic subjects – reading, writing, math ➤ School monitors students' individual learning frequently during year (at least every 6 weeks, weekly is ideal) ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met ➤ School offers individual or small group teaching (equally effective) according 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are grade level expectations challenging? How can I tell? • Do you expect <i>all</i> children to meet grade level? • What kinds of kids do not make grade level in your school, usually? Why? What are you doing to change this? • How do you monitor individual progress during the year? How often? • What changes do you make for children who are struggling or behind in a subject? How often? • What changes do you make if a former struggling student begins to

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Challenged</p> <p><i>...continued</i></p> <p><i>...continues</i></p>	<p>to students' current capability in basic subjects to ensure all achieve grade level performance; children are not "stuck" in low-performing groups all year, but are moved to more advanced work as soon as they are ready</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academically challenged children are taught by staff as skilled as more advanced groups' teachers. Avoid schools where teaching gifted children is the "prize" for star teachers. ➤ Breadth (e.g., science, languages) used primarily to reinforce basics ➤ Test scores: high percentage of students achieve grade level; high percentage of students with previous low scores now at grade level; high growth by lowest scoring students. <p>Pace, Breadth, Critical Thinking, Social and Testing Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. Look for frequent monitoring of progress in basics (reading, math and writing) throughout school year, teaching done with very small ability-level groups, and individual tutoring; OR significant time in large group spent on drills and repetition in basic areas, with frequent individual tutoring as needed. ➤ Breadth: Nice to Have. Must reinforce basic subjects to be useful, e.g., using science to teach math basics, using geography to teach reading. ➤ Critical Thinking: Nice to Have ➤ Social Needs: Typical school population. ➤ Test Score Indicators: See above. 	<p>make fast progress?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are teachers chosen to work with struggling students? Advanced students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Breadth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What subjects are taught? • How much time is spent on each subject weekly? • What is the purpose of each of these "special" classes? How is that purpose achieved? • How is each special subject taught? Separate class or woven into basic subjects? Do teachers of special subjects coordinate with teachers of basic subjects each week? ➤ Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many children in each classroom do you think will be at a learning level similar to my child's? ➤ Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about this if you have not been able to get information elsewhere • Ask about any problems you see with test score results – does the principal have a plan for addressing problems? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and consistent across teachers within each grade level. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and teachers'. ➤ Speak with parents of academically challenged children. Ask if their children's academic and social needs have been met. <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers, and parents. <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place? ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child; are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Do teachers deal with children like yours effectively?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Typical</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>In general, look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets high minimum expectations for all students; the higher, the better, especially for child in top half of Typical range ➤ School vigorously pursues goal of all students meeting grade level ➤ School spends significant portion of school time on basic subjects – reading, writing, math ➤ School monitors students' individual learning frequently during year (at least every 6 weeks; weekly ideal) ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met ➤ Students moved to more advanced work as soon as they are ready ➤ Breadth (e.g., science, languages) used to reinforce basics ➤ Breadth of topics, both academic and nonacademic, used to help students discover own interests and strengths that will distinguish them from "the pack" of other Typical students ➤ Test scores: high percentage of students overall achieve grade level; high growth by all students, especially middle scorers; more students than those classified as "gifted" score at top levels (indicating children in middle are pushed beyond grade level – especially important if your child is in top half of the Typical range) <p>Pace, Breadth, Critical Thinking, Social and Testing Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. Typical schools will pace to meet this group's needs, but <i>challenging grade level expectations</i> for all is essential. Monitoring student progress is ideal to determine if student falls behind, needs additional challenge, or needs new approach ➤ Breadth: Nice to Have. Will help Typical students find special interests that distinguish them from "the pack." ➤ Critical Thinking: Nice to Have. Look for some time spent on special projects, writing, research, and exercises specifically geared to teach thinking skills. ➤ Test Score Indicators: see above. ➤ Social Needs: Typical school population. 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are grade level expectations challenging? How can I tell? • Do you expect <i>all</i> children to meet grade level? • What kinds of kids do not make grade level in your school, usually? Why? What are you doing to change this? • How do you monitor individual progress during the year? How often? • What changes do you make for children who are struggling or behind in a subject? How often? • What changes do you make for students who learn new material more quickly than others? ➤ Breadth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What subjects are taught? • How much time is spent on each subject weekly? • What is the purpose of each of these "special" classes? How is that purpose achieved? • How is each special subject taught? Separate class or woven into basic subjects? Do teachers of special subjects coordinate with teachers of basic subjects each week? ➤ Critical Thinking Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your school teach critical thinking skills? • For all students or just some (e.g., gifted)? • How are these skills taught? • If answers do not include these items, ask: Do your students do independent projects, research or writing? Can you give me a few examples of what they do? ➤ Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the students in this school pretty typical academically? If not, in what ways? ➤ Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about this if you have not been able to get information elsewhere • Ask about any problems you see with test score results – does the principal have a plan for addressing problems? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and consistent across teachers within each grade level.

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Typical</p> <p>...continued</p>		<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and teachers'. ➤ Speak with parents of academically typical children. Ask if their children's academic and social needs have been met. <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers, and parents. <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place? ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child; are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Do teachers deal with children like yours effectively?
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Bright/Gifted</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>In general, look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets higher, individualized learning goals for students ahead of grade level; if not, school's learning goals are set higher for all students ➤ School monitors students' individual learning frequently during year (at least every 6 weeks; weekly ideal) ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met ➤ School offers individual or small group teaching according to students' current capability in basic subjects to ensure all students are challenged to next level ➤ School focuses on critical thinking skills, with significant time spent on research, writing, projects, and exercises specifically geared to teach thinking skills ➤ School offers advanced courses for students in higher elementary grades (at school or at other nearby schools) ➤ School places students with children in higher grades for advanced study (if very few other children in same grade are equally advanced in a subject) ➤ School's extracurricular activities include academic ones, such as Odyssey of the Mind, Chess club 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are grade level expectations challenging? How can I tell? • Do you set higher goals for students who are ready to go beyond grade level? How and how often? • How do you monitor individual progress during the year? How often? • How are children grouped for learning in basics? Why? • Do you make any other changes for students who progress beyond grade level? ➤ Breadth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What subjects are taught? • How much time is spent on each subject weekly? • What is the purpose of each of these "special" classes? How is that purpose achieved? • How is each special subject taught? Separate class or woven into basic subjects? Do teachers of special subjects coordinate with teachers of basic subjects each week? ➤ Critical Thinking Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your school teach critical thinking skills? • How are these skills taught? • How much time is spent each week on this?

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS... continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Bright/Gifted</p> <p>...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social Needs: school has some other children who are gifted; typical school population is usually adequate ➤ Test scores: Top 10% of students have very high scores; large % students score in top category; high average scores (not a good indicator if school also has many challenged students); high growth scores by top scoring students. <p>Pace, Breadth, Critical Thinking, Social and Testing Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. Your child needs a school that does not let bright students coast along at grade level when they are capable of more. Look for school that monitors student progress frequently in reading, math and writing, and groups children by current achievement; or by other methods school individualizes most class work and homework at each student's current level of capability. Alternately, look for schools that set learning goals higher than other schools for <i>all</i> students; this is an inferior approach for students in this BLC category, so if you consider such a school, ensure that goals are <i>actually</i> higher in basic subjects than other schools (often they are not, despite school claims). ➤ Breadth: Nice to Have. More important when pacing in basic subjects is inadequate to keep child challenged. Breadth may keep bright child motivated when not challenged in basics. ➤ Critical Thinking: Must Have. Many of these students will need advanced critical thinking in their future school and work. Extremely important if pace in basic subjects is inadequate to keep child challenged. ➤ Social Needs: Nice to Have. Typical school population. Some other bright students in your child's classroom. ➤ Test Score Indicators: see above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If answers do not include these items, ask: Do your students do independent projects, research or writing? Can you give me a few examples of what they do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many children in each classroom do you think will be at a learning level similar to my child's? ➤ Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about this if you have not been able to get information elsewhere • Ask about any problems you see with test score results – does the principal have a plan for addressing problems? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and consistent across teachers within each grade level. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and teachers'. ➤ Speak with parents of academically bright/gifted children. Ask if their children's academic and social needs have been met. <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers, and parents. <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place? ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child; are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Do teachers deal with children like yours effectively?
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Highly Gifted</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>In general, look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets higher, individualized learning goals for students ahead of grade level ➤ School monitors students' individual learning frequently during year (at least every 6 weeks; weekly ideal) 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you set higher goals for students who are ready to go beyond grade level? How and how often? • How do you monitor individual progress during the year? How often?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Basic Learning Capability: Highly Gifted ...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met ➤ School offers individual or small group teaching according to students' current capability in basic subjects to ensure all students are challenged to next level ➤ School focuses on critical thinking skills, with significant time spent on research, writing, projects, and exercises specifically geared to teach thinking skills. ➤ School offers advanced courses (at school or at other nearby schools) ➤ School places students with children in higher grades for advanced study (if very few other children in same grade are equally advanced in a subject) ➤ School's extracurricular activities include academic ones, such as Odyssey of the Mind, Chess club ➤ Social Needs: school has a substantial percentage of children who are gifted or highly gifted ➤ Test scores: Top 3 – 5% of students have very high scores; large % students score in top category; high average scores (not a good indicator if school also has many challenged students); high growth scores by top scoring students <p>Pace, Breadth, Critical Thinking, Social and Testing Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. Unless a child has a disability or similar barrier, students in this group will rapidly learn and exceed grade level in any school not focused on the highly gifted. Few if any schools can make one set of learning goals appropriate for children in this group, as their needs are very diverse. Look for a school admitting <i>only</i> children in this ability range; and/or a school that monitors student progress frequently in reading, math and writing, and groups children by current achievement; or that individualizes most class work and homework at each student's current level of capability by other methods. ➤ Breadth: Nice to Have. More important when pacing in basic subjects and teaching of critical thinking are inadequate to keep child challenged. Breadth unlikely to keep highly gifted child satisfied and motivated when not challenged in basics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are children grouped for learning in basics? Why? • Do you make any other changes for students who progress beyond grade level? ➤ Breadth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What subjects are taught? • How much time is spent on each subject weekly? • What is the purpose of each of these "special" classes? How is that purpose achieved? • How is each special subject taught? Separate class or woven into basic subjects? Do teachers of special subjects coordinate with teachers of basic subjects each week? ➤ Critical Thinking Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your school teach critical thinking skills? • How are these skills taught? • How much time is spent each week on this? • If answers do not include these items, ask: Do your students do independent projects, research or writing? Can you give me a few examples of what they do? ➤ Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many children in each classroom do you think will be at a learning level similar to my child's? ➤ Test Scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about this if you have not been able to get information elsewhere • Ask about any problems you see with test score results – does the principal have a plan for addressing problems? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and consistent across teachers within each grade level. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal's and teachers'. ➤ Speak with parents of academically highly gifted children. Ask if their children's academic and social needs have been met. <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers, and parents.

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Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Basic Learning Capability: Highly Gifted ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Critical Thinking: Must Have. Essential component to both challenge and satisfy these children. Critical thinking will be essential for future school and work at this level of capability. ➤ Social Needs: Must Have. School must have some similar-capability peers in your child's <i>class</i> to prevent isolation. ➤ Test Score Indicators: See previous 	Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place? ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child; are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Do teachers deal with children like yours effectively? ➤ Isolation: no child should be doing work all by him or herself all day. Even if a student is very far ahead academically, some of day should be spent with other children and some working with an adult.
Other Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language ...continues	Strengths, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly describes its mission and curriculum so that you know what content will be covered and can count on continuity of content And: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Curriculum <i>focuses</i> on your child's strength (e.g., school of fine arts), or ➤ Some required or optional courses in child's area of strength, or ➤ Allows for significant independent study, research, or projects of student's choosing so that child may pursue area of strength on own, or ➤ Daily school schedule includes time for your child to pursue area of strength informally at school, or ➤ Established <i>extracurricular</i> activities at school in child's area of strength, or ➤ Will accommodate child's scheduling needs to pursue area of strength outside of school ➤ And school attracts similar students Weaknesses, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does not focus curriculum or teaching method primarily on your child's area of weakness (except ESL: see below) ➤ Curriculum includes some exposure to your child's weakness. Uses teaching methods that address varying "learning styles," "multiple intelligences," or "whole-child" development or that 	Strengths, ask: Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What opportunities are there for my child to further strengthen his/her capability at school? In regular curriculum? In individual work? In clubs or after-school activities at school? Required or optional? ➤ How much time is committed to this subject or type of activity each week? ➤ What training do teachers have in this subject or activity? ➤ How many students do you have with similar strength? ➤ Other questions that help you understand specifics of how well and how often your child's strength will be addressed Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Ask about teachers' individual classes. Look for consistency at different grade levels and throughout school. Parents: Speak with parents of children with similar strength: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How has this school helped to develop your child's strength? ➤ Have you and your child been satisfied? How? ➤ Have there been any problems or challenges? Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of how your child's area of strength is incorporated into the school's curriculum, extracurricular

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Other Capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language <p>...continued</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>employ other techniques for ensuring your child's well-rounded development. This will allow your child to develop weaknesses while also using strengths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ English as Second Language (ESL): school includes intensive language skill training for ESL students during regular school day, covering speech, reading, writing and listening comprehension <p>Examples of How To Develop Specific Capabilities at School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School curriculum focuses on learning about music (rhythm, pitch and tone), or • School uses music as one method to teach other subjects (e.g., math, reading), or • Some music included in curriculum, or • Extracurricular music offered ➤ Physical or Hands-on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School enhances body awareness and skills through subjects such as Physical Education, or • School uses physical movement and the sense of touch as one method to teach about other subjects, including drama to teach language, construction of physical models and products to represent ideas (see Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning Style), or • Extracurricular sports offered ➤ Social or Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School explicitly teaches children interpersonal skills (recognizing and identifying emotions and needs of others, acting and communicating appropriately in response), or • Requires children to do significant daily work or projects in pairs or small groups, or • Includes significant time in day during which children interact informally (e.g., allowed to talk and interact at lunch time and/or recess), or • Offers extracurricular activities requiring small group or paired interactions where children must work out their own rules (not structured by an adult), • And has students living close enough to your family for informal play time outside of school 	<p>activities and other elements of school life. Is what you read consistent with what you have heard from principal, teachers and parents?</p> <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Observe classrooms teaching or using your child's area of strength. How would your child fit in? Is what you see consistent with written materials and what you have heard from principal, teachers and parents? <p>Weaknesses, ask:</p> <p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How is my child's weakness addressed in the curriculum? ➤ What effort does your school make to ensure that children are well-rounded, not just academically, but socially, artistically, physically and in other ways? ➤ English as Second Language: exactly what services are offered to improve my child's English? During regular school day? Covering speech, reading, writing and listening comprehension? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same questions as principal. Look for consistency. <p>Parents: Speak with parents of children with similar challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask same questions as principal. ➤ Has this school helped develop your child's weakness? ➤ Has your child ever been socially excluded or felt uncomfortable because of his/her weakness? If so, what did the school do in response?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Other Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language <p>...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creativity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School spends a significant portion of school week on projects in which children are able to make work products of their own choosing, or • Allows children some choice about what activities to pursue and what their "work product" will look like, or • Includes creative writing in curriculum for all grades, or • Allows some choice by students about what kinds of books they read, or • Significant time spent on creative arts – art, music, dance, drama 	
Interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Subjects or topics ➤ Ways of thinking (analytical, conceptual or creative thinking) ➤ Other interests, regardless of talent or current skill (e.g., interpersonal, musical, artistic) <p>...continues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly describes its mission and curriculum so you know what content will be covered. <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Curriculum focuses on your child's interest (e.g., school of math or fine arts, foreign language immersion), or ➤ Some required or optional courses in child's interest area, or ➤ Allows for significant independent study, research, or projects of student's choosing so that child may pursue interest on own, or ➤ Daily school schedule includes time for your child to pursue area of interest informally at school, or ➤ Established extracurricular activities in child's interest area, or ➤ Will accommodate child's scheduling needs to pursue interest outside of school ➤ Social development: School attracts students with similar interests 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What opportunities are there for my child to pursue his/her special interest at school? In regular curriculum? In individual work? In clubs or after-school activities at school? Required or optional? ➤ How much time each week is devoted to the interest area? ➤ Do you think that this school's coverage of this interest area will change in the next several years? How? ➤ Does the school have other students with the same interest? How many? ➤ If the interest is not addressed, ask questions specific to accommodating your child's schedule outside of school to pursue the interest. <p>Teachers: Look for answers that are consistent with the principal's and that show teachers value the interest area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do you include this interest area in your weekly classroom teaching? ➤ Are there any other ways that you address the interest during the year (special projects, etc.)? ➤ Do you think it is a good idea to keep addressing this interest area in the future? <p>Parents: Look for answers that are consistent with the principal's and teachers' comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How is this interest area covered in school? ➤ Is this an interest of your child's, too? ➤ Have you and your child been pleased with the coverage? Is there anything you hope they'll change?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Subjects or topics ➤ Ways of thinking (analytical, conceptual or creative thinking) ➤ Other interests, regardless of talent or current skill (e.g., interpersonal, musical, artistic) <i>...continued</i>		Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consistent mention of the topic, subject, way of thinking or activity of interest, or ➤ Consistent mention of opportunities for children to pursue individual interests Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for bulletin boards, wall displays, facilities, materials and other visible signs that your child's interest area is valued at the school.
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS		
Learning Styles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visual ➤ Auditory ➤ Kinesthetic/Tactile 	<p>In general, for either extreme strengths or weaknesses, seek a school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has mission and teaching methods geared to all three major learning styles, or both of the following: ➤ Includes your child's learning style strength(s) as major part of teaching method, and ➤ Includes at least some, but not too much, of your child's weaker style(s) so that child may become more adaptable 	Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What does your school do to engage children with different learning styles? ➤ Do children with certain learning style strengths do better in your school? Why? Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal, but ask about teachers' own classrooms. Parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to speak with parents of children who have strengths and weaknesses similar to your child's. ➤ Ask how their children have fared academically and socially. ➤ What challenges have they faced in the classroom that may be related to learning style? How has the school responded? Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of school's efforts to meet the needs of children with differing learning styles or your child's strengths in particular. Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would your child respond to this environment – the look of furniture, walls and materials (visual); the noises, talking and discussion (auditory); the movement, activity, and hands-on work of the classroom (kinesthetic/tactile)? ➤ How do teachers respond to children who act like yours in the classroom?
Learning Style: Visual <i>...continues</i>	<p>The visual learner will enjoy and succeed in a school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adjusts the teaching approach to ensure that students meet learning goals 	<p>See general learning style questions above.</p>

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Learning Style: Visual <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has visually stimulating and interesting walls, classroom equipment, materials ➤ Has neatly organized classrooms ➤ Values neatness and requires frequent clean up of materials; uses teaching method unlikely to lead to messy or disorganized looking classrooms ➤ Uses visual reinforcement in teaching: overheads, bulletin boards, diagrams, charts, etc. ➤ Allows children to take notes while listening ➤ Provides children with their own assigned workspace that they may keep neat ➤ Limits movement of children from room to room 	See general learning style questions above.
Learning Style: Auditory	<p>The auditory learner will enjoy and succeed in a school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adjusts the teaching approach to ensure students meet learning goals ➤ Uses group discussion, storytelling and other oral teaching methods ➤ Encourages students to work in pairs or small groups (and allows talking) more than large group or alone ➤ Encourages students to present work orally (presenting projects to class, reciting poems, etc.) ➤ Allows students to talk quietly to selves while working ➤ Includes some one-on-one work time between teacher and child, or very small work groups with teacher ➤ Is not overcrowded in each classroom ➤ Trains teachers to manage overall noise level in classroom – encourages quiet talk and discussion, does not allow loud talk, yelling ➤ Trains teachers and staff to manage noise level in lunch room and other crowded places, allowing talk but not too loud 	See general learning style questions above.
Learning Style: Kinesthetic/Tactile <i>...continues</i>	<p>The Kinesthetic learner will enjoy and succeed in a school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adjusts the teaching approach to ensure students meet learning goals 	See general learning style questions above.

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Learning Style: Kinesthetic/ Tactile ...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has significant amount of "choice time" for children to move among work stations of their own interest ➤ Has much open physical space within the classroom for children to move ➤ Allows children to work in multiple appropriate positions – on floor, at table, sitting, standing, lying down ➤ Uses physical movement to teach about other subjects ➤ Includes multiple daily breaks for activity: stretching, walking, recess ➤ Uses teaching method including dramatizations and simulations ➤ Has a major emphasis on PE, dance, after school sports, etc. ➤ Encourages completion of tasks (in combination with allowing movement) <p>The Tactile learner will enjoy a school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Uses "hands-on" activities, such as models, crafts, puzzles, blocks, felt or magnetic storyboards, gardening, etc. for significant part of each school day ➤ Includes a significant number of projects that encourage children to create models and physical products ➤ Uses the sense of touch to teach about other subjects ➤ Allows students to "fidget" and "doodle" without reprimand, but teaches them how to do so without disrupting others 	<p>See general learning style questions above.</p>
<p>Motivation ...continues</p>	<p>If motivation is a weakness (level 1 or 2), seek a school that:</p> <p>For child of <i>any Basic Learning Capability</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is a small school, has a small program within the school, or has small classes (18 or fewer students), and ➤ Individual students' academic capability (BLC) is assessed, and students are required to set and meet individualized goals appropriate to capability, and ➤ Individual academic progress is monitored frequently (every six weeks is absolute minimum, weekly is ideal), and ➤ School uses a wide variety of teaching methods to engage students by appealing to different learning styles, interests, ways of thinking, etc. (ask how school engages child with <i>your</i> child's strengths and interests), and 	<p>If motivation is a weakness (or typical, with limited parent supervision):</p> <p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who sets goals for individual student' learning? How and when? ➤ Who monitors student progress toward goals and how often? ➤ Is student work supervised? How? ➤ What actions are taken to ensure that students meet goals? ➤ Do teachers work one-on-one or in very small groups (how small?) with students in core academic subjects? How often? ➤ How often are parents informed about their children's progress? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal for teachers' own classes.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Motivation ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teachers have one-on-one or very small group contact with each student in core academic subjects most days, and ➤ School frequently informs parents about child's progress; weekly is best <p>OR for child of <i>Challenged</i> or <i>Typical Basic Learning Capability</i> only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets very clear, standard goals for students; requires students to achieve these goals (does not allow excuses from child or parent; provides mandatory extra practice work if needed), and ➤ Monitors your child's academic progress frequently (every six weeks is absolute minimum, weekly is ideal), and ➤ Teachers have one-on-one or very small group contact with each student in core academic subjects most days, and ➤ School frequently informs parents about child's progress; weekly is best <p>If motivation is typical (level 3 or 4), and parental supervision of school work is limited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School sets high minimum expectations for all students ➤ School monitors children's individual learning frequently (<i>at least</i> every 6 weeks, weekly is best) during year to ensure that unexpected barriers to child's achievement have not arisen; school addresses problem if child's achievement falls below expected ➤ If child is gifted or highly gifted, school raises learning goals for individual children <p>If motivation is a strength (level 5 or 6), seek school that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allows students to set some of own learning goals (within spectrum of school's overall curriculum) ➤ Gives students some freedom to determine <i>how</i> they will accomplish learning goals ➤ Allows students to work beyond pre-established learning goals, and recognizes accomplishments beyond standard curriculum ➤ Allows students to establish or improve school's extracurricular activities. 	<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to speak with parents of children who may have similar motivation challenges. ➤ Ask how their children have fared academically. ➤ What challenges have they faced in the classroom that may be related to motivation? How has the school responded? ➤ Has school communicated clearly and often about student progress toward goals? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do written materials make clear how goals for individual students are set? ➤ How progress is monitored? ➤ How progress toward goals is communicated to individual students and parents? <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are all students in classrooms engaged in learning? ➤ Do teachers quickly redirect and engage students who seem not to be paying attention? ➤ Do you see any one-on-one or very small group contact between teachers and students? <p>If motivation is a strength:</p> <p>Principal and Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What opportunities will my child have to set some of own work goals? ➤ What opportunities will my child have to decide how to accomplish own work (e.g., timing, exact nature of work product)? ➤ Does the school allow children to do more than is asked? Will teachers recognize and give feedback on this extra work, too? How?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Physical or Mental Health Challenges	<p>Physical Health Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School accommodates child's condition with facilities and equipment that allow child to participate as fully as possible in school <i>academic</i> life (make your own list of activities that may be affected and facilities and equipment needed), and ➤ School accommodates child's condition with facilities and equipment that allow child to participate in social and athletic activities (make your own list of activities that may be affected and facilities and equipment needed), and ➤ On-site health care professional qualified to provide required treatment, medication and to deal with potential emergencies, and ➤ School schedule is flexible enough to accommodate child's treatment outside of school, and ➤ Social environment is supportive of children who are different (especially if your child's condition is noticeable); teasing and taunting are not allowed <p>Mental Health Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Small school, or small program within school, in which staff know students and are attentive to students' social and emotional needs (as well as academic needs), and/or ➤ School with personal counseling services for students (that you feel comfortable using) or ➤ School schedule is flexible enough to accommodate child's counseling or treatment outside of school ➤ And school maintains very frequent communication with parents <p>Note: See PickyParent.com to learn more about your child's eligibility for special education services in public schools.</p>	<p>Physical or Mental Health Challenges</p> <p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has your school had other children with my child's physical or mental health challenge? ➤ What have you done to help children like mine overcome obstacles to participating fully in school life? ➤ Does your school provide health services needed for my child (be specific)? ➤ Does your school have the facilities my child needs to participate fully in school (be specific)? ➤ Will your school allow my child time off for counseling or treatments? Do you have a policy or usual procedure for coordinating missed work with teachers? ➤ What have you done to help children like mine overcome any social obstacles? How does your school handle teasing by other students (ask only if child's condition is noticeable)? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Talk, if possible, to teachers who have had a child like yours in their class at this school. ➤ Ask same questions as principal about children that teacher has had in own class. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to speak with parents of children who may have same or similar condition as your child. ➤ Ask how their children have fared academically, socially and physically. ➤ What challenges have they faced in the classroom or socially that may be related to the mental or physical condition? How has the school responded? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In its written materials, does the school openly support children with physical and mental health challenges (good), or is it a hidden secret (not good)? <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would your child respond to this environment and learning activities? ➤ How do teachers respond to children like yours in the classroom?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Behavior Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School's approach to discipline should be playful and clear to you. ➤ In general, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear behavior expectations, • Consistent consequences (both rewards and punishments), • Frequent praise and discussions about good behavior, and • Firm but fair punishments when needed ➤ School discipline also should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with your parenting values (see Family tables), and • Effective with your child at home and elsewhere (think about what environments have worked best in past) ➤ And school should have a formal policy for working with students and parents to develop behavioral discipline and ➤ Maintain very frequent communication with parents about child (daily is best) ➤ For extreme behavior challenges or ones that have not been resolved with methods above, consider a school focused <i>exclusively</i> on children requiring significant development of behavioral discipline ➤ Note that changes in discipline method used at home (and child care) may be necessary to help your child develop age-appropriate self-control 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is your school's approach to discipline in the classroom? Outside of the classroom? ➤ What happens when a child has repeated behavioral discipline problems? ➤ How, and how often, does the school communicate with parents about their children's behavior at school? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask same questions as principal about children that teacher has had in own class. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to speak with parents of children who have had behavior challenges. ➤ Ask how their children have fared academically, socially, and emotionally/behaviorally. ➤ How has the school responded to problems? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In its written materials, does the school openly acknowledge that some children have behavioral challenges and clearly express the school's approach to developing behavioral discipline? <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would your child respond to this environment and the discipline approach used? Would your child's behavior likely improve? ➤ How do teachers respond to children like yours?
Learning Disabilities & Disorders <p>...continues</p>	<p>Seek least restrictive school environment addressing children like yours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fully meets child's needs in the regular classroom, or ➤ Pulls child out of regular classroom for part of day, or ➤ Focuses only on children with varying disabilities, or ➤ Focuses exclusively on children with disabilities like your child's. ➤ And school monitors children's individual learning frequently during year (at least every 6 weeks; weekly ideal), and ➤ School adjusts teaching approach to ensure goals are met 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has your school had other children with my child's disability or disorder? ➤ What have you done to help children like mine overcome learning obstacles? How successful have these strategies been? Have test scores of children with learning disabilities improved? ➤ What have you done to help children like mine overcome any social obstacles? ➤ Do you set individual goals for children with my child's disability? How? ➤ Do you monitor child's progress and make changes during the year to child's goals and/or teaching method used? How?

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Learning Disabilities & Disorders <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Test scores: scores for students with learning disabilities are relatively high and/or show high rates of growth ➤ Social: school has some other students like your child <p>Note: See PickyParent.com to learn more about your child's eligibility for special education services in public schools.</p>	<p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Talk, if possible, to teachers who have had a child like yours in their class at this school. ➤ Ask same questions as principal about children that teacher has had in own class. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to speak with parents of children who may have same (or similar) disability as your child. ➤ Ask how their children have fared academically and socially. ➤ What challenges have they faced in the classroom that may be related to the disability? How has the school responded? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In its written materials, does the school openly support children with disabilities and disorders (good), or is it a hidden secret (not good)? <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would your child respond to this environment and the learning activities used? ➤ How do teachers respond to children like yours in the classroom?
Self-Understanding	<p>Weakness, seek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School closely fits child's other needs, or ➤ School explicitly teaches children to identify their own strengths, challenges, feelings and needs and to make decisions based on this knowledge ➤ And school communicates with parents frequently about child's academic, social, emotional and physical development 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does your school do anything to help children develop better self-awareness, such as understanding of their own feelings, strengths and challenges? If so, what? How often? ➤ Are children asked to make choices about their school work? If so, is guidance provided? ➤ How does your school communicate with parents about their children's progress? Academically? About social, emotional and physical development? How often? <p>Teachers and Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same questions as principal. Look for consistency. <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for specific description of efforts school makes to develop students' understanding of their own strengths and challenges, needs and wants (may be called "emotional intelligence," "intrapersonal intelligence," or "self-understanding").

Child Needs: What to Look for in a School

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
SOCIAL ISSUES		
Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seek school where child will know particular friends with whom your child wants to attend school; or ➤ Seek a school where your child will know at least some children, even if not your child's best friends; or ➤ Encourage parents of your child's friends to choose same school with you ➤ If considering very small school or special program with small number of children, ensure that other children of your child's gender will be in class 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where do children who attend this school live? ➤ Are there events that allow parents to get to know each other so we can get children together? ➤ Does your school provide a directory with students' family phone numbers? ➤ If very small school or special program: Are both boys and girls in every class? How do you achieve this balancing? <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do your children play with other children from school? How often? <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find out where your child's friends plan to attend school, and include those schools on your Target School list.
PRACTICAL MATTERS		
Essential Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seek school that will actively collaborate with students and families for off-campus learning, or ➤ Seek school with established schedule that is compatible with extracurricular activity, or ➤ Seek school that will allow child time off from school to engage in activity, or ➤ Seek school that has some related activities or independent study time and will accommodate child's remaining needs using one of the methods above, or ➤ Consider home schooling, by yourself, in collaboration with other parents, or using a tutor 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explain need for child to pursue extracurricular activity. Touch on your child's own interest, capability and motivation to pursue the activity. ➤ Then ask: Could we work out a plan for my child to pursue this outside interest while also attending this school? Have other children ever done that at this school? ➤ Follow-up questions as needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is daily and yearly school schedule? Is this likely to change from year to year? • Are children ever allowed time off or independent study credit for outside activities? • Is this activity addressed in the school's curriculum or extracurricular activities?

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

How to Use This Table:

- Make sure you have identified your family's top needs for school before using this table.
- For each of your family's Must Haves and Nice to Haves, find the companion section of this table.
- Read general information about the family need or value where provided.
- Then read specific information about your family's Must Haves and Nice to Haves.
- **Bolded** questions and things to seek are the most important. Focusing on them will help you quickly target the best-fit schools and eliminate poor-fit schools.
- Note top things to seek and ask at schools on your *Personalized Great Fit Checklist* (page 59).

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS		
Values about what <i>content</i> is important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Core academic subjects ➤ Other academic subjects (make your own list) ➤ Morals, ethics, character, religion ➤ Other non-academic: e.g., social, emotional and physical development ➤ Other topics important to you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly states its mission, goals, and curriculum so you know what content will be covered, <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Includes your valued subject(s) as a stated part of curriculum, including class time devoted exclusively to the subject, or ➤ Includes your valued subject(s) as a stated part of curriculum, and regularly weaves teaching of the subject into other subjects (e.g., science taught as part of math curriculum), or ➤ Includes optional classes or established extracurricular activities in subject, and you are confident child will be able to pursue these opportunities, or ➤ Includes special events, mini-courses, or other non-routine, limited-time exposure to subject 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask specifically about the subjects or topics of interest to you ➤ What subjects are covered in the curriculum (for grades your child will attend at this school)? ➤ Are these taught in separate classes or woven into basic subjects? ➤ How much time is spent on these subjects (that are of interest to parent)? ➤ Are there other opportunities – elective courses, mini-courses, extracurricular clubs, etc. – to cover other topics that are not part of regular curriculum? ➤ Are the subjects covered likely to stay the same in the future (especially ones of interest to you)? ➤ What kind of training do teachers have in subjects (most important if math or science is your valued area)? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What subjects do you cover in your class? ➤ Separately or as part of basics? ➤ How much time do you spend on each subject in a week (ask about subject of concern to you)? ➤ Do you help with any of the other topics covered in mini-courses, clubs, etc? (If so, describe.) <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Confirm principal's and teachers' comments ➤ How have your children liked these subjects (of interest to you)? ➤ Is there anything that you think the school should do better in covering these subjects? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of subject important to you (this indicates that it is a valued and stable part of curriculum) <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ May want to observe coverage of critical topics in the classroom to ensure that your expectations for what is included are met

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont. A CONFIDENT CHOICE Tool

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If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Goals for your child: Grade Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly states that all students are expected to meet grade level requirements ➤ School focuses large portion of school day on basic subjects (reading, writing, math) and any other subjects required for grade progression ➤ School has high percentage of children like yours meeting grade level (e.g., percent at grade level for your child's race, family income, previous performance) ➤ School provides individual or small group tutoring for children not meeting grade level requirements ➤ School changes teaching approach if child's progress falls below expected 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are all children expected to meet grade level, or do you expect that some will fail each year? Why? ➤ What does your school do to help children who are struggling to meet grade level? ➤ How much time in each day is spent on reading, math and writing? Other subjects required for students to pass from grade to grade? ➤ My child is _____ (describe why you think your child may be at risk of not making grade level). What does your school do to help make sure children like that achieve at grade level? <p>Teachers and Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal for each teacher's class <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask to talk with parents of similar children ➤ Ask how the school has helped their children succeed ➤ Ask what problems they see <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for emphasis on grade level achievement for all <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are teachers engaging all of the children in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that <i>all</i> children get a chance to participate and • Making sure that all children are paying attention and • Insisting that all children learn the material?
Goals for your child: Academic Performance ...continues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly states that it expects children to achieve <i>beyond</i> grade level requirements when they are ready ➤ School assesses individual student readiness and sets individual goals, with grade level as a bare minimum; goals are continually raised as child progresses beyond grade level ➤ School monitors children's individual learning frequently (<i>at least</i> every 6 weeks, weekly ideal) during year to ensure that unexpected barriers to child's achievement have not arisen ➤ School changes teaching approach if child's progress falls below expected 	<p>See Basic Learning Capability section of table <i>Child Needs: What to Look for in a School</i>. Ask questions for children of your child's current capability.</p>

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School ...cont.

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Goals for your child: Academic Performance <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School does what it should to meet requirements of child with your child's Basic Learning Capability (see <i>Child Needs: What to Look for in a School</i>) 	See Basic Learning Capability section of table <i>Child Needs: What to Look for in a School</i> . Ask questions for children of your child's current capability.
Goals for your child: College Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If child is Challenged or Typical in Basic Learning Capability, choose school for Grade Progression, above ➤ If child is Gifted or Highly Gifted in Basic Learning Capability, choose school for Academic Performance above ➤ For all students: curriculum in elementary should allow entry into middle and high school courses <i>required</i> by colleges and universities and <i>optional</i> advanced placement level classes in subjects where your child excels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If child is at risk of not passing grade level, see questions above for Grade Progression. ➤ If child may be able to perform beyond grade level, see Basic Learning Capability section of <i>Child Needs: What to Look for in a School</i>. Ask questions for children of your child's current capability. <p>Also ask Principal and Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What exactly does your school do to ensure that students in higher elementary grades will be ready to take honors or advanced classes in middle and high school?
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS		
Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manners with other children ➤ Manners with adults ➤ Dress ➤ Discipline ➤ Honor code ➤ Other behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School clearly states its overall values, and ➤ School clearly states its expectations for student conduct both in and out of the classroom, including consequences for not meeting expectations, and ➤ School's rules and expectations for students are consistent with your family's values, including your opinions about these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manners with other children • Manners with adults • Dress code • Honor code • General discipline policy (what acts are punished and how punishment is administered) <p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School actually adheres to its own values, rules and expectations in daily school life. 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What social values are most important in your school? ➤ Does your school expect certain behaviors and conduct from students in and out of the classroom? ➤ How is that communicated to students and parents? ➤ What are the consequences for not meeting the student conduct expectations? ➤ May want to ask about specific rules and expectations regarding items of particular importance to you: manners expected (e.g., on playground, at lunch), dress code, general discipline policy, honor code. <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you find that you are able to enforce your school's conduct rules (be specific: honor code, discipline policy, character code, etc.)? What's the biggest challenge? ➤ What social values do you think are most important in your school? ➤ What kinds of problems do you see with student behavior outside of the classroom, in the lunch room, playground and so forth? ➤ How do students treat other students who are different from the norm?
<i>...continues</i>		

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manners with other children ➤ Manners with adults ➤ Dress ➤ Discipline ➤ Honor code ➤ Other behaviors <p>...continued</p>		<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How have you found the social behavior of the other students in your child's school? ➤ Do you like the social values that the school reinforces? Which values? How are they reinforced? ➤ Have you noticed any problems with student social behavior? What? How does school deal with that? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for clear statement of school's social values. ➤ Look for clear statement of student conduct rules and expectations (especially ones important to you). ➤ Look for clear statement of how school expects students to behave in and out of classroom. <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ During your observation time, notice whether teachers insist that children adhere to expected behaviors. ➤ Do teachers treat infractions as mere chances to inflict punishment, or do they use them as a chance to reiterate the underlying values and teach children better ways to behave? ➤ How are students who appear different from others treated? ➤ How do teachers who hear students treating others unkindly respond?
<p>Values about how children should learn:</p> <p>Teaching method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher directed ➤ Student discovery ➤ Mixed approach <p>...continues</p>	<p>Look for clear school statement of teaching methods used throughout the school, and look for method that fits your values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher directed, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set goals for whole class and define activity steps • Teachers, not students, do most of the talking, or teachers direct and control class discussions • More whole-class, big-group learning, less small group and individual learning ➤ Student discovery, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students set some individual and group goals within pre-defined topic areas • Teachers encourage students to think of questions and discuss or research answers before teachers "tell answer" 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there a certain teaching method teachers are expected to use here? Please describe. ➤ Do the teachers decide what activities children will engage in all day or do students have some choice? Is the answer the same for all subjects, or does it vary? Can you give me examples? ➤ Do teachers do most of the talking and directing of discussions? Or are students asked to come up with some of own questions and do some activities on their own? Examples? Vary across subjects? ➤ How much time is spent in whole class, small group and individual activities each day? Does this vary in different classrooms or grades?

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School ...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
Values about how children should <i>learn</i>: Teaching method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher directed ➤ Student discovery ➤ Mixed approach <p>...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More small group and individual learning, less whole-class, big-group learning 	Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal for each teacher's own class. Parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal and teachers – confirm consistency of school's approach. Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for written statement about teaching method expected in school. Observation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are teachers instructing students in the way described by principal, teachers, parents and written materials?
Values about how children should <i>learn</i>: Classroom behavior management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Controlling/Strict ➤ Developmental ➤ Mixed approach 	<p>Look for clear school statement of behavior management used throughout the school's <i>classrooms</i>, and look for method that fits your values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Controlling/Strict, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, written rules of classroom behavior expectations • Clear punishments for breaking rules, rewards for adhering to rules • Little tolerance for not fitting into behavior guidelines ➤ Developmental, look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent, small rewards or recognition for positive behaviors • Before exacting punishments, teachers coach students to understand their own emotions (students') and to improve self-control in response to emotions • Teachers modify teaching method to ensure all students are engaged • Teachers use peer group pressure, parents and principal to reinforce expected behaviors 	Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you expect teachers to take a certain approach to managing children's behavior in the classroom? What approach is expected or commonly used? ➤ If you do expect a certain approach, do teachers receive any training in this approach? ➤ What does a teacher do if he or she is having trouble managing children's behavior? (Look for principal who acts as coach to teachers, helps them resolve problems and improve behavior management.) Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do you keep children's behavior in the classroom focused on school work? ➤ What do you do if a child is having behavior problems? Parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How have you felt about the teachers' handling of classroom behavior? ➤ Have you known about any serious behavior problems among children in the classroom? What do the teachers and principal do about that? Written Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of how teachers manage classroom behavior. Observation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does teacher behavior match what you expect based on principal and teacher comments?

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued		
<p>Your role as advocate for child (understanding, communicating and influencing school to address your child's learning needs). The greater your ability, the less important for school to help you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School that fits all of your <i>child's</i> needs very closely, or ➤ School uses individualized approach to student education, including <i>frequent assessment</i> of child's academic, social, emotional and physical development. School <i>changes</i> child's learning goals and the teaching approach accordingly <p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School communicates very frequently with parents about individual children's progress and behavior (at least weekly is ideal), and ➤ School has very strong and consistent leadership and teacher quality (see Great School Quality Factor #7: Instructional Leadership) 	<p>All questions related to your child's specific fit needs, or:</p> <p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How closely are you able to track the individual development (academic, social, emotional and physical) of children at this school? Who is responsible for this? How do they do it? Is it consistently done in all grades? ➤ What changes are made to a child's learning goals and the teaching approach to respond to children's individual needs? ➤ How do teachers communicate with parents about their individual children's progress and behavior? How often? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal for teachers' own classes. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal for parents' own children. ➤ How closely has school monitored your child's development? ➤ How often has school communicated with you about your child's development? ➤ How well has school met your individual child's needs? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of monitoring children's progress and development not just academically, but also socially, emotionally and physically. ➤ Look for specifics about changing learning goals and teaching approach for individual students. ➤ Look for mention of how teachers are expected to communicate about children with parents.
SOCIAL ISSUES		
<p>Parent Community</p> <p>I want my child's school to have parents with particular characteristics</p> <p>...continues</p>	<p>Look for school with parent population that matches the list you have created.</p>	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask questions about parent population, according to the profile you have created <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask questions about parents each teacher has encountered, according to the ideal list you have created

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont.

If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have	...Then Look For This in a School	...And Ask These Questions
SOCIAL ISSUES...continued		
<p>Parent Community</p> <p>I want my child's school to have parents with particular characteristics</p> <p>...continued</p>		<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask questions about parent population, according to the ideal list you have created ➤ Ask questions of individual parents you meet to see if values and other characteristics are consistent with what you want <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for information about parents that informs you about the characteristics important to you <p>Observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do parents speak and act – with their own children, other students, teachers, principal and each other? Does this match what you want? ➤ Do you feel comfortable with other parents from this school? How will your comfort level affect your ability to participate in the school community and help your child build social relationships?
<p>Parent Involvement in School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Helping ➤ Decision-making ➤ Fundraising activities 	<p>Look for parent <i>policy</i> and <i>actual</i> parent involvement that match types and level of involvement you want, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parent Involvement Policy: formal opportunities or requirements for parents to participate in school in ways and at level you want, without obligation to participate in ways or at level undesirable or unfeasible for you ➤ Actual Parent Involvement Level: percentage of parents and time committed actually volunteering at school match what you want ➤ Actual Parent Roles: parents actually participate in school life in ways you want 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you have a parent involvement policy? What is it? ➤ What opportunities are there for parents to participate in the school? Can you give me examples? (Ask about any specific roles you might want to play.) ➤ Is participation required or optional? ➤ What percentage of parents actually volunteer at the school each year? ➤ How much volunteer time per parent is typical? ➤ Where is most of parent time spent? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do parent volunteers help you? Do you find that helpful? Are there other things you wish parents would do to help? <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have you volunteered in the school? What have you done? Was it satisfying? How did it help the school? ➤ What expectations do parents have for each others' involvement? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read parent involvement policy. ➤ In other materials (newsletters, etc.), look for mention of current parent involvement and requests for help from parents – does this match what you want?

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

...cont. A CONFIDENT CHOICE Tool

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<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
SOCIAL ISSUES...continued		
Student Community I want my child's school to have students with particular characteristics	Look for school with student population that matches the list you have created.	Principal: ➤ Ask questions about student population, according to the profile you have created Teachers: ➤ Ask questions about student population each teacher has encountered, according to the profile you have created Parents: ➤ Ask questions about student population, according to the profile you have created ➤ Ask questions of individual students you meet to see if behavior and other characteristics are consistent with what you want Written Materials: ➤ Look for statistics about student population ➤ Look for mention of student actions and behaviors – do they match what you want in student population? Observation: ➤ How do students speak and act – with each other, parents, teachers and principal? Does this match what you want?
I want my child to attend a certain school, school type, or school design	The school, type or design you prefer	➤ If your bias is toward a particular school, confirm that the school has the offerings and characteristics you expected. ➤ If your bias is toward a type of school, confirm that the school has the offerings and characteristics you expect in a school of that type. ➤ If design, confirm that school is in fact using the design as you expect.
PRACTICAL MATTERS		
Child Care ➤ Before school ➤ After school ➤ Holidays ➤ Summer	School meeting your needs in the following areas: ➤ Hours and days that care is provided ➤ Transportation to/from school and to/from home ➤ Snacks or meals provided ➤ Safe supervision of child ➤ Academic or developmental assistance ➤ Structured or unstructured time for your child ➤ Care for your multiple children ➤ Cost Stop by your community's child care resource and referral agency for more information about non-school care options.	➤ From any source available to you, find out facts about this school's child care offerings ➤ Ask parents who have used care services about their satisfaction with each aspect important to you (see list to left).

Family Needs: What to Look for in a School

<i>If This is a Must Have or Nice to Have</i>	<i>...Then Look For This in a School</i>	<i>...And Ask These Questions</i>
PRACTICAL MATTERS...continued		
Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Daily hours ➤ Yearly (start/finish and holidays) 	Look for school accommodating your daily and annual scheduling needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If available, be sure to look at the coming years, not just the current one, for any changes. ➤ Ask if the schedule is likely to change significantly from year to year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ From any source available to you, find out facts about this school's schedule ➤ School web sites and written sources often have the basics of current daily schedule and yearly calendar
Transportation Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To school ➤ After school ➤ After school activities 	School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides transportation or ➤ Is within walking or bicycling distance for you and child (or child alone) to and from home, child care, and extracurricular activities. ➤ Find out what, if any, cost is involved in school-provided transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ From any source available to you, find out facts about this school's transportation offerings ➤ School web sites and written sources often have the basics of current transportation offerings and cost <p>Parents who have used school transportation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have you found school transportation to be reliable (on time, shows up every day)? ➤ Safe (good drivers, good behavior on bus)? If there have been serious behavior problems on the bus, how has the school responded? ➤ Reasonable in cost (if any)? How much?
Location proximity to your home or work	Look for school in location desired, near home, work or other critical location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Just note whether location meets your need. May want to rank your school options according to how well they meet your need, e.g., #1= best location, #2 = next best.
Your Other Children	<p>Same School: Look for school that may be suitable for all of your children (e.g., that accommodates varying ages and learning needs)</p> <p>Different Schools: Look for schools with compatible schedules, locations, and transportation to accommodate your different children without disrupting family life</p>	<p>From whatever source available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same School: Determine how well school meets your children's differing individual needs (See Child Needs tables) ➤ Different Schools: Determine schools' schedules, locations, transportation and fit with other family needs to determine compatibility
Money available to pay for school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Schools with combined total cost (tuition, fees, supplies, dress, lunch, and expected donation, etc.) within your Target (or Maximum) ➤ Subtract potential scholarship and voucher funds from total cost to determine schools that you could afford 	<p>From whatever source available (web sites and written materials are good places to start):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are tuition and fees for the year? ➤ What other costs should we expect? (Be sure to ask about these: books, supplies, dress/uniforms, lunches, snacks, special fees for trips or other activities, expected donations, class gifts for teachers.) ➤ What scholarships might be available to a child like mine? How do we apply? What are our chances (or how many children get a scholarship like that each year)? ➤ Are government vouchers available that can be used to pay some of tuition here?

Quality: What to Look for in a School

How to Use This Table:

- Use the *Great School Quality Checklist* on page 200 as a starting point.
- If you want more help understanding a Great School Quality Factor, find the companion section in this table.
- Make a note of specific questions you want to ask or quality details you'd like to seek in a school.
- Also use this table to make finer distinctions between two or more schools very similar in quality.
- Focusing on **bolded** questions and things to seek will help you quickly identify important quality strengths and weaknesses in each school you consider.

<i>Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School</i>	<i>Questions to Ask</i>
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR # 1	
<p>Clear Mission Guiding School Activities</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School has written mission that accurately communicates school's focus and priorities ➤ School has memorable motto that communicates one or two most important points of mission – and everyone knows this by heart ➤ School consistently communicates its mission through principal, teachers, parents, and written materials ➤ School has goals for overall student achievement, overall student improvement and other important indicators of whether school is meeting its mission. These are adjusted yearly, but may include longer-term goals, too (e.g., progress towards higher student achievement over 5 years). ➤ School has clear set of skill and knowledge goals for all students in each grade and subject ("standards"). These should clearly show what students should know ("knowledge") and be able to do ("skills") by the end of each year. School should also have a method for raising goals for students who are ready. Do both of these support mission? ➤ School's curriculum (class materials and activities), teaching method and other activities (e.g., parent volunteer work) support school mission. 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the mission of your school? ➤ What is your school motto? ➤ Does your school have certain goals it is trying to meet overall for this year? What are they? How will meeting these goals support your mission? ➤ Does your school have a written set of skills and knowledge students are expected to gain ("standards")? Are goals ever changed for some students? How do all of these learning goals for students support the mission? ➤ How does the curriculum (class materials and activities) support the mission? ➤ How do teaching methods support the mission? ➤ How do parent activities support the mission? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal – look for consistency. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal – look for consistency. ➤ Has your child had a <i>stable and consistent</i> experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the school turned out the way you expected for your child? • Have the teachers been similar in quality and approach? • Has what your child learned each year built on the past year? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for clear, consistent expression of school's mission, including repetition of motto summarizing mission. ➤ Look for communication of school-wide achievement and improvement goals. May include student achievement, parent satisfaction, student turnover, teacher turnover and other factors that support mission. ➤ Are the grade level student goals clear and consistent with mission? ➤ Look for explanations about how the student goals, curriculum, teaching method and parent activities support the mission. Is this consistent with what you've heard from principal, teachers, and parents? <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you see activities in classrooms consistent with what you have read and heard about curriculum and teaching method? ➤ Do you see the school motto and/or key mission points posted and used throughout the school?

Quality: What to Look for in a School ...continued

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #2	
<p>High Expectations for All Students: High Minimum Expectations for All</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The school's minimum expected skill and knowledge goals for each grade and subject ("standards") are challenging for most students, but attainable by all * ➤ Principal & teachers have school-wide plan to ensure that <i>all</i> students achieve at least grade level goals in basics (reading, math, writing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal, teachers express expectation that all children will meet grade level • Principal, teachers take planned steps to ensure grade level achievement by all • Principal, teachers do not make excuses for failing students; maintain consistent expectation for grade level achievement ➤ Test scores show that a very high percentage of students actually achieves at least grade level in basics by year end, regardless of starting achievement level, race, and family income ➤ Progress or growth scores show that a very high percentage of students makes significant progress, at least one grade's worth, from beginning to end of school year 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the source of minimum grade level standards – state, national or school's own? (May be helpful for comparison if source of standards is pre-existing one that has been rated. See the Resources for Parents section starting on page 354 for links to information about standards.) ➤ Do most students in your school find the grade level goals challenging to meet? ➤ *If your child tests Extremely Challenged in Basic Learning Capability only: Is there a clear set of challenging but achievable learning goals for students like my child? What is the source of these standards? Or, is there a defined process for the school and parents to agree on individualized learning goals for each student? ➤ What specific actions does your school take for children who are at risk of not meeting the grade level standards? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for consistency <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for consistency ➤ Ask parents of students who have struggled: What has school done to help your child meet grade level? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Written grade level goals or standards: how challenging are they? (Compare to state or national standards or to other schools you are considering.) ➤ Look for explanation of steps taken to ensure that all children achieve at least grade level expectations
<p>High Expectations for All Students: Higher Expectations for Students Who are Ready</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Skill and knowledge goals are adjusted upward throughout year, to stay challenging but achievable, for all students who are ready to proceed beyond grade level ➤ Principal & teachers have and use a school-wide plan to ensure that individual students with higher learning goals achieve them <p style="text-align: right;"><i>...continues</i></p>	<p>Principal and Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What does your school do for children who are ready to go beyond grade level? ➤ What about students who are already beyond grade level in a subject? ➤ Do all teachers in your school approach this in a similar way, or does it vary? ➤ Do you have anything written that shows the levels of skill and knowledge through which students advance in basic subjects? Does this extend beyond grade level? <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal and teachers. Look for consistency ➤ Ask parents of students who are advanced academically: What has school done to challenge your child? (Look for advanced goals and work in core academic areas for significant portion of each school day.)

Quality: What to Look for in a School

...continued

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #2 ...continued	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Test scores are <i>not</i> clustered only at grade level; some students – <i>at least</i> number classified as “gifted” — have very high test scores ➤ Progress or growth scores show that top students make significant progress from beginning to end of school year 	<p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for mention of how school addresses academic needs of students who are advanced, ahead of grade level, or “gifted.” Is this consistent with what you have heard? ➤ Look for written set of progressively more challenging skills and knowledge students are expected to master, at least in basic subjects. This should extend well beyond grade level.
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #3	
<p>Monitoring of Progress and Adjusting Teaching</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School frequently monitors/assesses students’ individual progress towards their learning goals, at least in basic subjects (continual informal assessment by teachers, plus formal assessment every 6 weeks <i>minimum</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring may be done in very small groups or one-on-one • Monitoring may be done by lead teacher or other skilled staff (or using computer technology) ➤ Teachers change teaching approach, when needed, to ensure that every child achieves his or her learning goals (whether grade level or higher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have freedom and flexibility to make changes in classroom teaching that help students meet goals • Teachers regularly consider and address as needed a broad range of potential barriers to – and opportunities to enhance – learning, including: sound social, emotional and physical health; children’s interests, nonacademic strengths, and learning styles; and learning disorders and disabilities • Changes are used to help students meet learning goals, not to lower goals or overall academic expectations ➤ Students are grouped for instruction in core academic subjects so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups are small enough that teachers can engage and monitor each child • Children are assigned to groups based on their current readiness / understanding <p>...continues</p>	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do you monitor individual student progress during the year? How often? ➤ What systems do teachers have to obtain and keep track of data about how their students are learning? ➤ What changes do you make for children who are having trouble meeting grade level goals? How often? ➤ What changes do you make if a child is ahead of grade level, but not making further progress? How often? ➤ How are children grouped for learning, especially in basics (reading, math, writing)? How large are the groups? How often do these groupings change? (Schools that place each student in a fixed “ability” group for the entire year are not meeting this Great School Quality Factor. This is “tracking,” and it indicates that the school does not use monitoring to change student learning goals. If you hear something that sounds like tracking, ask whether groupings change during the year.) <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal’s and consistent across teachers within each grade level <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. Look for answers consistent with principal’s and teachers’ ➤ Ask parents of children similar to yours if their children’s work has been monitored and if teachers have consistently made changes to ensure their children’s progress <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for consistent references to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring or assessment of children’s progress during school year • Clear, continuous efforts to ensure all children make progress, even ones already ahead of grade level • Clear, continuous changes made to ensure that struggling students reach grade level • Reference to one or more of the models used to understand and address individual children’s capabilities and needs (multiple intelligences, learning styles, All Kinds of Minds, whole child, etc.), but not as a substitute for high expectations in core academic subjects <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the learning activities described to you by principal, teachers and parents taking place?

Quality: What to Look for in a School ...continued

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #3 ...continued	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can move between groups as they learn (no "tracking" or fixed "ability" groups) • No child works by him or herself all day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are teachers taking advantage of small group or one-on-one work to engage every child? ➤ Are teachers trying different approaches with different children? ➤ Are there any negative consequences of how the class has been arranged to monitor progress? Look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise: class should not be too noisy for multiple groups to work in room • Order: children should know what they are supposed to be doing at all times – are they <i>engaged</i> in their small group and individual work? • Isolation: no child in elementary grades should be doing work all by him or herself all day. Even if a student is very far ahead or behind academically, part of day should be spent with other children and some working with an adult.
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #4	
<p>Focus on Effective Learning Tasks</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teaching, learning approaches, and materials used are effective for most of the school's students • School staff have a regular process for assessing which methods and materials work with the students in the school • School staff have an established process for keeping up with academic research about what works best in each subject and with different children (by age, background and other differences) • Methods, materials that work best with most students in a school are used most often • Methods, materials that are not working for actual students attending a school are replaced ➤ Class time is allocated according to importance of subjects (consistent with school's mission and learning goals) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant time spent on core academic subjects • Time spent on each additional subject reflects school mission ➤ Materials and facilities are allocated according to importance of subjects (consistent with mission and learning goals) ➤ Principal and teachers limit class interruptions (e.g., announcements, students leaving room, visitors) 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What does your school do to stay current with best education techniques? Have you made any recent changes? (Listen for continuous, regular changes in school curriculum, teaching methods and materials, based on current research) ➤ Do you think your school is using the most effective teaching techniques now? What are areas you might be changing soon? ➤ What part of your facility and materials do you think is closest to "state of the art"? (Should include academic items – library, classrooms well-stocked with core materials, science center or science materials in classrooms, computers used for core academics.) ➤ Do you think there are any shortages or problems with materials and facilities at your school? How does this affect what students learn in core academic subjects? ➤ How does your school prevent class time from being interrupted in the middle of learning activities? (Look for clear policies.) Does that work? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal, for each teacher's own class. ➤ What is the daily and weekly schedule? (Look at a sample of the grades your child will be attending. Look at how time is allocated among subjects. Do reading, writing, and math receive significant time? Is coverage of other items consistent with school's mission and learning goals?) <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does your child complain about class interruptions? ➤ Do you think there are any shortages or problems with materials and facilities at your school? How has this affected your child? ➤ Has your child experienced any problems with what is taught or how it's taught at your school? ➤ Have you seen any changes in what your school is teaching or how? Has that worked for your child? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Describe use of learning programs, especially in reading, that have been shown by research to work (see the Resources for Parents section starting on page 354 for information about research on reading and other topics)

Quality: What to Look for in a School ...continued

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #5	
<p>Home-School Connection</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School tells parents in advance what children will be learning at school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At beginning of each year • Frequently during year as new topics and more challenging work are introduced ➤ School tells parents how they should help with children's learning (homework, attendance, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general • On specific assignments ➤ School updates parents frequently on each child's achievement and progress, in academics, class behavior, and other measures important to the school's mission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently on a pre-set schedule and • As needed when problems arise ➤ School works with parents to resolve problems through changes at school and home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By setting expectation that education is a family-school partnership • By including parents in problem identification and problem solving ➤ School identifies common challenges among parents and families of children attending the school and works proactively to strengthen families and important parenting skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School partners with social services organization when needed to serve school's parents and families • School offers programs to increase parent skills in needed areas (general parenting skills, language, academic know-how, etc.) 	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you tell parents in advance what their children should be learning? How often? How is this communicated? ➤ Do you have certain expectations about how parents will help their children with learning at home? How do you communicate that? ➤ How often do teachers update parents on their children's progress and behavior? How? ➤ What happens if a student is having an academic or behavior problem? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has your child's school told you what your child will be learning at the beginning of each year? How? ➤ Do you know how you are expected to help your child with school work? ➤ How often do teachers keep you updated on your child's progress? How? Does that work for you? ➤ Do you know what the school does if a child is having problems? Does that work for you? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for clear, parent-friendly communication in newsletters, websites, and other materials about the school's standards and learning programs ➤ Look for mention of how school communicates with parents, when, and expected role of parents with regard to their own children's educations ➤ Examine materials used by the school to communicate with parents <i>about their own children</i> (e.g., report cards, folders sent home weekly, daily behavior reports). How frequently do parents receive these? Do they contain useful information?
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #6	
<p>Safe and Orderly Environment</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students know where they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to behave, both in and out of the classroom ➤ Students focus on school work in the classroom <p style="text-align: right;"><i>...continues</i></p>	<p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you have certain behaviors expected of students in the classroom and other activities? How is this communicated? ➤ Do you have problems with students not complying with expected behaviors? ➤ When problems with student behavior happen, what do teachers do? What is your role in discipline? ➤ Do you have a policy about how students are supposed to act towards each other? What happens if a student violates this? ➤ What are your biggest safety concerns here? What do you do about that?

Quality: What to Look for in a School ...continued

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #6 ...continued	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consequences for behavior problems – from the mildest to most challenging – are clear and consistently applied ➤ School communicates and enforces policies that keep students and staff safe from harm by outsiders, other students or staff. Policies are appropriate for the location and population. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal background checks for all staff • Other job-appropriate checks, e.g., driver record for bus drivers • Clear, enforced procedures for visitor sign in and tracking • Clear, enforced procedures for pick-up of students by adults during and after school • Clear policies for staff to follow regarding one-on-one interactions between students and staff (e.g., open doors, two-way mirrors on doors) ➤ School communicates and enforces policies that keep students and staff safe from harm by equipment and facility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies to cover extraordinary situations (e.g., fire, threats to school) • Policies regarding routine cleaning and repair of equipment and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is your policy on visitors? ➤ Do you have rules about how staff and students interact in one-on-one situations to keep students safe? ➤ How do you screen staff for basic safety issues? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same as principal, except last two bullets. <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have your child's classrooms (or other school activities, including bus) experienced any problems with disruptive student behavior? Was the problem resolved? ➤ Has your child or any child you know experienced problems with bad behavior by other students (e.g., too much teasing, threats)? What did the school do about this? ➤ Do you feel that your child is safe at school? Why or why not? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for clear, written policies on the following (at least): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student behavior expected – in the classroom and out • Behavior that is not tolerated • Bus behavior • Consequences for violations • Visitor sign in and tracking • Pick-up of students during and after school • Staff background checks • Staff-student interactions • Extraordinary situations (e.g., fire, threats to school) • Routine cleaning and repair of equipment and facilities <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are classrooms, halls, lunchroom and other places in school orderly? (Note: "orderly" does not necessarily mean "silent" or "still." In a school that expects students to participate in conversation and hands-on activities, there will be a constant buzz and movement. As long as this represents engagement rather than chaos, you shouldn't regard it as a sign of "disorder.") ➤ Are students engaged in appropriate activity, not too loud and not bothering other students and staff? ➤ Is behavior observed consistent with behavior guidelines and teaching methods of school? ➤ Do equipment and facility appear clean and in good repair?
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #7	
<p>Strong Instructional Leadership</p> <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Principal sets clear, challenging expectations for teacher performance ➤ Principal actively recruits and keeps teachers who meet or exceed performance expectations <p style="text-align: right;"><i>...continues</i></p>	<p>Principal (see Chapter 14 for more information about what to ask principals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do you recruit good quality teachers? ➤ Have you been able to keep good teachers? How? ➤ What do you expect of teachers once they are here? ➤ Do teachers work together? How? ➤ How do you keep up with individual teachers' performance? ➤ How do you help teachers who need to improve in an area? ➤ If the school needs to improve in an area, how is that determined?

Quality: What to Look for in a School

Great School Quality Factors: What to Look for in a School	Questions to Ask
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #7 ...continued	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Principal actively ensures that teachers work together, within and across grades, to meet school learning goals ➤ Principal monitors individual teacher performance ➤ Principal and teachers regularly identify school-wide problems and make improvements ➤ Principal ensures that teachers engage in professional development that helps staff achieve school mission and learning goals by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing common gaps in student achievement • Addressing problems keeping individual teachers from helping students meet learning goals • Not: teachers choose whatever they want, regardless of school needs ➤ Principal holds staff accountable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards and recognizes high performance • Rids school of low performers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What kinds of improvements have you been able to make? ➤ How are professional development activities for teachers chosen? ➤ Have you ever had to fire a teacher who was not getting students to learn? <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you have freedom to make changes in how you teach day-to-day to make sure every student is learning? Examples? ➤ Do you feel pushed by the principal to perform? Examples? ➤ Do you think the principal recognizes good teacher performance? ➤ Does the principal help you if you are having trouble teaching a student in your class? How? ➤ Do you like your job? (Listen for: "Yes. It's hard work, but we achieve a lot." Or "Yes. It's hard work, but we have a huge impact on children here.") <p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has your child had <i>consistently</i> good teachers? ➤ If not, what did principal do about the ineffective teacher(s)? Is that teacher still at the school? <p>Written Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for kudos given to high-performing teachers who help school meet its goals ➤ Beware if principal or written material gives only blanket praise to all teachers, regardless of performance (blanket "thank you" is fine, but also look for recognition for highest performers) ➤ Do test scores show weakness in a single grade or class that goes unaddressed by principal? <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do you see consistent teacher quality across school? If not, does principal have a plan for improving the situation quickly?

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

How to Use This Table:

- Read sections matching your child's Must Haves and Nice to Haves.
- Identify which child needs you can most easily meet outside of school.
- Once you have chosen a school, use to help plan non-school experiences for your child.
- Some of the suggested actions, such as hiring a tutor, seeing a counselor, and enrolling your child in activities, can be expensive. Local community organizations, public libraries, and other agencies, however, may offer some of these services and activities free or at reduced prices.
- Add your own ideas! (And, if you like, share them with other parents at PickyParent.com)

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Basic Learning Capability Your child's readiness for learning in core academic subjects	<p>If school is not a good fit for your child's Basic Learning Capability, keep track of the following items, especially ones that are Must Haves for your child (see BLC categories below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: What your child knows and can do, particularly in reading, math and writing. Look at your child's work after it is completed and graded. Ideally, compare your child's current level of mastery to the school's standards for current and surrounding grades (or state or national standards). ➤ Breadth: Topics covered, and not covered, in your child's curriculum. Assess how the non-basic subjects covered <i>reinforce</i> basic subjects, <i>motivate</i> and interest your child, and cover broadening topics that <i>you value</i>. ➤ Critical Thinking: How much your child's program includes analytical problem solving (non-fiction writing, projects, research, other chances to figure out problems and organize steps to reach a goal), conceptual thinking (projects, research, all writing except purely descriptive) and creative thinking (creative writing of stories, poetry, drama; creative art; thinking of own topics or research questions for study; other chances to think of new ideas) ➤ Social Needs: Keep track of your child's successes and challenges in developing positive relationships with other children, both one-on-one and in groups. <p>In general, consider the following non-school sources for educational and developmental assistance with your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extracurricular activities with other children in groups outside of school ➤ Individual private lessons or tutoring ➤ Individual counseling with a psychologist or other trained counselor ➤ Set aside work time, and help your child pursue activities independently (e.g., provide needed transportation, materials, equipment and space for work at home) ➤ Take your child to public facilities, such as museums and libraries, that have information and exhibits ➤ Help your child find biographies of people who have traits in common with your child ➤ Help your child find websites to educate and develop ➤ Purchase computer software to develop your child's skill and knowledge ➤ Form an out-of-school club with similar children ➤ Help your child find friends with similar characteristics ➤ Seek out community organizations that support children and families like yours
Basic Learning Capability: Extremely Challenged <i>...continues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pace: Must Have. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange private at-home or small group tutoring tailored to your child's current level of capability ➤ Breadth: Must Have. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange private at home or small group activities to teach life skills (taking care of self, organizing the steps of a healthy and safe day) • Select activities to stimulate multiple senses and brain regions. For example: playing

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS... continued	
Basic Learning Capability: Extremely Challenged ...continued	<p>and moving to music; painting, clay work and other "touch" activities; physical activity with whole body (e.g., swimming, dancing) and small muscles (e.g., ball play, painting, drawing); viewing a stimulating visual environment (e.g. pictures on walls of animals and nature, posters of basic life skill activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enroll your child in enjoyable non-school activities, with similarly able children or more typical ones. Discuss your child's abilities and needs with instructors in advance <p>➤ Critical Thinking: Less Important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help your child learn basic life skill problem solving (taking care of self, organizing the steps of a healthy and safe day) <p>➤ Social Needs: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join or organize community groups or small "play group" so your child may enjoy social and/or learning activities with similar children Arrange one-on-one play time with similar children
Basic Learning Capability: Challenged	<p>➤ Pace: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review your child's completed and graded school work and home work If child is having difficulty, immediately discuss with teacher tactics for helping with school work at home Do drills (repetitive studying) and try other ways of helping your child study current school topics at home. Or, hire tutor (or see if school can provide) for additional study of basic school topics If child is "acing" every assignment in some subjects, but struggling in others, have your child tested immediately to see if a learning disability is leading to uneven performance. School may provide testing or you may seek through a private counselor <p>➤ Breadth: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help your child choose a <i>limited</i> number of extracurricular activities to pursue (in groups, with private tutors, etc.) Ensure that, <i>over time</i>, your child is exposed to mix of physical, creative, analytical, artistic, language and mathematical/scientific topics and sensory experiences. Non-school activities are more likely to broaden knowledge than to motivate or reinforce school academic learning, since activities will not be coordinated with current school work <p>➤ Critical Thinking: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage creativity and problem solving in your child's home life. Get child's input into creative activities (e.g., decorating, landscaping). Allow or pay child to take on multi-step home projects; help child plan work steps before doing the work, and encourage self-critiquing of own work at end Provide materials at home that encourage creativity (art, music, story tapes, fiction books) and problem solving (crosswords, puzzles, step-by-step models, brain teasers, non-fiction books) Help your child find extracurricular activities of interest that develop creative and conceptual thinking (e.g., art, drama, science) and problem solving (e.g., chess club, carpentry) <p>➤ Social Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage child to develop friendships with many types of children from many sources (school, neighborhood, religious organizations, extracurricular activities)
Basic Learning Capability: Typical ...continues	<p>➤ Pace: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review child's completed and graded school work If child is having more difficulty than previously, discuss with teacher tactics for reinforcing school work at home

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Basic Learning Capability: Typical ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do drills (repetitive studying) and try other ways of helping your child study current school topics at home. Or, hire tutor (or see if school can provide) for additional study of basic school topics • If child is "acing" every assignment, add pacing activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach your child to face new mental challenges in core academic areas (reading, math, writing) by introducing more advanced skills and concepts than school offers • Do "school at home" in non-school hours, either yourself or by hiring a tutor in core areas (math, reading, writing). Use school's own standards, learning goals or curriculum outline to determine next challenging steps, if possible • If child is "acing" assignments in some subjects or types of work, but struggling in others, have your child tested immediately to see if a learning disability is leading to uneven performance. School may provide testing or you may seek through a private counselor <p>➤ Breadth: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child choose a <i>limited</i> number of extracurricular activities to pursue (in groups, with private tutors, etc.) • Ensure that, <i>over time</i>, your child is exposed to mix of physical, creative, analytical, artistic, language and mathematical/scientific topics and sensory experiences. Non-school activities are more likely to broaden knowledge than to motivate or reinforce school academic learning, since activities will not be coordinated with current school work <p>➤ Critical Thinking: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage creativity and problem solving in your child's home life. Get child's input into creative activities (e.g., decorating, landscaping). Allow or pay child to take on multi-step home projects; help child plan work steps before doing the work, and encourage self-critiquing of own work at end • Provide materials at home that encourage creativity (art, music, story tapes, fiction books) and problem solving (crosswords, puzzles, step-by-step models, brain teasers, nonfiction books) • Help your child find extracurricular activities of interest that develop creative and conceptual thinking (e.g., art, drama, science) and problem solving (e.g., chess club, carpentry) <p>➤ Social Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage child to develop friendships with many types of children from many sources (school, neighborhood, religious organizations, extracurriculars)
Basic Learning Capability: Bright/Gifted ...continues	<p>➤ Pace: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach your child to face new mental challenges in core academic areas (reading, math, writing) by introducing more advanced skills and concepts than school offers • Do "school at home" in non-school hours, either yourself or by hiring a tutor in core areas (math, reading, writing). Use school's own standards for current and higher grades to determine next challenging steps, if possible <p>➤ Breadth: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child choose a <i>limited</i> number of extracurricular activities to pursue (in groups, with private tutors, etc.) • Ensure that, <i>over time</i>, your child is exposed to mix of physical, creative, analytical, artistic, language and mathematical/scientific topics and sensory experiences. Non-school activities are more likely to broaden knowledge than to motivate or reinforce school academic learning, since activities will not be coordinated with current school work

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS... continued	
Basic Learning Capability: Bright/Gifted <i>...continued</i>	<p>➤ Critical Thinking: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage creativity and problem solving in your child's home life. Get child's input into creative activities (e.g., decorating, landscaping). Allow or pay child to take on multi-step home projects; help child plan work steps before doing the work, and encourage self-critiquing of own work at end • Provide materials at home that encourage creativity (art, music, story tapes, fiction books) and problem solving (crosswords, puzzles, models, brain teasers, nonfiction books) • Help your child find extracurricular activities of interest that develop creative and conceptual thinking (e.g., art, drama, science) and problem solving (e.g., chess club, science club) <p>➤ Social Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage child to develop friendships with many types of children from many sources (school, neighborhood, religious organizations, extracurriculars) • If child attends school with few bright/gifted children, then play match-maker to help your child meet and develop relationships with similar-capability peers
Basic Learning Capability: Highly Gifted	<p>➤ Pace: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach your child to face new mental challenges in core academic areas (reading, math, writing) by introducing more advanced skills and concepts than school offers • Do "school at home" in non-school hours, either yourself or by hiring a tutor in core areas (math, reading, writing). Use school's own standards for higher grades to determine next challenging steps, if possible <p>➤ Breadth: Nice to Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child choose a <i>limited</i> number of extracurricular activities to pursue (in groups, with private tutors, etc.) • Ensure that, <i>over time</i>, your child is exposed to mix of physical, creative, analytical, artistic, language and mathematical/scientific topics and sensory experiences. Non-school activities are more likely to broaden knowledge than to motivate or reinforce school academic learning, since activities will not be coordinated with current school work • Consider choosing activities likely to draw other highly gifted children for combined breadth and social development (discuss with program directors, if possible) <p>➤ Critical Thinking: Must Have. Critical component to challenge and satisfy these children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage creativity and problem solving in your child's home life. Get child's input into creative activities (e.g., decorating, landscaping). Allow or pay child to take on multi-step home projects; help child plan work steps before doing the work, and encourage self-critiquing of own work at end • Provide materials at home that encourage creativity (art, music, story tapes, fiction books) and problem solving (crosswords, puzzles, models, brain teasers, nonfiction books) • Help your child find extracurricular activities of interest that use creative and conceptual thinking (e.g., art, drama, science) and problem solving (e.g., chess club, science club) <p>➤ Social Needs: Must Have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play match-maker to help your child meet and develop relationships with similar-capability peers • Coach (or hire psychologist skilled in this area to coach) child in social skills needed to develop friendships with others, even when child "feels different" • Seek "matches" from many sources (school, neighborhood, religious organizations, extracurriculars)

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Other Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language 	<p>If your child's school does not nurture your child's strengths or develop weaknesses adequately, consider these alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extracurricular activities with other children in groups outside of school; this allows your child to develop the capability while meeting others who value the same capability ➤ Individual private lessons or tutoring in area of capability; this allows child to maximize individual achievement in capability ➤ Set aside independent work time, and help your child pursue the capability (e.g., provide needed transportation, materials, equipment and space for activity at home) ➤ Take your child to public facilities – such as museums, libraries, and parks – that have information, exhibits and equipment where your child can pursue or learn about child's area of capability ➤ Help your child find biographies of people who have excelled in this area of capability ➤ Help your child find websites about the area of capability ➤ Purchase computer software to improve your child's skill and knowledge ➤ Help child form out-of-school club with friends and others who share the capability ➤ Help your child find friends who share the capability for informal play and work <p>To develop or nurture Social & Leadership Capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enroll your child in group extracurricular activities in which children are able to work together as a group or in pairs. Structured, adult-directed activities alone are not enough. Some of this time needs to be unstructured, with children allowed to make some decisions and work as a group and in pairs ➤ Arrange one-on-one play time and small group activities for your child. Some of these interactions should be with school classmates and can be at your home or the friend's or in extracurricular activities. Some of this time needs to be unstructured, with no grownup dictating activities, for child to develop these skills fully ➤ Take on the role of coach to develop your child's interpersonal skills. Help child recognize and identify emotions and needs of others, and act and communicate appropriately in response. Coach before and after social interactions, not during, so as not to embarrass your child ➤ Hire counselor if your child needs significant interpersonal development or is emotionally fragile as a result of <i>underdeveloped</i> social skills <p>To develop or nurture Creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read your child stories about imaginary people, places and things, including stories about other children who use their imaginations ➤ Tell your child stories about imaginary places and people; encourage your child to tell you similar stories; take turns with your child telling one line each from a story and see how the story progresses as you create together ➤ Once your child is reading, obtain books about imaginary people, places and things, including stories about other children who use their imaginations ➤ Provide toys and materials that require imagination, and make sure your child has big blocks of time each week time with no TV, computer or other "spoon fed" activities. Example indoor materials – plain wooden blocks and other building materials; cloth scraps, yarn, string; a large stack of plain paper, colored pencils, crayons, markers, a glue stick, scissors and tape; plain paper bags, cups and plates; modeling clay or dough. Example outdoor materials – a pile of sticks, mulch, and/or rocks; a small wooden bridge, shovels and buckets, a bird house, a sand box; a simple playhouse

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Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS... continued	
Other Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Musical ➤ Artistic ➤ Physical & Hands-on ➤ Social & Leadership ➤ Creativity ➤ English as Second Language <p>...continued</p>	<p>(without "real" cookware, furniture, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Model creativity yourself. Think out loud with your child about different ways to do things, from decorating the dinner table to new ways to solve problems you face in your adult life (at work, in volunteer activities, in planning home life). Ask yourself out loud in front of child, "what if ...?" ➤ Prompt your child to think of new ideas and different ways to do things. Include concrete tasks like decorating the child's bedroom or deciding what flowers to plant in the window box. Include less tangible tasks like writing about new ideas and imaginary situations in school assignments. Ask your child "what if ...?" <p>To develop English as a Second Language skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Search your community for an international support organization, either focusing on people from your country of origin (or your child's if adopted) or on immigrants in general. Find out what services are available for children ➤ Enroll your child in English classes for children in your community ➤ Invite native English-speaking children over to your house to play. This will ensure that your child has one-on-one conversations to teach "social" English speaking and listening ➤ Check out books and books-on-tape in English at your local library. Books on tape paired with accompanying paper books allow your child to <i>hear and see</i> the words at the same time. Ask your librarian for help or get an English-speaking friend to go with you to help communicate with the librarian the first time. Get to know one librarian who can help you and your child on later visits. Your child's school librarian may be able to help you find materials in your child's school library ➤ Check out or purchase computer software specifically designed to teach English reading, listening, speaking and writing to children ➤ Check out or purchase software designed to teach <i>English-speaking</i> children letters, reading and writing. Start with preschool software, and encourage your child to advance as quickly as possible until reaching the grade your child currently attends ➤ Hire a private tutor to provide individual or small group English lessons to your child ➤ Strive to learn English yourself, and force yourself to speak it at designated times (e.g., at the dinner table or when you are in public with your child)
Interests	<p>If your child's school does not cover your child's interest adequately, consider these alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extracurricular activities with other children in groups outside of school; this allows child to develop the interest while meeting others who share interest ➤ Individual private lessons or tutoring in area of interest; this allows child to maximize individual achievement in interest area ➤ Set aside independent work time, and help your child pursue the interest (e.g., provide needed transportation, materials, equipment and space for work at home) ➤ Take your child to public facilities, such as museums and libraries, that have information and exhibits about child's area of interest ➤ Help your child find biographies of people who have excelled in your child's area of interest ➤ Help your child find websites about the area of interest ➤ If appropriate to interest, purchase computer software to improve your child's skill and knowledge ➤ Help child form out-of-school club with friends and others who share the interest ➤ Help your child find friends who share the interest for informal play and work

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Learning Styles ➤ Visual ➤ Auditory ➤ Kinesthetic/Tactile	<p>In general, if school does not emphasize child's strengths or develop child's weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help your child become aware of his/her favored and less-favored learning styles ➤ Help your child feel proud of and use learning style strengths at home and in non-school activities ➤ For child with extreme strength that is making school difficult or unpleasant (for self or others), discuss with child possible ways to minimize the negative impact on the child and others ➤ Help child develop weaker learning styles through consistent exposure to materials and activities that develop those senses, at home and through other non-school activities ➤ Plan and discuss your efforts with teacher, when possible
Learning Style: Visual	<p>To develop or nurture Visual Learning when school does not, try these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create home environment with visually stimulating and interesting walls and decorations (e.g., let child help decorate own room or space in room) ➤ Ensure child has at least one neatly organized place to spend time at home; help child set up routines to keep personal space neat; provide containers, shelves that help child with organization ➤ Provide materials (paper, colored pencils) and show child how to make a visual reinforcement for things learned at school: diagrams, tables, lists, etc. ➤ Encourage child to take notes and draw diagrams while listening to teacher <p>For extreme visual learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Remind child about room changes in advance of each day's school activities (e.g., "remember, you have art and science lab today at school"). Ask teacher to do the same when possible ➤ Teach child relaxation techniques to use when school becomes too visually stimulating (deep breathing, closing eyes for 5 seconds, etc.) ➤ Teach child focusing techniques when school is not visually stimulating enough (e.g., taking notes, drawing pictures or diagrams related to learning task)
Learning Style: Auditory	<p>To develop or nurture Auditory Learning when school does not, try these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage child to talk about school. Ask child very specific questions about what happened at school (e.g., what they learned today, favorite activities, the children with whom they played or ate) ➤ Ask child to tell you what (s)he learned in each academic area that day at school. ➤ Ensure that some non-school activities are done in small groups (or one-on-one with tutor) where talking is allowed or encouraged ➤ Encourage family discussions at dinner time and other meals. Make sure everyone takes a turn. Teach your child that it is important to participate by talking and by listening. ➤ Encourage child to read homework assignments aloud ➤ Obtain a tape recorder the child can operate and urge child to use to record thoughts and answers to homework assignments prior to writing them down <p>For extreme auditory learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help child organize social events (one-on-one or small groups) with other children who like to talk ➤ Provide a place in your home where your child may "talk to self" while she unwinds after school ➤ Teach child relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, count one-two-three) to use when school is too loud ➤ Teach child focusing techniques when school does not allow enough talking (e.g., quietly verbalizing material, asking teacher relevant questions)

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Learning Style: Kinesthetic/ Tactile	<p>To develop or nurture Kinesthetic Learning (whole body) when school does not, try these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preserve a significant amount of time after school and on weekends for child to engage in physical activities of choice (at home, in group extracurriculars, at local park, etc.) ➤ Create open space in home where child can move body (less furniture, more wide spaces); change house setup and rules to allow child to dance, do somersaults, dramatize, etc. ➤ Set aside time every day for your child to do outdoor exercise ➤ Allow child to do homework in multiple appropriate positions: on floor, at table, sitting, standing, lying down ➤ Encourage child to dramatize or build models at home to help learn school material; show teacher when practical ➤ Allow some breaks for physical activity (stretching, short walk around block, jump rope) while child does homework ➤ If child is an extreme kinesthetic learner: Encourage your child to set and stick to time goals for completion of tasks (allowing for movement while doing) <p>To develop or nurture Tactile Learning ("fine motor" work with hands) when school does not, try these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At home, provide "hands-on" materials that support your child's school learning, including models, crafts, puzzles, blocks, felt or magnetic storyboards, art paper and drawing materials, a wide variety of pencils and pens, scissors, glue sticks, beads and string, cloth to cut, and small gardening tools. Let child do own work with these ➤ Encourage child to create models and physical products related to school work; allow child to show products to teacher ➤ If Child is an extreme tactile learner: Teach your child how to "fidget" and "doodle" without disrupting others (hands under desk, small movements); teach your child note-taking to keep hands busy during class
Motivation	<p>If motivation is a weakness and school is not tracking your child's progress and achievement compared to capabilities, try these activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Let each of your child's teachers know that you are concerned about your child not making his best effort on work and that you want to be informed right away if they see problems arise ➤ With your child's participation, set very clear academic goals for child. Goals should be challenging but achievable "next steps" starting from child's current capabilities. Make a plan that includes steps to attain each goal (including what child and parent will do, how you will involve teacher, amount of time needed each day or week, and when you think each goal should be met) ➤ Ensure that your child has uninterrupted time to complete homework each day ➤ Check your child's completed homework and school work. Praise good effort often. If you see mistakes, ask child to check his own work and correct problems (on his own before you help) ➤ Consider hiring a tutor once each week to work with your child one-on-one, especially if your child responds well to personal attention. Tutor may perform some of parent tasks listed above, as well ➤ Communicate frequently (at least weekly) with teacher; write a little note or call teacher (ask which method she prefers) about progress or problems you see at home in child's development and learning <p>If motivation is typical and school is not keeping track of progress compared to child's capability, regularly remind your <i>child</i> to take these steps on own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set small next-step goals ➤ Set aside homework time each day

...continues

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Motivation ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check own work and make corrections ➤ Tell teacher and parents if struggling with schoolwork, not feeling motivated <p>If motivation is a strength but child does not have the chance to set own goals and work beyond grade level at school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide child plenty of free time and materials of interest to pursue own goals after school ➤ Support child's decisions to pursue learning or extracurricular goals, even when they seem to be "beyond" what parent would expect from child of this age ➤ Do not hover over child regarding homework; let child structure and plan own work time after school (but do help child when asked) ➤ If child becomes too tired or overburdened by taking on too much, coach child to choose highest priority interests. Help child learn to plan day to accomplish his/her priority goals
Physical or Mental Health Challenges	<p>Physical Health Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before school begins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine with principal and child's teachers which activities will be affected for your child due to your child's physical condition and lack of proper facilities • Determine with principal and teachers how any required treatment, medication and likely emergencies will be handled • Communicate your expectations for how child should be treated by teachers in classroom and other school activities • Express your desire for teachers to monitor teasing, taunting and other inappropriate behavior by other students; discuss how you can help your child respond to minimize bad treatment by others • Ask principal for names of other parents with similar children in the school; make an effort to get to know these parents and share ideas ➤ During school year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor child's academic, physical, social and emotional development. Discuss any concerns immediately with teachers and/or principal • Coach, or hire counselor to coach, your child in how to build friendships (and deal with rude peers) <p>Mental Health Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before school begins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine with principal and teachers how any required treatment, medication and potential emergencies will be handled • Provide your child's teacher with a short written list of the symptoms of your child's mental illness, and ask teacher to let you know if symptoms appear to be worsening at school ➤ During school year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child about school work and school social interactions <i>every day</i>. Listen • Monitor child's academic, physical, social and emotional development. Discuss any concerns immediately with teachers and/or principal • Ensure that your child is receiving appropriate counseling and medication outside of school
Behavior Challenges ...continues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before school begins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure that you have considered having or have had your child tested by a psychologist for underlying causes of poor behavior; address those underlying causes as well as the behavior that results

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Child Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Behavior Challenges ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider formulating a behavioral discipline plan with your child's psychologist; include actions that parent(s) should take at home and teachers should take at school. Share with school and discuss with child's teacher and principal • Provide your child's teachers and principal with a short written list of <i>specific behaviors your child has displayed</i> previously that are disruptive to his own and other student's learning • Provide your child's teachers and principal with a short written list of <i>parent and teacher actions that have been effective</i> in helping your child learn and display self control and focus on school work • Ask your child's teacher to inform you <i>immediately</i> when your child's behavior hampers his own or other students' learning • Discuss and determine with your child's principal and teachers how each of you will respond to child's behavior at school and at home <p>➤ During school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor child's academic, physical, social and emotional development. Discuss any concerns immediately with teachers and/or principal • Increase the frequency of contact and informal communication with your child's teacher: escort your child to class or pick child up from class several times each week • Hire a counselor for your child to help him learn to understand his feelings and control behavior in response • Consider obtaining counseling for yourself and other adults who take care of your child outside of school to improve your own effectiveness and consistency dealing with your child's behavior
Learning Disabilities & Disorders ...continues	<p>If school does not address your child's educational, social or other developmental needs, try the following:</p> <p>➤ All needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate regularly – before and during school year – with both principal and teacher about child's progress in school and any steps you are taking outside of school to help child • Join or form group of parents who have children with similar disabilities for support and information exchange <p>➤ If your child's educational needs are not met at school: Hire private tutor or enroll your child in after school tutoring service. Tutors should be trained to educate children with your child's specific disability. You should establish with the tutor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a regular schedule for appointments and • clear goals for your child's educational progress <p>➤ If your child's social needs are not met at school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join group or sign child up for activities with children who share the same or similar disability. You need not isolate your child from more typical peers, but most children will benefit from having some relationships with others who are coping with similar challenges • Help your child find individual friends who share same or similar disabilities. Coach your child to improve social skills. The more "different" your child feels, the stronger his social skills need to be to build social bridges between himself and others • Acknowledge that many children, particularly ones with an obvious disability, will feel socially awkward around more typical children. Help your child cope with these feelings while learning to reach out to other children despite setbacks <p>➤ If your child's developmental needs are not met at school: Hire counselor or therapist to help your child overcome the disability/disorder to the extent possible, learn to</p>

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

<i>Child Characteristic</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Learning Disabilities & Disorders <i>...continued</i>	<p>accommodate the disability using child's stronger capabilities, and cope with feelings of frustration about the disability. Counselors and therapists should be trained to help children with your child's specific disability. This person may be the same as the educational tutor, but note that your child may need developmental and emotional support that a tutor focusing on educational achievement cannot provide. You should establish with the counselor or therapist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a regular schedule for appointments and • clear goals for your child's developmental progress
Self-Understanding	<p>If school does not fit your child's other needs well or does not actively teach children self-understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work extra hard to accommodate your child's other needs outside of school (see sections regarding your child's specific Must Have needs) ➤ Hire a counselor (psychologist, social worker, or education counselor) trained to coach children your child's age to develop self-awareness (also called "intrapersonal intelligence," "emotional intelligence") ➤ Ask your child daily after school to tell you about best and worst parts of day, how he/she felt, what he/she plans to do to address any problems or take advantage of good things that may have arisen. Give advice only after child has had chance to express and think through issues on own ➤ Allow your child to make simple choices often (among options amenable to you), starting as young as possible. Regularly ask why she made choices, what she's giving up, how someone else she knows might have made a different decision, whether the choice was hard, and how she feels about it after the fact ➤ Help your child make thoughtful decisions about activities, friends, and school work ➤ Encourage your child to consider own strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes in decisions ➤ When your child makes a decision about activities, friends or school work, affirm the decision and also ask him why he's made that particular decision ("That sound's great – you may go over to Jane's house tomorrow. Tell me what you like about Jane?" or "Sure, you may switch from soccer to Karate lessons this year. What got you interested in that?") ➤ In general, encourage your child to value his own time and to make thoughtful decisions about how he uses it ➤ Ask your child often about what he likes and doesn't like, what his own strengths are, what his challenges are, and how he feels ➤ Tell your child's teachers about improvements or changes you see in your child's academic, social, emotional and physical development
SOCIAL ISSUES	
Friends <i>...continues</i>	<p>If school does not include your child's current friends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before school starts, invite children (and parents) who are going to new school to meet at your house, nearby park, school playground, skating rink or other social setting and ➤ Help your child build new friendships by having other children from new school over to your house after school starts (ask your child who to have and/or get teacher's advice) ➤ Help your child continue old friendships for some time after starting new school with activities outside of school (e.g., play dates, non-school extracurricular activities) ➤ Help your child strengthen neighborhood and other non-school friendships by inviting friends over on a regular basis

Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

<i>Child Characteristic</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
SOCIAL ISSUES...continued	
Friends <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Take steps yourself, or through a counselor, to coach and develop your child's interpersonal skills with peers (for one-on-one and group interactions) <p>If school class will not have enough other children of your child's gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss with school leadership possibility of recruiting additional children of your child's gender to school and classroom ➤ Plan one play date each week with a friend of your child's same gender from outside of school ➤ Consider scheduling afternoon or weekend activities with child's non-school, same-gender friends
Essential Activities	<p>If school schedule does not allow your child to pursue high-priority non-school activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First, decide if the extracurricular activity or need is truly important enough to interrupt your child's school schedule. If it is, and your chosen school's schedule cannot accommodate the activity, then ... ➤ Make special arrangements with school for missed time and schoolwork: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire tutor (or parent may tutor) in subjects where work is missed, and • Coordinate both daily schedule and missed work with teachers and principal ➤ Ensure that your child's academic performance does not suffer. A school is far more likely to be accommodating if your child's academic performance is high ➤ Consider home schooling – alone, with a tutor, or in conjunction with parents of similar children

Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

How to Use This Table:

- Read sections matching your family's Must Haves and Nice to Haves.
- Identify which family needs you can most easily meet outside of school.
- Once you have chosen a school, use to help plan non-school actions and experiences for your child and family.
- Add your own ideas! (And, if you like, share them with other parents at PickyParent.com)

<i>Family Characteristic</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Values about what <i>content</i> is important	<p>If your child's school does not cover valued subject or topics, try these actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Afternoon, evening or weekend family activities that cover subject area ➤ Extracurricular activities in subject with group of other children outside of school ➤ Individual private lessons or tutoring for child in subject ➤ Set aside independent work time for child, and help child pursue the subject (e.g., by providing needed transportation, materials, equipment and space for work at home) ➤ Parent tutors or coaches child ➤ Summer camps or classes
Goals for your child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Grade progression ➤ Academic performance ➤ College opportunity 	<p>If your child's school may not be well-suited to ensure that your child reaches your goals, see the row below that corresponds to that goal</p>
Goals for your child: Grade Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tell teachers that you want them to expect a lot from your child, and ask how you can support them at home ➤ Tell your child that you expect him/her to try hard at school ➤ Check your child's home and school work frequently ➤ Praise your child's good efforts, and help your child recognize and solve problems with school work ➤ Set aside time each day for your child to do homework and other basic skill practice ➤ Seek tutoring assistance in required subjects through school – discuss with teacher and principal ➤ Hire private tutor for child or seek assistance of private tutoring service
Goals for your child: Academic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check your child's school and home work frequently ➤ If child is consistently having difficulty, try steps for grade progression above ➤ If child consistently performing at very top, seek teacher and principal's advice for ways to challenge child outside of school ➤ See Basic Learning Capability section of Child Needs tables for ways to ensure that your child performs <i>at least</i> at level of current academic readiness
Goals for your child: College Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ See Basic Learning Capability in Child Needs tables for ways to develop your child's academic performance outside of school. Consider schools outside of your immediate location (across county or state lines; family move)
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS	
Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct ...continues	<p>If your child's school does not have rules or other reinforcement of the social behaviors you value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep a written list of values you want to encourage, and have clear conversations with your child about your expectations ➤ Discuss with your child how to get along with others who are different in values, beliefs and behaviors

Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Family Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Values about school-wide expectations and rules on student conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manners with other children and adults ➤ Dress ➤ Discipline ➤ Honor code ➤ Other behaviors <p>...continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss with child values of others, why others have different values, and why you have yours ➤ Discuss ways of dealing with peers who behave in undesirable ways and who pressure your child to do the same ➤ Consistently reinforce your valued manners, dress, ethics and other behaviors with your children at home ➤ Model, with your own words and actions, expected values and behaviors ➤ Buy or borrow books and audio stories (fiction and nonfiction) for your child that reinforce your family's values; make sure materials are appropriate for your child's age ➤ Help your child find friends outside of school who reflect your family's values; encourage these friendships by inviting friends to your house to play and by getting to know parents ➤ Use discipline methods at home that are consistent with your values
Values about how children should learn: Teaching method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher directed ➤ Student discovery ➤ Mixed approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher directed. <i>If you can't get this at school:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with teacher at beginning of year any concerns you have about less-directive teaching style with your child • Regularly (at least weekly) discuss current school learning goals and activities with your child to ensure that they are clear • Encourage child to speak in class • Encourage child to ask teacher questions when uncertain about what to do • Encourage child to take initiative in choosing and completing own work • Arrange or provide tutoring for your child if you become concerned about mastery of basic subjects ➤ Student discovery. <i>If you can't get this at school:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with teacher at beginning of year any concerns you have about more-directive style with your child • Encourage your child to take school assignments beyond prescribed bounds at home, when child is interested in doing so • Leave significant unstructured time for your child to pursue own interests and ideas at home • Encourage child to be respectful of teacher's directive style, not to interrupt, to raise hand and wait patiently for questions
Values about how children should learn: Classroom behavior management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Controlling/Strict ➤ Developmental ➤ Mixed approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Controlling/Strict. <i>If you can't get this at school:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask teacher or principal to clarify expectations for child's behavior so that you can reinforce at home • Set your own expectations, and consequences, for child's positive and negative behavior at school • Communicate with your child's teacher frequently to get feedback on your child's behavior ➤ Developmental. <i>If you can't get this at school:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your child lots of positive attention at home – hug your child, listen to your child, spend time with your child • Provide frequent, small rewards or recognition for positive behaviors at home • Coach your child to improve self-control at home: help child identify sources of own emotions and control behavior in response • If child gets into trouble at school, coach child about how to act differently next time • Adapt after-school time to your child's unmet needs, if any, that may be leading to behavior problems (see <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>) • Be sure you understand what behaviors are expected of your child at school, and reinforce at home, to help child adapt to school; inform teacher of your efforts

Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Family Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS...continued	
Your role as advocate for child (understanding, communicating and influencing school to address your child's learning needs). The greater your ability, the less important for school to help you.	<p>If your child's school does not provide the help you need understanding and communicating about your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve your <i>understanding</i> of your child's needs, through paid child/family counseling, reading about relevant topics, or joining appropriate community support groups ➤ Hire a tutor or counselor to help your child with unmet academic, social, emotional or physical needs ➤ Improve your <i>assertiveness and communication</i> skills through counseling or by joining a community support group ➤ Increase your <i>confidence communicating</i> with teachers and principal by volunteering at your child's school on a regular basis ➤ Communicate frequently with teacher about your child and your parenting efforts at home that affect school; use methods that are comfortable and manageable for you (e.g., short notes, phone messages, e-mail, dropping child off at classroom in person) ➤ If language or cultural differences are a barrier, ask a friend or family member who is more comfortable to help by joining you for parent conferences and other meetings with teacher; if this is a problem common in your child's school, consider meeting with principal to suggest that a school staff person help parents similar to yourself communicate well with teachers
SOCIAL ISSUES	
Parent Community I want my child's school to have parents with particular characteristics	<p>If your child's school does not have the parents you prefer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engage your child in extracurricular activities with children who have parents better matching your desired profile ➤ Engage your family in religious or other community organizations with families that better match your desired profile ➤ Encourage parents meeting your desired profile to send children to same school as your child ➤ If your child is exposed to parent behaviors you find objectionable, freely discuss with your child your opposing views, how you would act differently in a situation, and why other parents might have different values and behaviors ➤ Limit your interaction with other parents from child's school to essential activities
Parent Involvement in School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Helping ➤ Decision-making ➤ Fundraising activities 	<p>If parents' role in school is not as extensive or of the type you would like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be useful: discuss with principal, PTA chair or other school leader possible roles you might play that both utilize your talents and contribute to the school's quality, mission and goals ➤ Change the school: take on a leadership role in PTA and make increased or changed parent involvement your mission. Most principals are glad to have the help when parent involvement supports the school's quality, mission and goals ➤ Create new roles: if parent roles have been limited to helping with school's daily life, and you would rather play a decision-making or fundraising role (and have matching skills to contribute), discuss with principal, PTA chair or other leader how you might use your talents to help school <p>If parent role required is too much:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss with principal, PTA chair or other appropriate leader alternative ways you might help that fit your time and other constraints ➤ Ask for an exception, even if temporary ➤ Have a grandparent, other family member, family friend, or other adult make a time contribution as your substitute
Student Community ...continues	<p>If your child's school does not have the students you prefer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reserve time after school for play with children not attending your child's school ➤ Engage your child in extracurricular activities with children who better match desired profile

Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Family Characteristic	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
SOCIAL ISSUES... continued	
Student Community I want my child's school to have students with particular characteristics <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engage your family in religious or other community organizations with families that better match your desired profile ➤ Encourage parents with children meeting your desired profile to send their children to same school as your child ➤ If your child is exposed to other students' behaviors you find objectionable, freely discuss with your child your opposing views, how they could act differently in a situation, and why other students might have different values and behaviors ➤ Speak to the school's principal about any other concerns, particularly if you think your child's academic, social, emotional or physical development is being negatively affected by school peers
I want my child to attend a certain school, school type, or school design	If your child cannot attend your preferred school, school type, or school design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using the <i>Great School Quality and Personalized Great Fit Checklists</i>, make a note of the offerings and characteristics you wanted or needed in your preferred school, school type, or school design, and ➤ Attempt to find an alternate school that most closely mimics the offerings you desired in preferred school, and ➤ For those characteristics you cannot find in a school elsewhere, use this table and the <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i> table to get what you and your child need outside of school ➤ Consider re-applying or re-registering in following year(s)
PRACTICAL MATTERS	
Child Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before school ➤ After school ➤ Holidays ➤ Summer 	If you are unable to find a school with appropriate care, try these steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider whether you can change your work hours (or other commitment times) to match your child's school schedule ➤ Consider alternative sources of child care you may not have considered before (e.g., neighbors, child's friends' parents, relatives, smaller child care settings such as family day care, swapping afternoon care for weekend evening care with a friend); check with your local child care resource and referral center about other options ➤ Consider extracurricular activities that might keep your child occupied during non-school hours, holidays, and vacations (e.g., camps, after school care at local children's centers)
Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Daily hours ➤ Yearly (start/finish and holidays) 	If your children's schools have unchangeable schedule conflicts with each other or with your work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider whether you can change your work hours (or other commitment times) to match your child's school schedule ➤ Carpool, with you driving the segments that fit your schedule ➤ Take advantage of before or after school care offered by one of your children's schools so that you can stagger start/finish times for a manageable schedule; make sure you can use and pay for just the limited amount of care time you need ➤ For essential extracurricular activities, try to change extracurricular activity times or seek alternative instruction if there is conflict with school schedule ➤ For vacation conflicts, check school policies on children missing school; if you ensure that your child makes up missed work, you may be able to take one child out of school to match other child's vacation schedule
Transportation Needs <i>...continues</i>	If you cannot transport your child and no busing (or other school-provided transportation) is offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reconsider alternative means of transportation, according to child's age and maturity (e.g., city bus, subway)

Family Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

<i>Family Characteristic</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
PRACTICAL MATTERS...continued	
Transportation Needs ➤ To school ➤ After school ➤ After school activities <i>...continued</i>	➤ Form carpool, and you drive segments that fit your schedule ➤ Pay neighbor (adult with nearby work or student at same or nearby school) to drive your child to school ➤ Organize vanpooling (a van with paid driver to take several children to and from school) at your child's school for your neighborhood ➤ If timing or child care is the issue, see Child Care and Schedule suggestions above
Location proximity to your home or work	➤ See suggestions in Child Care, Schedule, and Transportation sections above ➤ If need is related to child's health, explore alternative ways of meeting need; discuss with your doctor, local community agencies serving children like yours, principal and school nurse ➤ Consider home schooling your child, alone or in collaboration with other parents
Your other children	<p>Same School. If all your children cannot attend same school even though you would like them to:</p> ➤ See Child Care, Scheduling and Transportation sections above ➤ Reapply next year to family school if child was not admitted (if selective school, discuss reasons for not admitting with school admissions office, and work to develop child's school readiness) ➤ Seek multiple schools with compatible schedules ➤ Make time for siblings to interact after school and on weekends <p>Different Schools. If your best option this year means sending children to same school even though you would prefer not to:</p> ➤ Consider reapplying to suitable alternative school(s) in future years ➤ Help children distinguish themselves and develop confidence in their unique talents through extracurricular activities ➤ Discuss any concerns you may have with your children's principal and teachers to minimize any negative effects (e.g., assign different teachers to your children to reduce "shadow" of older siblings)
Money available to pay for school	<p>If your best school option is too expensive:</p> ➤ Discuss your conflict with principal or admissions office to see if any additional financial support is available ➤ Consider whether child's grandparents or other relatives might contribute financially to child's education ➤ Contact local agencies that may have private school assistance programs ➤ Review your overall family budget one more time to see if there are any areas where you can feasibly – and actually – cut spending ➤ Review your overall income options one more time to see if you have any ways of earning additional money <p>If you are surprised that your best school option costs less than you anticipated:</p> ➤ Donate money to your child's school ➤ Use some money for extracurricular activities, educational toys and educational travel ➤ Offer to reimburse your child's teachers up to a specified dollar amount for supplies they purchase for the class; or make an outright gift to school designated for your child's teacher to spend ➤ Offer to fund an extra class field trip related to child's class studies ➤ Offer to purchase school supplies and school clothes for a needy child attending the same school ➤ Spend less time making money and more volunteering at your child's school (or with your children after school)

Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

How to Use This Table:

- Read sections matching each Great School Quality Factor.
- Identify which Great School Quality Factor weaknesses you can most easily make up for outside of school.
- Once you have chosen a school, use to help plan non-school actions and experiences for your child and family.
- Add your own ideas! (And, if you like, share them with other parents at PickyParent.com)

<i>Great School Quality Factor</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #1	
Clear Mission Guiding School Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If school has unclear or no written mission: Ask principal, teachers and parents about other Great School Quality and Fit Factors most important to your child and family. Are answers consistent, even though school does not have clear written mission? ➤ If a Great School Quality or Fit Factor important to you is <i>inconsistently</i> addressed in school (because of unclear mission, goals, curriculum or teaching method): ask principal if you can influence which teachers your child is assigned to ensure quality and fit ➤ Ask if principal would support formation of group to write new mission statement; be sure to show how mission is supported by school-wide achievement and improvement goals, student learning standards, curriculum and teaching method ➤ If one or more aspects of school – school-wide goals, student learning standards, curriculum or teaching method – do not support mission: let principal know your concerns, discuss with other parents, and join or form committee to address specific areas that are out of alignment with mission
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #2	
High Expectations for All Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High Minimum Expectations for All ➤ Higher Expectations for Students Who are Ready 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set high expectations for both achievement and progress for your own child; do not rely on school to do this ➤ Discuss with each of your child's teachers your expectations for your own child's achievement and progress; let teachers know that you want them to expect a lot of your child and that you will support them at home ➤ Check your child's completed school and home work; praise your child's good efforts, help your child recognize and solve problems with work ➤ If your child is at risk of not meeting grade level, ask teacher or principal about tutoring opportunities at school, hire a private tutor, or tutor child yourself. See <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i> section for students Challenged in Basic Learning Capability for more ideas ➤ If child is ready to advance beyond grade level but is not making further progress at school: obtain learning goals for higher grades, and hire tutor or provide your own "school at home" after school to help your child advance at faster pace. See <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i> sections for children Gifted and Highly Gifted in Basic Learning Capability for more ideas ➤ Inform child's teacher about your activities; the teacher may have ideas to help you ➤ Consider organizing other parents and students to start academic clubs that foster a culture of thinking and academic pursuit, such as Odyssey of the Mind, chess, and the like. Get teacher support. Make the clubs visible on campus with posters, announcements, and contests that encourage many children to participate
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #3	
Monitoring of Progress and Adjusting Teaching <i>...continues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss with teacher your expectations for your own child's achievement and progress ➤ Check your child's completed school and home work ➤ If you do not see progress, and if your child is at risk of not meeting grade level: ask teacher or principal about tutoring opportunities at school, hire private tutor, or tutor child yourself. You may want to ask if school can provide (or you pay for private) assessment of child's interests, capabilities (academic, social, emotional and physical),

Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Great School Quality Factor	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #3...continued	
Monitoring of Progress and Adjusting Teaching ...continued	<p>learning styles, potential disabilities and other factors that might affect child's learning. Consider non-academic sources of stress (social, emotional, physical) that may be affecting child's learning. Inform teacher of results and discuss how school might alter teaching approach with your child. See <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i> section for students Challenged in Basic Learning Capability for additional ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If child has higher-than-grade-level learning goals but is not making progress, discuss with teacher. Reevaluate the child's mastery of more basic material. Consider non-academic sources of stress (social, emotional, physical) that may be affecting child's learning. If goals are appropriate, hire tutor or provide your own "school at home" after school to help your child ➤ If child is not being challenged (no higher goals and no monitoring of progress), you will need to hire tutor or provide your own "school at home" after school to challenge your child. See <i>Child Needs: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i> sections for Gifted and Highly Gifted children for more ideas ➤ In all cases, inform child's teacher about your activities; the teacher may have ideas to help you
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #4	
Focus on Effective Learning Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using a tutor, your own efforts or extracurricular group activities, supplement your child's education in subjects where your child's school is not using instructional approaches that work for your child (or not enough time spent on subject at school) ➤ Read parenting magazine articles about school instruction research findings. Ask your principal how you might help the school stay abreast of the latest research about effective curriculum and teaching methods. Ask about specific ideas you have seen. The more you stay informed and concerned, the more reinforcement your child's school will have to keep current ➤ Express your specific concerns about class time, interruptions, materials, facilities or instructional approaches to your child's teacher <i>and</i> principal. Be clear about how you think the situation may be keeping your child from learning as well as your child could. Sometimes, a simple change will improve the situation dramatically (e.g., bathroom breaks between classes, children leave for appointments or tutoring between subjects not in middle, limited use of loudspeaker for school announcements, putting most valued subjects at time of day when children are most focused, changing how facilities are used) ➤ In coordination with principal and teachers, organize fundraising effort to ensure that appropriate materials are available to all children. Fundraising sources include parents, neighbors living near school, community groups, foundations that support education, and special government grants
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #5	
Home-School Connection ...continues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In spring before school starts, write your principal a letter telling as much as you know about your child's academic, social, emotional and physical development (use your <i>Child Needs Summary</i> and <i>Personalized Great Fit Checklist</i> as guides). Also describe the kinds of teachers who have been effective (and ineffective) with your child. Mail or meet with principal to deliver ➤ During or just prior to the first week of school, write your child's teacher a note similar to the one you wrote the principal, focusing on your child. Most teachers will appreciate the help understanding your child and knowing what challenges and opportunities they'll have working with your child ➤ Periodically, drop off or pick up child at classroom so that teachers know who you are. If time, ask how things are going with your child. If lengthy discussion is needed, make an appointment to meet or call teacher after school hours

Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School ...continued

Great School Quality Factor	Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #5... continued	
Home-School Connection ...continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Offer to volunteer in class (read a story, tutor a child, decorate for party, whatever you can do well) to gain teacher access and trust ➤ Generally, take the initiative to ask teacher how things are going for her and for your child this year. The more you understand your child's teacher's strengths and challenges (everybody has both!), the better you can shape your child's life outside of school ➤ Get a copy of the learning standards for your child's grade (and beyond if child is advanced), so you will know generally what your child should be learning during year. This may be available on school website, or you may call your child's school office and ask for a copy. If your child attends public school, these standards may also be available from the district office or state education agency. If you meet resistance, be firm but polite, saying that you want to help make sure your child is keeping up in school ➤ Check your child's completed school and home work, and check off skills/knowledge on the learning standards once you believe your child has mastered them ➤ If you have questions or concerns about your child's report card, call teacher right away to discuss. Ask what you can do at home to support your child's success. Then ask what the teacher plans to do ➤ If conflict with a teacher arises, call principal. Helping parents and teachers figure out how to work together is part of the principal's job. See the box <i>Resolving Parent-Teacher Conflicts</i> in Chapter 18 for more
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #6	
Safe and Orderly Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be clear with your child about how you expect him or her to behave at school, in class and elsewhere ➤ Ask your child how (s)he and other children behaved each day at school. Ask how other children's good and bad behavior affected your child. Discuss how your child's good and bad behavior affected other students and teacher. Ask how your child feels about things at school, and listen for social and emotional challenges. Encourage and help your child to address underlying conflicts or problems that affect behavior. Encourage child to keep improving own behavior ➤ If you are concerned about behavior of other children on your own child, discuss your concern with teacher (and principal if needed). Be specific about the effect on your child's social, emotional, academic and physical well-being ➤ Bring any <i>general safety</i> concerns to the immediate attention of principal. If the concern is only about your child's classroom, discuss with teacher first. Chances are good that other parents have similar concerns ➤ If you are concerned about <i>specific, immediate threats</i> of harm to your child (e.g., another child is threatening harm), inform teacher immediately. If teacher does not act right away, inform principal immediately. If risk is extreme, inform teacher and principal immediately upon realizing the risk of harm. Do not wait. If you are not satisfied with actions taken, take your concern to the next level (call school board member or district office)
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #7	
Strong Instructional Leadership ...continues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When teacher quality is uneven, all the more important to ensure the best fit with your child. In spring before school starts, write your principal a letter telling as much as you know about your child's academic, social, emotional and physical development (use your <i>Child Needs Summary</i> and <i>Personalized Great Fit Checklist</i> as guides). Also describe the kinds of teachers who have been effective with your child in the past. Mail or meet with principal to deliver

Quality: Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School

<i>Great School Quality Factor</i>	<i>Ways to Get What You Don't Get at School</i>
GREAT SCHOOL QUALITY FACTOR #7...continued	
Strong Instructional Leadership <i>...continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At the beginning of the year, share with your child's teacher any techniques for teaching that have been especially effective with your child in previous school years, at home, or in extracurricular activities. Teachers may or may not be able to follow this advice, but you improve the odds if they are informed ➤ When a teacher is effective in helping your child learn, tell her, thank her, and tell principal ➤ Identify your child's teacher's strengths and weaknesses early (by observing your child's progress or by talking with parents of similar children who have had teacher). Make up for weaknesses outside of school with extracurricular activities or tutoring ➤ If your child is not responding well to school – academically, socially or emotionally – be assertive: ask your teacher and principal how you can work together to ensure that your child's needs are met ➤ If you are concerned about the quality of your child's teacher, express your concern confidentially to principal (call or make an appointment). At the end of the meeting, be sure you understand what will happen next to resolve the problem



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