

Things to consider when choosing your child's school.

Information for parents.

Please feel free to include the below article in your school newsletter.

There can be a lot anxiety for parents around the first few weeks of school. Questions like, 'Have made the right choice?' 'Is this the right school for my child?' Questions often plague parents not just within the first few weeks but even years later.

I have had the privilege of working in schools around the world for 15 years, visiting and actively engaging in the social fibre of over 500 schools in every state, across a wide ranging spectrum including; Public schools, Private schools, Christian Schools, Catholic, Jewish, Steiner Schools, Comprehensive and Selective Schools, Single Sex and Co-ed Schools, Specialist Schools which House Sporting Academy's and Schools specialising in the Performing Arts, to name a few.

Not only have I been employed to visit such schools but I have noted tremendous differences in student's behaviour, their attitude to learning, school culture, staff commitment to their students and have observed leadership structures of varying degrees. I have been privy to staff room chatter and what really happens in day to day school life.

As a speaker my primary focus is to connect with my audience. I need to have an understanding of who they are and what they stand for and believe in. Over the years I have developed a high level of discernment so as to ascertain how to scratch where my audience are itching. So it is with this level of experience I would like to share with you my top ten tips in choosing a school for your child.

To answer this question most effectively for your child, I need to first ask you a question, "What is your vision for your child?" The answer to that question could be the most significant thought you receive from this article. By vision I mean, what kind of person are you endeavoring to raise? What kind of person do you want them to become? Not just in terms of academic results but character traits.

Parents need to have a vision in their minds eye, of what their child could become, notice I said 'become' and not 'do'. We are not raising human doings but human beings. The clearer the vision, the easier the decision will be on which school fits the vision. Below are 10 tips to help you make an informed decision.

1. Leadership: Everything rises and falls on leadership. While sadly the debate on private and public schooling will continue to distract us, the real issue about what makes or breaks a school never gets discussed, and that is leadership. I have seen both private and public schools become elevated through strong leadership and come to utter demise because of a lack of leadership. Be open to all forms of schools; choose schools based on leadership rather than type. The easiest way to critique a school in this manner is to see how well the school receptionist greets you. If leadership is strong it will echo throughout every facet of school life.

2. Values: Does the school you choose for your child share the same values as your family? Are you clear on what values you want passed on to your children? Each and every school in Australia has their core values displayed somewhere in the foyer. The question to ask is how these values are instilled in the students. When you find a school with a similar value set, make sure they are reinforced at home. If the school has a set value position and policy in place regarding behaviour, punctuality and dress code, make sure these same values are bolstered in the home. If you don't share the same values as the school, send your child to a school that does.

3. Opportunity: What sort of opportunities are available for your child to pursue at the school of your choosing, not just in terms of subjects, although that's

important, but extra-curricular activities? I strongly believe that every child has a unique talent or gift. Our role as parents is to provide a place for those talents to be cultivated. Talents without opportunity to germinate are destined to be lost forever.

4. Discipline: What are the procedures regarding the schools disciplinary issues? How are disputes handled? How will I be notified as a parent if my child has behavioural issues or is a victim and what can I, as a parent do to support the school in these matters? As a warning to parents, your child may at times be unjustly punished. Life is unfair and not everything will go their way however help them to develop resilience and allow them to serve the given consequence.

5. Sense of Community: Everyone wants to belong; it is a fundamental human need. Social networking is trying to achieve what in the olden days only family could, a sense of connection with others who are like minded. Make this one a priority. It will improve the wellbeing of your child and help build resilience in ways you couldn't imagine.

6. Openness to Spirituality: Please don't misread this. I am not talking about religious fundamentalism or militant atheism, either side of these pendulums are dangerous and both preach intolerance. We want to raise open-minded children, who become seekers of truth. Information fills our heads with knowledge, but leaves our psyche empty. Life's mysteries must be reflected on and contemplated in order to develop a healthy soul.

7. Commitment to Social Justice and Community Service: No parent wants to raise a self-centred, narcissistic child. We live in a global community, and as global citizens it is vital that we foster empathy. Empathy is more than a feeling, it creates a desire to take action on behalf of those less fortunate. It is an emotion that must be taught and developed in order to bloom into full scale social transformation.

8.Tradition: Sadly a sense of tradition has been lost in our throw away consumer society. Nothing gets passed or handed on because everything is consumed and thrown away. Whether it's a story, a poem or a custom, as humans we need to connect with those that have gone before us. It fortifies us and helps motivate us to continue to learn, grow and move forward.

9.Distance: Be practical where possible, with the time involved in getting to and from school. Your child will spend 78,000 hours at school from K-12. Adding to this unwanted travel, probably does not instill in them a lifelong commitment to learning. If you find yourself with little choice as to the distance you have to travel, be committed to your child's education and find ways to make the travel time fun and use this time effectively.

10.Cost: A practical consideration, but obviously very important. There will always be costs to consider and I am not just talking about school fees, because public education is free but it's not cheap. There are uniforms, textbooks, excursions, and extra-curricular activities, but I personally couldn't think of a better investment than our children.

Additional information regarding data on individual schools is available from the much advertised [myschools website](http://myschools.website). Whilst there is some very good information on this site, I personally would not recommend making such an important decision solely on this information. Data is important, if I were raising a robot, this would be all I would need. However I am parenting a human, whom is complex and profound and multi-dimensional.

Choosing your child's school is an important decision. The environment, in which your child learns and grow, will play a significant role in their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. However the most essential environment for your child is a home that is loving, supportive and committed to setting them on the pathway of a life of learning.

- See more at: <http://thehopefullinstitute.com>