

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR PARENT INTERVIEW

By The Testing Mom

During a parent interview, you'll be asked, "Do you have any questions for us?" You should definitely be ready with a few questions that you really care about. Here are some ideas to keep in your back pocket.

If you're applying to public schools, you often have a chance to attend a forum to meet the principal and learn more about the school. These questions should give you ideas of what you might ask in a group setting.

1. How competitive would you describe your school?
2. What do you think makes this school different from most other schools?
3. What are you most proud of at this school?
4. How do the teachers handle a range of abilities in one class?
5. How do they teach reading here? Are most children reading by the end of kindergarten?
6. What kind of student does this school serve best?
7. How important a role do the arts play here?
8. Tell me more about the commitment to diversity you have and how it plays out in your admissions policy and your curriculum?
9. How do you use computers in your curriculum? Do children have access to the internet? Do you protect them from inappropriate websites?
10. Tell me about your after-school program. What classes do you offer? How late do they go? What do they cost?
11. Can you tell me more about the experience level of the teachers you have? What kind of ongoing education do you offer them?
12. Is there something unique about the school you are visiting that you could ask to learn more about? Perhaps they have a special teaching philosophy. Waldorf Schools keep the same teacher with a class throughout their education. You could ask about that. My children attended a Quaker School that had Meeting For

- Worship each week. Ask to learn more about that, or better yet, ask to attend a Meeting For Worship so you could see it for yourself.
13. How do you challenge children at the top? Are enrichment programs available?
 14. How do you help children who are having trouble?
 15. How do you place children in classes each year (based on ability, learning style-teaching style fit, mixing group styles deliberately, keeping friends together).
 16. How do you handle separation during the first weeks of school?
 17. Do you require that children do community service? At what age does that begin?
What types of projects do kids get involved in?
 18. Are there many opportunities to volunteer? What kinds of projects did parent volunteers do last year? Are parents in this community very involved?
 19. Are there any key staff changes about to happen, or that recently happened? How has that impacted the school?
 20. When does homework start to get assigned? How long is it expected to take in the early years?
 21. What do you think your school does best?
 22. How does the school evaluate a student's achievement and progress?
 23. How do your students perform on standardized tests?
 24. How is communication between parents and teachers/school handled? Are parent-teacher meetings held regularly? Do you have dialogs with the head of the school?
 25. Are there any events coming up that we could attend so that we can see the school from another perspective? (i.e. spring fair, Halloween party)
 26. Do you want to see a first choice letter? (Ask this in markets where this is often done, but not always required).