

Houston ISD Area

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# PARENT ACTION GUIDE

TEXAS SCHOOL GUIDE 2017

children at **Risk**

# PARENT ACTION GUIDE

## TEXAS SCHOOL GUIDE 2017

### Houston ISD Area

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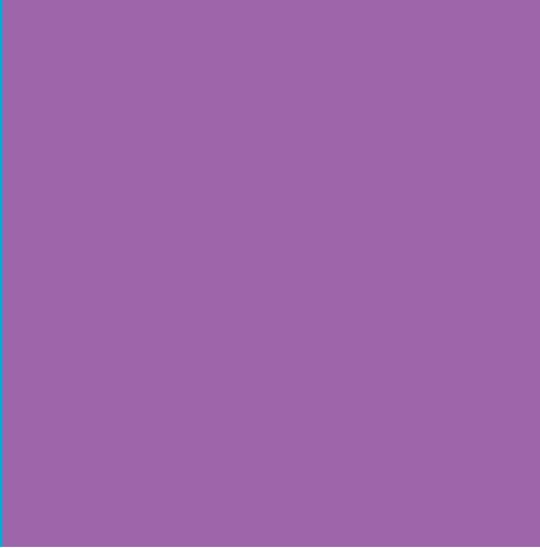
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# WHY SHOULD PARENTS BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION?



## What is parent engagement?

Parent engagement is all of the activities parents do to help their children succeed in school and life. Everything from making sure your child is prepared to go to school every day, attending parent meetings and school events, and even communicating the value of education to your child, is considered parent engagement. Parent engagement empowers parents to become partners in their child's education. When parents get involved in their child's schooling, they can become more informed decision makers, better goal setters, and stronger voices for their child's education and overall well-being.

## Why should parents be engaged?

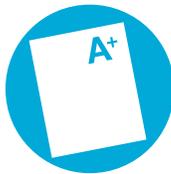
Involvement in your child's school is important to his or her academic and social success. Students with involved parents or guardians are more likely to:



Attend School Regularly



Have A Positive Attitude About School



Earn Good Grades



Have Good Behavior



Have A Stronger Relationship With Their Parents

Taking the time to be involved in your child's education shows your student you care about his or her academic success and that education is important to your family. Getting involved also gives you the opportunity to make sure your child is receiving the quality education he or she deserves.

## How do parents engage?

Parent engagement is more than just volunteering at your child's school. There are a variety of ways you can partner with your child's school and get involved in your child's education, both at school and at home.

### AT SCHOOL:

- **Choosing a school** – Select the most appropriate school for your child to attend. Each child has unique interests and abilities, and schools have different ways of meeting those needs. For more information about your school choice options and what to look for when choosing a school, refer to the “Understanding Schools” section in this guide.
- **Building relationships** – Strong relationships are an important factor in your child's success. When there are strong relationships with individuals in any organization, schools included, students are more likely to be successful. Strong relationships between parents and teachers, as well as between students and their teachers support student success.
  - **Relationships between parents and teachers/staff** – The first step in building relationships is getting to know at least one of your child's teachers, counselors, coaches, or other important school staff. This could be through having conversations in person, through phone calls, or through emails – you should feel comfortable enough with this individual that you can raise any issues or questions you may have with them. Forming relationships will make it easier for you to talk to them about what is happening in your child's education as an equal partner.
  - **Relationships between student and teachers/staff** – Encourage your child to get to know his or her teacher – students who have a caring adults in their lives to support and encourage them are more likely to succeed and thrive in school.

- **Staying aware** – It is important to stay aware of events, programs, and groups offered at your child's school, as well as your child's academic progress. Check school websites, calendars and newsletters to stay informed or consider the following actions.
  - **Join a parent group** – Most schools have parent groups that influence what happens in a school and work together to advocate for the needs of their children. Consider joining one! Many of these groups keep parents involved and informed about what is going on at school. If you are interested in getting involved contact your school's office to join or refer to the "Parents as Advocates" section of this guide for more information.
  - **Attend school events** - There are often meetings and events offered at your child's school. These can range from school plays, concerts, and sporting events to awards ceremonies, report card pick-up nights, and workshops for parents. When possible, make it a priority to attend these events. Attending school events can help you get to know the teachers and staff at your child's school in addition to other parents. Your attendance also shows your child you think being at school is important, and you may leave events with new skills or valuable information.
  - **Check Parent Portals** – Many school districts allow parents to track their child's grades online. Parents can check their child's grades, homework assignments, and teacher contact information through <http://www.houstonisd.org/domain/11001>. Regularly checking your child's academic progress can help you identify problems early.
  - **Request a meeting** - Set up meetings with your child's teacher, counselor or school administrator if your child is having issues, or if you just want to check in. You can request a meeting at a time that works for you. You can also request the help of a translator if needed. To set up a meeting, call or email the appropriate person. Be aware that meetings with your child's teacher will likely be before or after school.

## AT HOME:

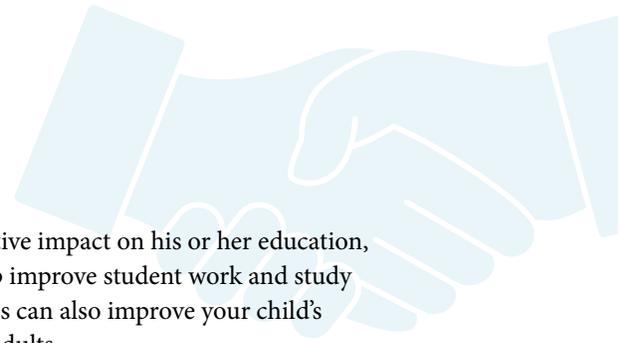
Parent engagement is not limited to the school environment. There are many things you can do at home to support your child's education. The best thing you can do is show your child that his or her education is important. See below for a few things you can do to demonstrate this value.

You can show your child that education is important by:

- Making sure your child attends school each day
- Making sure your child gets to school on time
- Reading together at home
- Setting aside a time and place for homework
- Making sure your child completes his or her homework
- Regularly asking your child about his or her classes
- Encouraging positive communication about your child's school and teachers
  - If your child comes home with an issue, work with them and the teacher to understand and resolve the problem by asking questions and problem solving together.*
- Making every activity a learning opportunity
  - Going to the zoo, the museum, the grocery store – anything can be an opportunity to learn something new.*

As your child's first teacher, you can have a significant impact on your child's education. It is important to show your child you value their education and you believe he or she can be successful in school. For more ideas on things you can do with your child, refer to the "Education Outside the Classroom" and "Parents as Advocates" sections in this guide.

# HOW TO SUPPORT EDUCATION OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM



How your child spends his or her time outside of school can have a positive impact on his or her education, readiness for college, and more. Quality programs and activities can help improve student work and study habits, homework completion rates, and grades in school. These activities can also improve your child's interest in school, level of self-esteem, and relationships with peers and adults.

Students involved in programs and activities outside of school are more likely to do well in school, and gain a greater variety of interests and skills. When children have strong relationships with others and are connected to groups, extracurricular activities, and other social circles, they have a better understanding of how to function in healthy ways as adults. These interactions help build connections with friends, learn from one another, and build social skills.

There are many programs and activities for your child during the school year and the summer. Some programs are free to parents. If a program has a fee, there may be scholarships to help cover the cost of the program. Other programs may offer different payment levels for your family based on your household income.

## AT SCHOOL

Many schools offer after school programs from tutoring to sports that can benefit your child's development. You can ask your child's teacher or school administrator which programs are offered, how to register for programs, and if there are waiting lists for any of them. Once your child begins a program, you can help encourage him or her by showing interest in the program or activity. For example, you might set aside time each day to ask questions about the program and whether your child is enjoying the activity.

### *Community Based Programs*

If your child's school does not offer after school programs that meet your child's interests or your family's needs, you can search for additional programs offered in the community. These programs are often offered through religious or nonprofit organizations in your neighborhood. Some places that you may want to look are:

- The Boys and Girls Club
- The YMCA
- Boys Scouts / Girl Scouts
- Big Brother, Big Sister
- Faith-based organizations, such as local churches
- Volunteering programs at local community organizations

## AT HOME

There are also things you can do at home to support your child's learning. This can be done after school, during the weekend, or during holiday breaks. There are a few ways you can approach this:

- **Turn everyday activities into learning opportunities.** Encourage your child's curiosity by asking questions and having him/her describe details to you.
  - For younger children, this may look like going for a walk with your child and asking them to tell you about the things he/she sees, hears, and smells on your walk. Talk about the stones, leaves, puddles, and insects you see and encourage your child to look closely and notice details.
  - For middle and high school aged children, ask your child about what he/she is learning in school. Have your child tell you about the books they are reading, or the projects they are working on. Ask them questions and push for detail. This may help your child remember the lessons they learn each day in school while also showing your child you value their education.

- **Utilize online resources.** There are a variety of websites you can use to help your child learn at home:
  - **Khanacademy.org** – Offers a wide range of activities, videos, and subjects for ALL grade levels.
  - **Brainpop.com** – Watch free, 5-minute videos on a variety of topics.
  - **Freerice.com** – Students can answer questions from a variety of subjects and each time they get a question correct they can donate rice to a family in need.

Check out our website for a full list of online resources that you can use at home.

- **Take trips to the library and museums.** Local libraries usually offer free programs for students. Going to the library and picking out books together can show your child that reading is important. Local museums also offer free programs for children. Check out our website for a list of museums in your area.

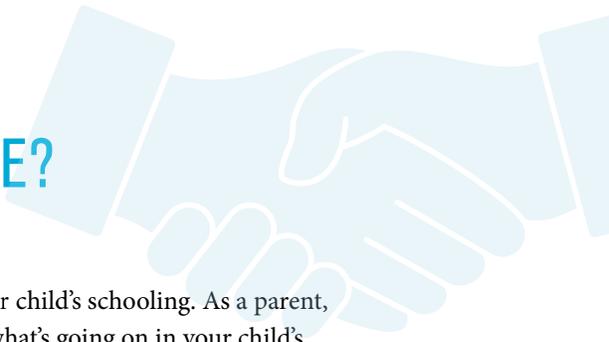
## SUMMER INVOLVEMENT

During the summer months, students can lose a lot of knowledge they gained in the school year. You can help them be ready for the next grade level by making sure they do some learning activities during summer. Below are some ways that your child can remain engaged in learning over the summer:

- **School Programs** – Your child’s school may offer tutoring, clubs and sports during the summer. Contact your child’s school or school district to find out more.
- **Community Programs** - There are a variety of community and faith based programs that offer summer activities and even overnight camps. For more information on community programs in your area, refer to the resources at the end of this section.
- **Volunteering** – Summer is a perfect time to get your child involved in his/her community. Not only does this help your child develop career skills, it also can look great when your child is ready to apply for college.
- **Additional Summer Programs** – There are a variety of organizations and colleges that have summer programs, especially for high school students. There may be additional costs associated with these. However, many offer scholarships and financial aid to help with the cost. A good place to start to learn more about different programs is at [www.onejump.org](http://www.onejump.org). You can also look at your local university and college websites for summer programing.
- **At Home** – You can support your child’s learning during the summer by encouraging your child to participate in some of the at home activities listed below.
  - Reading – Have your child read at least 20 minutes a day.
  - Physical Activity – Have your child get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day by playing a sport, going on walks, or playing outdoor games. An active body helps keep the brain healthy.
  - Learn Something New / Create Something Together – This can be as simple as building with Legos, baking / cooking together, or learning how to play a new game. The key is to ensure that your child is continuing to learn new things throughout the summer.

Your child’s learning is not limited to the classroom. There are many activities outside of the school day to continue to develop your child’s skills. By supporting these activities, you are helping your child be more prepared for school, college, and a career.

# PARENTS AS ADVOCATES: HOW CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



## *Your Rights as a Parent*

Parents are their child's first teacher and play a very important role in their child's schooling. As a parent, you have the right to be a partner in your child's education and to know what's going on in your child's classroom and school.

Your child's school should provide you with important information such as your child's learning, school safety procedures, and free meal programs. You can ask for more information about your child's education. You have the right to request materials that the teachers are using, your child's records on file, and your child's performance on assignments and exams.

Below are some questions that you may want to ask your child's teacher while he or she is in school:

- When will my child have a test, and how will I know that a test is coming up?
- If my child or I have questions on homework or deadlines, how can we contact you?
- What are your rules about kids working together on group projects?
- If my child is missing homework, how much time does he/she have to turn it in? Will he/she have to miss recess or other activities to complete missing work? Will I be notified that my child is missing work?
- How will I know how my child is doing in your class?

If you prefer speaking a language other than English, schools must find a translator or give you information in the language you speak.

If you don't understand the answer the school gives you, or if you have more questions – ask again! Your number one concern should be to ensure that your child is receiving the best education and support possible. You are your child's number one advocate.

## *Where to Start*

1. If you or your child is having a problem or if you don't understand why something is happening, reach out to your child's teacher first. If your child has more than one teacher, ask the one who teaches the subject you have a question about – for example, ask a math teacher about math class issues.
2. If the teacher doesn't respond or makes you feel uncomfortable, you can ask another teacher in that subject area or grade level. This teacher might not know the answer about your child specifically, but they might be able to help you better understand the school subject or school in general. The key in dealing with these situations is developing relationships with all of your child's teachers so that the teacher sees you as a partner in your child's education.
3. If talking to the teacher doesn't work, you can go “up the chain” and talk to the assistant principal, the principal, or even the superintendent if necessary. In order to do this, you will need to set up a meeting time. If you work during the day, some principals might be willing to meet early in the morning before school or after school if you explain why you need to meet at that time.

## Terms to Know!

**CAMPUS / SCHOOL:** This is a physical school of any level – elementary, middle, high school, or multiple levels housed together. While a campus refers to a single school, it might have a few buildings.

### Leadership

A Principal leads the campus. He or she makes many rules and hires the teachers. A principal may have staff members to help.

Your school might also have Assistant Principals (APs) who are in charge of a specific grade level (like “3rd Grade Reading AP”) or are in charge of discipline. It might not be easy to know who to talk to at first, but keep asking until you come to the right person!

**PTO/PTA:** These are “Parent Teacher Organizations” or “Associations.” These are groups, mostly parents, who volunteer to support the school, the principal, and teachers. If your school does not have a PTA / PTO you can set up a meeting with your principal to discuss starting one so that parents have a voice at the campus level.

### Leadership

All parents at a school can join, and there is usually a PTA/PTO Board of leaders (President, Secretary, etc.) that are elected by the members. PTA/PTO responsibilities include:

- Raising money through donations, fundraisers (bake sales, for example), and membership dues. This money can be used for fun activities (a teacher appreciation lunch or a popcorn party for students with perfect attendance), or to support the school (buying new soccer balls for the playground or books for the library).
- Help make changes they want to see at the school. They can work with the campus principal and staff to reach an agreement.

**DISTRICT:** This is a group that manages all of the schools in an area.

### Leadership

The leader of the District is called the Superintendent, and he or she is hired by the Board of Trustees that make up the School Board (see next section). The Superintendent and his/her staff run the District. They can set the start and end times for schools, set graduation requirements that comply with state laws, and schedule school repairs and athletic schedules.

**SCHOOL BOARD:** This is a team of people elected by the community to lead the District. If you live in the District, there is one Board Member in charge of your area. You have the right to attend School Board meetings. If you have an issue that is bigger than just your child or your campus you can bring that issue to the School Board during a regular meeting time that is open to the public. Anyone can request to speak at a school board meeting, or request to meet individually with a School Board member, or the Superintendent.

### Leadership

The School Board has a President, Vice President, and other members. However, they are elected by community members like you! Their roles include:

- Making the budget for the District.
- Hiring and firing the Superintendent.
- Deciding on teacher raises or bonuses.
- Creating teacher programs to evaluate how well teachers are doing.

Houston ISD School Board meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 5:00pm.

For more information about how to get involved or who to contact in your city, check out the resources at the end of this section.

**TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY (TEA):** This is the government agency responsible for Texas’ public education system. They are located in Austin, Texas.

*Leadership*

The Commissioner of Education leads TEA and is appointed by the Governor. TEA’s job is to provide guidance and resources to help schools meet the educational needs of all students in Texas, grades Pre-K through high school. Additionally, they are in charge of all standardized tests, such as the STAAR test.

**Who should I go to when my child has issues with**

| TEACHER   | PTA/PTO  | PRINCIPAL/SCHOOL   | SCHOOL BOARD  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Classroom discipline</li> <li>• Homework, units of study</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Field trips</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information between teachers and parents – like a new reading program</li> <li>• School doesn’t have enough money for art classes or sports equipment</li> <li>• Drop off or pickup is dangerous</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring and firing of teachers</li> <li>• Suspensions</li> <li>• Expulsions</li> <li>• Special Ed services</li> <li>• Food allergies</li> <li>• Recess policies</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Summer school</li> <li>• ELL services</li> <li>• Class schedules</li> <li>• Buying computers, books etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What time school starts and ends</li> <li>• Schedule of school year</li> <li>• Bus schedules</li> <li>• Athletic schedules</li> <li>• Graduation requirements</li> <li>• Fixing schools, building new athletic fields</li> <li>• Hiring and firing the Superintendent</li> <li>• Food served in the cafeteria</li> </ul> |

***How to Create Change Beyond Your School***

**PARENT COALITIONS**

Sometimes parents have an issue with their child’s education that involves more than just one teacher, year, or subject area. Some children may have learning disabilities, illnesses, special needs, or special interests that require extra attention.

Sometimes schools or teachers are unable or unwilling to provide that special attention. In cases like these, parents with similar issues will meet – online or in person – and share information, stories, and ideas to help their children. By working together, parent groups can often bring changes to schools or districts that individual families could not. For example, a parent who may be struggling with their child’s learning disability would benefit from connecting with parents in similar situations and hearing about ways that other parents have had success both in and out of the classroom.

For information on organizations that support parents in your area, refer to the resources at the end of this section.

## STATEWIDE ADVOCACY

There are changes that you can make at the campus or district level. However, this may not be possible when the issue or situation affects more than one child, or the school does not have the power to make the requested change. When this happens, parents might have to help change the state laws. As citizens of the state of Texas, parents have the power to advocate for changes in laws. This process can take many years of dedication.

### *What kinds of issues require legislative advocacy?*

Here are a few issues that may be out of your school or even school board's control that may require statewide legislative advocacy: school choice, school finance, statewide testing, and school calendar, to name a few.

### *How do I advocate for legislative change?*

Sometimes advocacy may involve asking the state representative and state senator assigned to your address to vote for a specific issue or bill. It is best to call or write to your representatives and express your reasoning. Other times you will first need to collect facts and prepare a proposal for change. Once you have a proposal you can bring this information to your representatives to ask for their support in making the changes.

### *"Who represents me?"*

To find the contact information for your statewide representative and senator visit [www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/](http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/).

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOUSTON PARENTS

## *Houston ISD School Board Information*

Whether your child has an issue that is not being addressed at the school level, you want to provide input on school district policies and conditions, or you just want to stay informed about what is happening in your child's district and greater community, district school board meetings can be a great resource.

The Houston ISD School Board includes 9 trustees that are elected by people who live in each trustee's district. Trustees serve for a period of 4 years and have a variety of responsibilities including:

- Setting policies for the District.
- Hiring the District Superintendent.
- Setting the budget for the district.
- Monitoring how schools perform.

Anyone can attend a Board Meeting. If you are unable to attend Board Meetings in person, you can watch meetings broadcast on local TV or live streamed on the district website at <http://www.houstonisd.org/board>.

Members of Houston ISD's current Board of Trustees include:

- **District 1:** Anna Eastman, Assistant Secretary
- **District 2:** Rhonda Skillern-Jones, Secretary
- **District 3:** Jose Leal
- **District 4:** Jolanda Jones, Second Vice President
- **District 5:** Michael L. Lunceford
- **District 6:** Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca
- **District 7:** Anne Sung
- **District 8:** Diana Davila, First Vice President
- **District 9:** Wanda Adams, President

To find out which District your school is located in check out the HISD Board District Map at [http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/7897/Board\\_districts\\_1516.pdf](http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/7897/Board_districts_1516.pdf).

For information on your current representatives visit  
<http://www.houstonisd.org/domain/7897>.

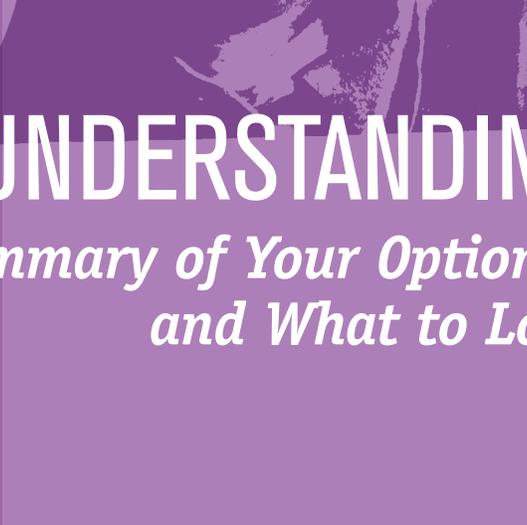
For more information on how to get involved at the school board level, contact the Houston ISD Office of the Board of Education at  
**(713) 556-6121**.

Or check out their website at  
<http://www.houstonisd.org/board>.



# UNDERSTANDING SCHOOLS:

*A Summary of Your Options  
and What to Look For*



# WHAT ARE MY SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS?

## Parents Have Options

When it comes to choosing a school, you have options. In addition to your zoned school (the school that serves your neighborhood), there are other types of schools that your child can attend through a transfer or application process. Below is a list of the different types of schools available to your child.



### *What are the types of schools my child can attend?*

A *District Zoned School* is the neighborhood school that a child is assigned to based on where he/she lives.

- The students are from the local community.
- It is free for all students in the community.
- Your child will attend this school if you do not apply to attend another school or if you don't get into another school.

A *Magnet Program or School* in Houston ISD is a public school option that:

- Has its own campus, or operates as a program within a zoned school.
- Offers a curriculum that is focused on a specific subject (example: Science Technology Engineering Mathematics or STEM, performing arts, leadership, a specific career path, or early college high school).
- Is free for your child to attend, but may charge fees for special programs.
- May have transportation options for your student if you don't live nearby.
- Requires an application during a specific time frame; be sure to identify the application due date for any of these schools you are considering.

For more information on these programs, contact HISD:

Office of School Choice  
(713) 556-6947

<http://www.houstonisd.org/magnetstatus>  
[magnet@houstonisd.org](mailto:magnet@houstonisd.org)

A *Charter School* is a public school that is not managed by a local school district. There are some important things to know about charter schools:

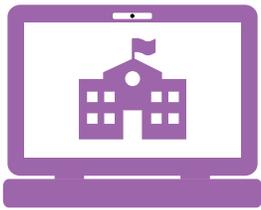
- They are free to attend, but may charge fees for special programs.
- They are open to any student that wishes to apply, with preference usually given to students living in the priority areas.
- They can have different rules than neighborhood schools. For example, charters can choose their own ways to teach lessons, and some charters may have a longer school day or a longer school year.
- They may have a waitlist. Often, there are more students wanting to attend a school than there are seats available. In these cases there is usually a blind lottery to choose the students who may attend.
- They require an application for the lottery during a specific time frame; be sure to know the application due dates for any charter schools you are considering.

*Religious or Private Schools* are non-public schools and do not receive government funds. Private schools may offer programming, lesson materials, and standardized tests that differ from public schools. They usually require students to:

- Pay tuition, although scholarships or financial aid may be available.
- Complete an application process that may include forms, tests, interviews, and financial aid requests.

Private schools can have a religious affiliation or be independent.

*Now that you know about the types of options available to you, follow this process to select the best school for your child:*

|   |  |
|---|--|
|    | <p><b>1</b> <i>Identify and compare your district zoned school to other possible school options (magnet, charter, etc.).</i></p> |
|   | <p><b>2</b> <i>Visit the school(s) you are considering to get a first-hand look at what is happening and ask questions.</i></p>  |
|  | <p><b>3</b> <i>Understand the transfer and application processes, and know the different deadlines.</i></p>                      |
|  | <p><b>4</b> <i>Make a decision and act!</i></p>  |

## Four-Step Process to Choosing a School

### STEP 1: Identify and compare your district zoned school to other possible school options

Find your district zoned school and learn about it. From there you can start to look at other school options.

To find your zoned school in Houston ISD go to:

[http://www.houstonisd.org/\\_findAschool](http://www.houstonisd.org/_findAschool)

There are many factors to consider when learning about your district zoned school and other potential schools. The four factors you should consider are: school quality, school programs and activities, environment and safety, and available resources.

### SCHOOL QUALITY

School quality refers to how well a school performs academically and how much students improve their academic performance each year. There are a few key things to look for that indicate if a school is a high- or low-quality school.

- **School Grade** – Just like students, most schools are given a letter grade, A-F. A grade of A, B, and even some C schools, are all good options for student success! Schools that receive a D or an F are generally not performing as well, academically.
- **School Ranking** – Most schools across the state are ranked based on their grade received. The higher the rank the better the school's academic performance in the previous year.
- **Gold Ribbon** – Schools that have high levels of poverty (75% or more) and high student achievement are designated as Gold Ribbon schools. This means that these schools are implementing special and effective practices to meet their students' needs.
- **PEG** – A Public Education Grant school is a campus that has been identified by the Texas Education Agency as needing improvement in 2 of the past 3 years. If your school is a PEG school you should be notified by the school and are allowed to transfer your child to a better school if space is available. Keep reading for additional information about PEG schools and how to transfer.

For more information on how to determine school quality, refer to the “*How to Understand the Quality of Your School?*” section of this guide starting on page 25.

[www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org)

Search for schools across Texas

Look at school profiles to learn about a school's programs and performance

Compare different schools

### SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Academic quality isn't the only important thing to consider when choosing a school for your child. You might look at the types of special programs and activities available during the school day. For example, your child might be interested in art, music, or STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math). If so, you may choose a school that has access to those programs and encourages learning in those areas. And if your child is in high school, you may want him/her to have access to a college program, such as AP courses or dual credits.

| ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  | MIDDLE SCHOOLS         | HIGH SCHOOLS                         |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Art Classes   | Art Classes            | Art Classes                          |
| Music Classes   | Music Classes          | Music Classes                        |
| Dual Language   | Dual Language          | Dual Language                        |
| Before School Program<br>(If Available, Grades That<br>Are Offered This Program)* | Before School Program* | AP, IB, College/Dual Credit Options* |
| After School Program & Activities   | After School Program*  | College Counseling                   |
| Pre-K (Full Day)*   | Sports/Athletics*      | Sports/Athletics*                    |
| Pre-K (Half Day)*   | –                      | –                                    |

\*There may be a weekly or monthly fee associated with these programs. Contact the school for more information.

Be sure to look for different community organizations that offer programs at the school. This can be a sign that the community is making an investment to help your child’s learning. Community partners can offer a wide range of opportunities and experiences for your student depending on your child’s school and age. These are a few types of programs that community partners might offer:

- Gardening
- After-school care
- Tutoring or academic support
- Faith-based clubs
- Local clubs, like Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts
- Counseling services for students and families
- College counseling

To find community partners at your school, search for your school at [www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org)

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Another important consideration is school environment. This is how students and teachers feel at their campus and in their classroom. It sets the tone for your student’s learning and their ability to be focused and engaged. It is impacted by school values, rules, discipline practices, and safety. It can include things such as:

- The relationships between students and each other
- The relationships between students and teachers
- How different parts of the school look and feel
- Front office staff behavior
- Bullying prevention on the school campus
- Safety measures

For additional information on school environment, visit section “*How to Understand Your School Environment?*” on page 28.

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

You might also think about any additional resources your child and family may need, such as transportation or bilingual education. You have the right to ask questions and find the resources you need for your child.

### Transportation

Getting your child to and from school can sometimes be a challenge. Charter schools and private schools can provide transportation, but they are not required to do so. Contact the individual school to discuss possible options.

*Houston ISD students are eligible to ride the bus if they live within district boundaries and:*

- Are in grades K-12, live two or more miles away from their neighborhood school or from the program or school of choice if they have been accepted; or
- Are a special education student who has disabilities that prevent them from using regular transportation and attends the closest available program to their neighborhood school.

Houston ISD provides transportation to any student, within HISD boundaries, admitted into a magnet program. This is not the case for all districts, and it does not apply to students beyond HISD for HISD programs.

Out of district students are responsible for their own transportation.

Parents should reach out directly to the district and also to their school principals for a definitive answer about PEG transfer transportation.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

Houston ISD has a Special Education Department that offers programming, information, and services to families with students who have special education needs. They provide support in the delivery of all services your child may need. Those services are determined by an Admission, Review, or Dismissal (ARD) committee or as stated in your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

In Houston ISD, each school provides instructional support for students based on their needs either directly to the student or through consultations with the student's teacher.

Charter schools and private schools must also have special education options. Contact the individual school to find out more.

To learn more about special education, including your child's rights, who to contact, what to expect from special education services and available support groups, refer to the "Special Populations" section of this guide starting on page 53.

## STEP 2: Visit Your School Options

One of the best ways to find out if a school is a good fit for your child is to visit the campus! Visit your zoned school and other school(s) you are considering to get a first-hand look at what is happening. You can also ask questions to determine what is important for your student and family.

### Questions to Ask When Visiting a School

#### *General School Concerns*

- What is the school's mission? The mission statement is usually a sentence or two that describes the school's values and purpose.
- How does the school approach safety or follow its code of conduct?
- How does the school approach discipline?
- What are the school's greatest successes?
- What are the school's greatest challenges?
- What is the student mobility rate? (The student mobility rate represents the number of students leaving the school each year for reasons other than graduation.)
- What is the teacher attrition rate? (The teacher attrition rate represents the number of teachers leaving the school each year.)

### Meeting Student Needs

- How does the school keep track of student academic progress (grades in classes and test scores)?
- How do teachers teach students who speak a language other than English?
- How do teachers help students catch up if they are falling behind?
- What services do you have for students with special needs or learning disabilities?
- How do students get to school? Is bus transportation available?
- Does the school have free or reduced-price meals for students who qualify based on family income?
- If a child is doing really well in his or her classes, does the school have advanced courses or programs that help them continue to succeed?

### Classroom and Learning

- What rules and systems are most important in classrooms?
- What is the typical class size? What is the maximum class size?
- How is technology used to support teaching and learning?
- What additional activities are available for students?
- How does fine arts fit into the curriculum?

### Parent Involvement

- How can parents get involved?
- How do teachers and staff communicate with parents?
- What programs are available for parents to support their child's education?

## STEP 3: Understand the transfer and application processes and deadlines.

If you decide that you would like your child to attend a school other than their district zoned school, you will need to know the different types of transfers and applications. Each has their own rules and deadlines.

### Transfer

You can request to transfer your child to another school within Houston ISD under two different options.

#### 1. *Open Transfers:* A transfer requested based on the student's and family's needs

- You can request an open transfer for your student based on his or her needs. If a student needs to request a transfer for medical reasons, they will require an official letter from the doctor. The transfer may be granted if the school has space available.

### Transfer Process



For more information about transferring schools in your city, visit:

<http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/31546>

2. *Public Education Grant (PEG) School Transfer:* A transfer requested if your district zoned school has a history of failing to meet state academic standards.
- Your student can request a transfer to a different school within your school district if he/she is attending a district zoned school that is listed as a Public Education Grant (PEG) school. Search for your school at [www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org) to find out if your school has been designated a PEG school or refer to the list of PEG Schools in your area at the end of this section.
  - PEG schools are low-performing schools where:
    - 50% or fewer students passed the STAAR exam in any two of the most recent three years (2014, 2015, and 2016), or
    - The school was rated by the state as “Improvement Required” in 2014, 2015, or 2016.
  - Each year the state provides districts with a list of PEG schools. The districts are then required to inform parents of students in PEG schools by February 1st.

### What Is The PEG Transfer Process?

Contact your school district to find out more.

Houston ISD

Student Transfer Department

713-556-6734

<http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/31541>

## APPLICATIONS

All charter schools, as well as Magnet Programs or Schools in Houston ISD require an application. They may also have additional requirements such as an essay, audition, or portfolio. If you would like your child to attend one of these schools, you must apply by the established deadline. Visit the end of this section or [www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org) for a list of Magnet Programs or Schools in Houston ISD and their application requirements. Be sure to check the dates and deadline early; some applications start as early as September.

### 1. *Magnet Programs or Schools in Houston ISD Application Process*

Be sure to first check the updated deadlines and application requirements listed on the website:

<http://www.houstonisd.org/magnetstatus>

| APPLICATION PROCESS FOR 2018-2019 MAGNET LOTTERY |   |
|--|---|
| SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER                             | <p><b>PHASE 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students living inside the HISD boundaries and children of active HISD employees who live outside the boundaries submit applications.</li> <li>• If there are more applicants than available seats, a lottery system will be used to determine enrollment.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <p><b>PHASE 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students living inside HISD boundaries and children of active HISD employees who live outside the boundaries submit applications.</li> <li>• After Phase 1 applications have been processed, eligible students are considered in the order in which their application was submitted (online or on paper).</li> </ul> |
| DECEMBER - MAY                                   | <p><b>PHASE 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HISD-resident students are prioritized.</li> <li>• If space remains, out of district eligible students are considered in the order in which they submitted their applications.</li> <li>• For magnet-only programs, out of district magnet transfers must be approved by the superintendent.</li> </ul>              |
|  | <p><b>PHASE 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HISD-resident students are prioritized.</li> <li>• If space remains, out of district eligible students are considered in the order in which they submitted their applications.</li> <li>• For magnet-only programs, out of district magnet transfers must be approved by the superintendent.</li> </ul>              |
| JUNE - AUGUST                                    | <p><b>PHASE 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HISD-resident students are prioritized.</li> <li>• If space remains, out of district eligible students are considered in the order in which they submitted their applications.</li> <li>• For magnet-only programs, out of district magnet transfers must be approved by the superintendent.</li> </ul>              |

**Application Tips**

- Any student interested in a Program or School of Choice must submit an application, even if the program or school is at the student’s district zoned school.
- Go to <http://www.houstonisd.org/magnetstatus>. But only submit ONE application.
- Students can apply for up to 5 programs, and the student can list the programs in order of preference on the application.
- Transportation is provided to HISD students if they choose a program within the district.
- A computer randomly selects students for the programs and schools through a lottery process.

2. *Charter School Application Process:* Each charter school network or individual charter school has their own process for applying. Call the school you are interested in or visit their website for additional information. You can search for charter schools in your area at [www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org).

Check out the [www.applyhouston.org](http://www.applyhouston.org) as a resource. You can fill out one application and submit to multiple K-12 schools. With 50+ school choices, it’s easier than ever to find and apply to the best fit school for your children.

To help you better understand your choices, check out [www.familiesempowered.org](http://www.familiesempowered.org). They exist to help empower families to understand and engage in the process of school choice. They also host a variety of fairs, with the first one on November 4th, 2017 from 9AM – 12PM at the HCC West Loop Campus. Visit their site to learn about other upcoming fairs and events.

**STEP 4: Decide which school best fits your needs, and take action!**

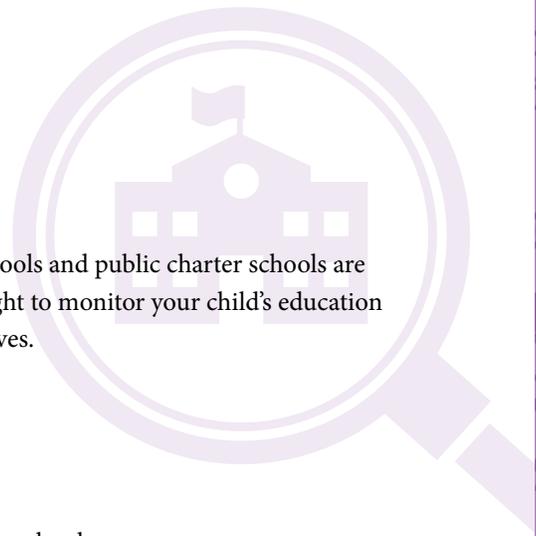
After you’ve decided which school(s) you would like your child to attend, request a transfer or go through the application process. For additional information and help with the transfer and application process visit [www.FamiliesEmpowered.org](http://www.FamiliesEmpowered.org).

If you are unable to change schools or if it's not the right choice for your family, you can always get involved to make your zoned school better! Check out the sections in this guide to help you support your child's education:

- Parents as Partners on pages 5-14.
- Cradle to Career on pages 35-52.
- Special Populations on pages 53-64.

There are many options when it comes to choosing a school for your child. Remember that you know what is right for your child and your family. Be confident that once you have made an informed decision – district zoned school, program or school of choice, charter school, or something else – it is the right decision. And wherever your child goes to school, get involved in their education.

# HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE QUALITY OF YOUR SCHOOL



All children deserve a high quality education. Traditional public schools and public charter schools are funded by your tax dollars. As a taxpayer and as parent, it is your right to monitor your child's education and ensure he or she is getting the quality education he or she deserves.

This guide is designed to help you understand:

- How to recognize school quality
- How CHILDREN AT RISK ranks and grades school quality
- What you can do if your child currently attends a lower quality school

## *What Does A Quality School Look Like?*

School quality is determined by how well students perform at a given school, in addition to the environment a school creates for their students. A high-quality school will have following positive characteristics:

### **Academics**

- Students are engaged in a rigorous curriculum that pushes them to think critically.
- Lessons are taught in a variety of ways to reach all types of learners.
- Most students are reading on or above grade level.
- Students are making continued growth on state standardized (STAAR) tests.
- Teachers and staff monitor student progress and use data to determine how to best teach.

### **Climate/Environment**

- Students are challenged and supported to achieve ambitious goals.
- Students feel safe and happy when at school.
- Students have clubs, sports, and different programs they can be involved in .
- Behavior and discipline are handled effectively and do not distract students from learning.
- There are high expectations for students and staff.
- School administrators and teachers are always looking for ways they can improve .

### **Relationships**

- Every student has caring and respecting relationships with teachers and staff.
- There is a mix of new and returning teachers who are passionate and dedicated.
- Parents are encouraged by the teachers and staff to get involved in their child's education.

Although the list above does not include all of the possible characteristics that make up a quality school, it does provide you with a starting point for things to look for as you determine the right school for your child.

## How Do We Rank And Grade School Quality?

To provide parents and communities with helpful information on how schools are performing, CHILDREN AT RISK ranks over 7,000 elementary, middle, and high schools across the state of Texas. Through this information, parents, schools, and school districts are able to identify strengths in their schools, as well as opportunities for learning and improvement.

Every year, we assign schools an A-F letter grade based on a school's performance on the following items:

1. How a school's students perform on Reading and Math STAAR tests
2. How a school's students perform compared to other schools with similar resources
3. The growth that individual students show over time on the STAAR tests
4. High school graduation rates, SAT/ACT participation rate and scores, and AP/IB class participation rate and test scores (high schools only)

These rankings provide some information about your child's school and the quality of education he or she is receiving. However, there are other factors that could influence your child's experience at school. To understand additional factors that may shape your child's experience at his or her school, check out the "What Are My School Options?" guide.

## What Does A "D" Or "F" Rating Say About My Child's School?

When looking up your child's school grade and ranking, you may be worried that it received a low grade. To help you make sense of what this may mean, below are a few key characteristics of a typical "D" or "F" campus:

- Schools that receive a "D" or "F" grade are performing below their peers on the STAAR tests and experience less growth than other campuses with similar students.
- Students at these schools, on average, are behind in reading, math, Algebra I, and/or English I and II skills
- Students at these schools also tend to receive lower scores on the SAT or ACT, and may not be considered college-ready

If your child attends a "D" or "F" school, it is important to consider that he or she may not be ready to transition to the next grade or the next educational step. However, this does not mean that every student at a "D" or "F" school is unprepared or not college-ready. As mentioned above, school quality is not only determined by academic performance. Therefore, we recognize that a child could be having a great experience at a "D" or "F" school.

There are many other important factors at a school such as the social or emotional support your child is receiving or extracurricular activities that are offered that support your child in ways that our rankings are unable to consider. If you are a parent of a child at a "D" or "F" school, you have a few options for your child's education.

1. You can choose to stay at your child's school and create an "A" experience for your child.
2. You can choose to stay at your child's school and advocate for change to help improve the quality of the school. (For information to help you advocate for change, check out our guide on "Parents as Advocates: How Can You Make A Difference?")
3. You can look for other school options for your child.

## What Are My Options?

### SHOULD MY CHILD STAY AT HIS OR HER CURRENT SCHOOL?

**YES**

*How can I help my child succeed at this school?*

- **Build relationships** with your child's teachers every year by attending parent-teacher conferences and communicating often.
- **Stay connected** to your child's school by talking to your child about their school experience and attending school events.
- **Voice any concerns** you have with the school principal.
- **Enroll your child in extra activities**, such as sports, clubs, tutoring sessions or community programs based on their needs and interests.
- **Make sure your child attends school** each day and gets to school on time.
- **Encourage strong study skills** by setting aside a time and place for homework, keeping track of major assignments, and helping them review before tests.
- **Make every activity a learning opportunity** by asking questions, reading together at home, and taking advantage of your local library or museums (often free for children).

For more information on how to engage with your child at school and at home, go to the "Defining Parent Engagement" guide.

**NO**

*How do I transfer my child to a new school?*

Look into charter schools, magnet programs, or other potential schools in your district and select which ones are good options for your child.

Look up application deadlines and requirements, and complete the applications on time.

For more information on how to find and apply to different schools, go to the "What Are My School Choice Options?" guide.

# HOW TO UNDERSTAND YOUR SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

## How to Understand Your School Environment



### *What is School Environment?*

School environment, also known as school climate, refers to the look and feel of a school. How students feel at school can influence how successful they are. A school's environment is often affected by its values, rules, safety, and discipline policies.

School environment is important because it sets the tone for student learning. A positive, supportive environment can help students feel safe and make better grades. Elements of school environment include:

- Relationships between students and teachers
- School staff and front office behavior
- School safety and levels of security
- Bullying prevention practices on the school campus
- General look and feel of the school

### *How Do I Assess a School's Environment?*

The best way to learn about the environment is by visiting the campus. As a parent, you have the right to visit your child's school, meet with teachers and administrators, and ask questions about the school environment. You can call the school or request an in-person tour to learn more about the school your child attends or may attend in the future.

#### **What to look for:**

When determining the quality of a school's environment, look for the following positive characteristics:

- Friendly and encouraging office staff (school secretary, office manager, etc.) who display supportive behaviors with students, staff, and parents.
- Teachers helping and speaking positively with students in the hallways and classrooms.
- Teachers keeping the students engaged in their lessons and thinking critically.
- Parents are encouraged to visit the school, participate in different activities, and ask questions.
- Students are friendly with one another.
- The school has a hopeful and supportive environment, such as posters on the walls encouraging students to "reach for the stars," etc.
- Safety measures in place throughout the school, such as automatic locks or gated entrances to the front office during the school day.
- Safe and clear resources for students with emotional, mental, and physical disabilities, such as unobstructed ramps for wheelchair access.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

In addition to looking for the positive indicators mentioned earlier, here are some questions you can ask to learn more about a school's climate.

- How does the school provide information to parents about their child’s behavior?
- How do office staff or teachers communicate positive feedback to the students?
- If a parent contacts the school, how long does it usually take to get a response?
- How does the school prevent and respond to bullying?
- Are there any official rules that require the school to notify parents when bullying happens in their child’s classroom?
- What rules are in place to keep drugs from being shared on school grounds?
- How does the school support students’ social and emotional growth?
- What resources and trainings does the school have to help teachers and staff support students’ social and emotional growth?
- How does the school encourage parents to talk with teachers and school staff if their child is having a problem?
- How does the school support emotional and physical growth for students with special needs?
- Does the front office staff, principal, or teachers speak the same language as me?

### Does My Child’s School Feel:

1. Safe?
2. Welcoming?
3. Clean?
4. Respectful?
5. Collaborative?

## Student Codes of Conduct

A code of conduct is a document that explains a school’s disciplinary rules. Schools are required to make this document available to the public. If you are unsure about where to find your school’s code of conduct, you may ask the school principal to share it with you. Becoming familiar with this document can help you advocate for your child and ensure that he or she is in the best learning environment.

Every student must follow the rules in the school’s code of conduct. If a student breaks any of the rules, he or she may face consequences, such as suspension or even expulsion.

### Things to Look For In a Code of Conduct:

- Rules for removing a student from the classroom
- Why and how a student could be suspended or expelled
- How the school factors self-defense, intent, and disability into disciplinary decisions
- Rules for transferring a student to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP)
- The school’s process for notifying a parent or guardian if their student violates the code of conduct
- How the school responds to bullying and harassment

Your school’s code of conduct will also explain why a student may be removed from the school setting, which will include reasons for suspensions and expulsions.

## Suspensions

A student may be suspended from school based on the reasons provided in the code of conduct. Suspensions may not exceed three school days. A conference must be scheduled between the campus behavior coordinator (CBC), parent, and teacher within three school days from the time a student receives a written or oral notice of removal. This is a great opportunity to restore trust and improve your child’s relationship with their teachers so he or she can continue to be successful in school.

It is important to note that as of June 2017, students in Pre-K through 2nd grade cannot receive out-of-school suspensions.

### Expulsions

Students can also be expelled – permanent removal from a school – for a variety of reasons listed in the code of conduct. These reasons are typically for acts that are against the law. If a student’s behavior seriously interferes with a teacher’s ability to communicate or other students’ ability to learn, the student may be immediately placed in an alternative education program. Students convicted of sexual assault may be transferred to another school if requested by the parent of the victim.

### Bullying

School districts must have bullying and dating violence prevention policies. These policies should protect students from bullying in any form – written, verbal, or physical. Policies should also protect students who speak up about bullying incidents. Parents of bullying victims can request transfer of their student or of the bully to another classroom or campus if there is a demonstrated negative impact on the student’s learning. It is important to build a strong relationship with your child and his or her school. The more involved you are, the better you can address this type of situation as it arises. Check out these resources as a helpful tool for parents: <http://bit.ly/2d7AIR3> and [http://www.imbullyfree.org/?page\\_id=2686](http://www.imbullyfree.org/?page_id=2686)

Check out Houston ISD’s website:

<http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/106693> for more information.

## *Trends in School Discipline*

### Restorative Justice

A new type of approach to discipline that schools are beginning to implement is restorative justice. This focuses on repairing the relationship instead of simply punishing a student when they behave poorly. In this approach, the victim, offender, and school staff work together to develop a plan to address damage caused by the offender and facilitate healing for everyone involved. There may be times when parents are asked to participate in this process. The main purpose is to restore trust and the relationship.

### Conscious Discipline

Through this learning approach, the teacher uses common examples of classroom conflict to teach students basic life-skills and increase emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. This approach is meant to avoid serious conflict before it starts.

### Police Officers

Your child’s school may have police officers on campus. These officers work to ensure each student has the ability to learn in a safe environment. Campus officers have the powers, privileges and immunities of police officers: they can enforce laws, take a child into custody, assist other law enforcement agencies, and may be authorized to carry a weapon. Charter districts can appoint one police officer per 400 students. Police officers employed by school districts or on campuses as part of an agreement with the local law enforcement agency must follow the school’s policies.

The environment of your child’s school can impact his or her ability to learn and find success. You can help by staying informed of the school’s rules and your child’s experiences. If you find your child is having issues in their school or outside environment, consider the following actions:

### WHAT TO DO IF...

#### Your Child Is Getting In Trouble At School

1. Read your school’s code of conduct and familiarize yourself with the rules and policies.
2. Talk to your child about any incidents and avoid forming opinions until you have heard your child’s perspective.
3. Have a calm and open discussion with your child about factors that may be contributing to his or her behavior or negative experience.
4. Implement a support plan, with daily goals, that can be used both in school and at home to help your child develop the necessary skills and habits to find success.
5. If suspended or facing other forms of punishment, contact your child’s school and make an appointment to meet with the principal.
6. Ask the principal about alternative forms of punishment and advocate for your child’s social, emotional, and educational needs.
7. Ensure the school is following the code of conduct. This is especially important if your child is a special education student.
8. Work with your child to make sure they make up any missed assignments or tests so that the possible suspension does not negatively impact his/her grades.

#### Your Child Is Being Bullied

1. Calmly listen to your child and document the incident(s) with as much specific information as possible (i.e. date, time, location and names of students involved).
2. Read your school’s anti-bullying policy and determine whether or not the policy was violated.
3. Contact your child’s school and make an appointment to meet with the principal. You should inform the principal of any bullying that you believe may impact your child’s school environment or ability to focus and learn.
4. Follow the principal’s suggestions and maintain communication to ensure the bullying is addressed and your child feels safe.

#### You’re Concerned Your Child May Be Involved In Negative Or Illegal Activity

1. Have a calm and open conversation with your child. Explain to your child the dangers of his or her actions. Ask questions and try to understand your child’s feelings.
2. Get to know your child’s friends and their parents. Limit or supervise time with individuals who may influence your child to become involved with illegal activities.
3. Encourage your child to become involved in positive activities such as school clubs, sports or other community programs.
4. Plan quality family time such as sit down dinners or game/movie nights.
5. Talk to your child’s teachers about attendance and academic performance. Students who are not engaged in their education or miss class days are more likely to become involved in negative activities and behaviors.
6. Establish age appropriate boundaries and consequences that help maintain a safe home environment for your family.
7. Talk to your child’s school counselor to get other resources and assistance.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOUSTON PARENTS

| HIGH PERFORMING CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THE HOUSTON AREA |       |      |            |                                |                             |   |
|---|-------|------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Name  | Grado | Rank | App Period | App Model                      | Phone                       | Website   |
| Houston Gateway Academy - Coral Campus              | PK    | 12   | A+         | contact                        | contact                     | 832-649-2700<br><a href="http://www.hgaschools.org/">http://www.hgaschools.org/</a>   |
| Kipp Shine Prep                                     | PK    | 4    | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Lottery                     | 832-328-1051<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/shine">https://www.kippouston.org/shine</a>   |
| Harmony Science Academy-Sugar Land*                 | KG    | 6    | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 281-265-2525<br><a href="https://www.hsshouston.org/">https://www.hsshouston.org/</a>   |
| Harmony Science Academy-Katy*                       | KG    | 12   | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 832-437-3926<br><a href="https://www.hsawh.org/">https://www.hsawh.org/</a>   |
| Kipp Sharp College Prep                             | PK    | 4    | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Lottery                     | 281-879-3000<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/sharp">https://www.kippouston.org/sharp</a>   |
| Houston Gateway Academy                             | PK    | 8    | A+         | contact                        | contact                     | 832-649-2700<br><a href="http://www.hgaschools.org/">http://www.hgaschools.org/</a>   |
| Harmony School Of Excellence-Houston*               | KG    | 8    | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 713-983-8668<br><a href="https://www.hsehouston.org/">https://www.hsehouston.org/</a>   |
| Houston Gateway Academy Inc Elite College Prep      | PK    | 8    | A          | contact                        | contact                     | 832-649-2700<br><a href="http://www.hgaschools.org/">http://www.hgaschools.org/</a>   |
| Kipp Explore Academy*                               | PK    | 4    | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Lottery                     | 832-230-0547<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/explore">https://www.kippouston.org/explore</a>   |
| Kipp Connect Primary*                               | 5     | 6    | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Lottery                     | 281-879-3023<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/connectprimary">https://www.kippouston.org/connectprimary</a>   |
| Harmony School Of Exploration- Houston*             | KG    | 5    | A-         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Open enrollment<br>/Lottery | 832-831-7406<br><a href="https://www.hehouston.org/">https://www.hehouston.org/</a>   |
| Accelerated Interdisciplinary Acad                  | PK    | 6    | A-         | contact                        | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | Elementary:<br>713-728-9330<br>Middle:<br>713-283-6298<br><a href="http://www.aicharacterschools.org/">http://www.aicharacterschools.org/</a>   |
| Zoe Learning Acad - Ambassador Campus               | PK    | 6    | A-         | contact                        | contact                     | 281-968-2962<br><a href="http://www.zoelarningcenters.com/">http://www.zoelarningcenters.com/</a>   |
| Texas Serenity Academy                              | KG    | 8    | B+         | contact                        | contact                     | 281-931-8887<br><a href="http://texasserenityacademy.net/">http://texasserenityacademy.net/</a>   |
| The Varnett School - Northeast                      | PK    | 5    | B+         | contact                        | Open enrollment             | <a href="http://northeast.varnett.org/">http://northeast.varnett.org/</a>   |
| Harmony School Of Technology-Houston*               | KG    | 8    | B+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10                 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 713-631-4396<br><a href="https://hsanw.org/default.aspx">https://hsanw.org/default.aspx</a>   |
| Raul Yzaguirre School For Success                   | KG    | 8    | B+         | contact                        | Open enrollment             | 713-640-3700<br><a href="http://www.tejanocenter.org/domain/26">http://www.tejanocenter.org/domain/26</a>   |
| Step Charter EI                                     | KG    | 8    | B+         | Jan 1 - Feb 28                 | Open enrollment             | 281-988-7797<br>for Wilcrest<br><a href="http://www.steppingstoneselementary.org/">http://www.steppingstoneselementary.org/</a>   |
| Beatrice Mayes Institute Charter School             | KG    | 8    | B+         | contact                        | contact                     | 713-747-5629<br><a href="http://bmi.wonderlandinc.org/">http://bmi.wonderlandinc.org/</a>   |
| Univ Of Houston Charter Sch-Tech                    | KG    | 5    | B+         | Mar 27 - Apr 7                 | Lottery                     | 713-743-9111<br><a href="http://www.uh.edu/charter-school/">http://www.uh.edu/charter-school/</a>   |
| Alief Montessori Community School                   | EE    | 5    | B+         | First Wk Nov -<br>First Wk Mar | Lottery                     | 281-530-9406<br><a href="http://www.aliefmontessori.org/">http://www.aliefmontessori.org/</a>   |
| Baker-Ripley Charter School                         | KG    | 5    | B          | contact                        | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 713-273-3731<br><a href="https://www.bakerripley.org/locations/promise-community-school-at-baker-ripley">https://www.bakerripley.org/locations/promise-community-school-at-baker-ripley</a> |

| Name  | Grado | Rank | App Period | App Model      | Phone                       | Website   |
|---|-------|------|------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Amigos Por Vida-Friends For Life Charter School | PK    | 8    | B          | contact        | contact                     | 713-349-9945<br><a href="http://www.amigosporvida.com/">http://www.amigosporvida.com/</a>                               |
| Harmony School Of Achievement - Houston*        | KG    | 5    | B          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 281-855-2500<br><a href="https://www.hsachievement.org/">https://www.hsachievement.org/</a>                             |
| Kipp Zenith Academy*                            | PK    | 4    | B          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-230-0562<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/zenith">https://www.kippouston.org/zenith</a>                       |
| Harmony Science Academy- Beaumont*              | KG    | 12   | B-         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 409-838-4000<br><a href="https://hsabeaumont.org/">https://hsabeaumont.org/</a>   |
| Harmony School Of Innovation-Sugar Land*        | 7     | 12   | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 281-302-6445<br><a href="https://www.hsshhigh.org/">https://www.hsshhigh.org/</a>                                       |
| Harmony School Of Innovation - Houston*         | 6     | 8    | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 713-541-3030<br><a href="https://www.hsihouston.org/">https://www.hsihouston.org/</a>                                   |
| Harmony School Of Discovery - Houston*          | 6     | 12   | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 281-861-5105<br><a href="https://www.hsdhouston.org/">https://www.hsdhouston.org/</a>                                   |
| Yes Prep - West*                                | 6     | 12   | A          | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-967-8200<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/west">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/west</a>                   |
| Ser-Ninos Charter Middle                        | 6     | 8    | A          | contact        | contact                     | 713-592-6055<br><a href="http://www.serninos.org/gulfton-ms">http://www.serninos.org/gulfton-ms</a>                     |
| Yes Prep - Southwest*                           | 6     | 12   | A          | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-967-9200<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/southwest">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/southwest</a>         |
| Yes Prep - North Central*                       | 6     | 12   | A          | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-967-8800<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/north-central">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/north-central</a> |
| Yes Prep - Southeast*                           | 6     | 12   | A-         | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-967-9400<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/southeast">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/southeast</a>         |
| Kipp Academy Middle*                            | 5     | 8    | A-         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-328-1051<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/kippacademy">https://www.kippouston.org/kippacademy</a>             |
| Kipp Voyage Academy For Girls*                  | 5     | 8    | B+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-230-0567<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/voyage">https://www.kippouston.org/voyage</a>                       |
| Kipp 3D Academy*                                | 5     | 8    | B+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-230-0566<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/3d">https://www.kippouston.org/3d</a>                               |
| Yes Prep - East End*                            | 6     | 12   | B          | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-967-7800<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/east-end">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/east-end</a>           |
| Kipp Sharpstown College Preparatory*            | 5     | 8    | B          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 281-879-3005<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/sharpstown">https://www.kippouston.org/sharpstown</a>               |
| Kipp Intrepid Preparatory School*               | 5     | 8    | B          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 281-879-3100<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/intrepid">https://www.kippouston.org/intrepid</a>                   |
| Yes Prep - 5Th Ward*                            | 6     | 10   | B-         | contact        | Lottery                     | 713-924-0600<br><a href="http://www.yesprep.org/schools/fifth-ward">http://www.yesprep.org/schools/fifth-ward</a>       |
| Harmony Science Academy-Houston*                | 9     | 12   | A+         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 713-729-4400<br><a href="https://hsahouston.org">https://hsahouston.org</a>   |
| Harmony School Of Advancement-Houston*          | 9     | 12   | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Open enrollment/<br>Lottery | 281-741-8899<br><a href="https://hsadvancement.org/">https://hsadvancement.org/</a>                                     |
| Kipp Houston H S*                               | 9     | 12   | A          | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-328-1082<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/khhs">https://www.kippouston.org/khhs</a>                           |
| Raul Yzaguirre School For Success               | 9     | 12   | B          | contact        | Open enrollment             | 713-640-3700<br><a href="http://www.tejanocenter.org/domain/26">http://www.tejanocenter.org/domain/26</a>               |
| Kipp Sunnyside H S*                             | 9     | 12   | B-         | Nov 1 - Feb 10 | Lottery                     | 832-230-0562<br><a href="https://www.kippouston.org/sunnyside">https://www.kippouston.org/sunnyside</a>                 |

## 2017 PEG SCHOOLS IN HOUSTON ISD

A Public Education Grant (PEG) school is a campus that has been identified by the Texas Education Agency as needing improvement in 2 of the past 3 years. If your school is a PEG school you should be notified by the school and are allowed to transfer your child to a better school if space is available.

|                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Alcott El                          | Kelso El                           |
| Atherton El                        | Key Middle                         |
| Attucks Middle                     | Law El                             |
| Austin H S                         | Lee H S                            |
| Bastian El                         | Lewis El                           |
| Berry El                           | Long Academy                       |
| Blackshear El                      | Looscan El                         |
| Bonham El                          | Mading El                          |
| Bruce El                           | Madison H S                        |
| Burrus El                          | Marshall Middle                    |
| Clifton Middle                     | Martinez C El                      |
| Codwell El                         | Martinez R El                      |
| Cook Jr El                         | Mcgowen El                         |
| Coop El                            | McCreynolds Middle                 |
| Cullen Middle                      | Memorial El                        |
| Deady Middle                       | Milby H S                          |
| Deanda El                          | Milne El                           |
| Dogan El                           | Mitchell El                        |
| Dowling Middle                     | Montgomery El                      |
| Edison Middle                      | North Forest H S                   |
| Elmore El                          | Ortiz Middle                       |
| Energized For Stem Academy Central | Petersen El                        |
| Fleming Middle                     | Reagan K-8 Educational Ctr         |
| Foerster El                        | Reynolds El                        |
| Fondren El                         | Robinson El                        |
| Fondren Middle                     | Roderick R Paige El                |
| Fonville Middle                    | Ross El                            |
| Forest Brook Middle                | Scarborough H S                    |
| Foster El                          | Sharpstown H S                     |
| Furr H S                           | Sterling H S                       |
| Gallegos El                        | Stevens El                         |
| Garcia El                          | Sugar Grove Academy                |
| Gregory-Lincoln Ed Ctr             | Texas Connections Academy At Houst |
| Grissom El                         | Thomas Middle                      |
| Hartsfield El                      | Thompson El                        |
| Helms El                           | Tinsley El                         |
| Henderson N El                     | Wainwright El                      |
| Henry Middle                       | Washington B T H S                 |
| Highland Hts El                    | Welch Middle                       |
| Hilliard El                        | Wesley El                          |
| Holland Middle                     | Westbury H S                       |
| Houston Math Science And Technolog | Wheatley H S                       |
| Jackson Middle                     | Williams Middle                    |
| Jefferson El                       | Wilson Montessori                  |
| Jones Futures Academy              | Woodson School                     |
| Kandy Stripe Academy               | Worthing H S                       |
| Kashmere Gardens El                | Yates H S                          |
| Kashmere H S                       | Young El                           |



# CRADLE TO CAREER:

*Preparing from Birth  
to After High School*



# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR KINDERGARTEN

## *Why is Early Education Important?*

Did you know that the first 5 years of a child's life are the most important in brain development? During this time, the brain grows to 80-85% of its full adult size. Children learn at a much faster rate during these first few years than at any other time in their lives.

Stressful experiences during the first few years of life can slow a child's brain growth and development. Sometimes these stressful situations are not in your control, but you can try to give your child a safe, supportive environment that promotes learning. You can help your child by having meaningful interactions and conversations with them during these early years. You can also make sure they have strong relationships with caring, encouraging adults like grandparents, child care teachers, and yourself!

Another way to provide this type of environment for your child is by enrolling them in high quality early education programs from birth to age 5.

### **These programs are more likely to help kids:**

- Be ready for learning at school
- Be successful readers in 3rd grade and beyond
- Graduate from high school
- Have better jobs as adults
- Have fewer behavior problems
- Have less chance of smoking, drug use, or depression

High quality early education programs are an important part of helping kids be ready for school!



## Types of Early Education Programs

There are many early education options for your child and your family. This table shows early education options and ages for which they are available. After the table there is additional information about each of the options.

|  | DESCRIPTION   | COST   | AGES     |       |        |        |        |        |
|--|---|--|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  |   |  | 0-12 MO. | 1 YR. | 2 YRS. | 3 YRS. | 4 YRS. | 5 YRS. |
| <b>Child Care</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically a nonprofit or a small business.</li> <li>Can be in a center or a home.</li> <li>Each location has different hours that they will care for your child, though it often covers most of the work-day.</li> <li>You might have to pay extra for early drop-off or late pick-up.</li> </ul>  | Varies; financial help is available for those who qualify  | X        | X     | X      | X      | X      | X      |
| <b>Early Head Start &amp; Head Start</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Head Start is for children 0-3 years and Head Start serves 4-year-old children.</li> <li>In addition to caring for children, these centers offer social services to families.</li> <li>Hours are different at each location.</li> </ul>  | Free to those who qualify  | X        | X     | X      | X      | X      | X      |
| <b>Public Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managed by your local school district or a charter school. • Either offered for a half-day (at least 3 hours) or a full-day (at least 7 hours)</li> <li>Go to <a href="http://www.texaschool-guide.org">www.texaschool-guide.org</a> or turn to page 16 for more information on your school options</li> </ul>   | Free to those who qualify; costs vary across school districts for families that don't qualify                |          |       |        |        | X      |        |
| <b>Kindergarten</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managed by your local school district, a charter school, or a private school</li> <li>Can be offered for a half-day (at least 3 hours) but most are for a full-day (at least 7 hours).</li> <li>Go to <a href="http://www.texaschool-guide.org">www.texaschool-guide.org</a> or turn to page 16 for more information on your school options</li> </ul> | Free to all Texas children at your local school district or charter school; varying fees for private schools |          |       |        |        |        | X      |

### Child Care

Child care programs enroll children from birth through Kindergarten, and up to age 12 for after school programs. Availability for each age group at a location will be different based on their size and waitlists. Child care can be offered at a center or in a home. All centers and homes must follow minimum expectations set by the state, but these do not indicate whether the program is quality. Please read “Choosing the Best Option” in this section on page 40 to learn more.

Centers and homes follow different minimum state standards and serve different numbers of children:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>LICENSED CENTERS</b>   | Care for 7 or more children. They must follow minimum standards set by the state, including cleared background checks and passing inspection at least once a year.   |
| <b>LICENSED HOME</b>      | Care for 7 to 12 children. They must follow minimum standards set by the state, including cleared background checks and passing inspection at least once a year.   |
| <b>REGISTERED CENTERS</b> | Care for no more than 12 children, with no more than 6 of them related to the home provider. They receive a registration certificate, are inspected every 1-2 years, and follow different minimum standards than licensed homes. |
| <b>LISTED FAMILY HOME</b> | Care for 1 to 3 unrelated children. They are not inspected unless there is a report of abuse or neglect and do not have to follow minimum requirements.  |

Child care can be subsidized or paid for privately. With subsidized child care, you can get financial aid to help pay for child care if you meet certain income requirements, and you are working or in school.

Compare your household income below to see if you qualify for subsidized child care. To apply, call Workforce Solutions at 1-888-469-5627 or visit <http://www.wrksolutions.com/for-individuals/financial-aid/financial-aid-for-child-care>.

| <b>INCOME GUIDELINES EFFECTIVE 10-1-16 TO 9-30-17</b> |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Family Size (Number of Persons in the Family)         | Gross Monthly Income Limit |
| 2   | \$2,670                    |
| 3   | \$3,360                    |
| 4   | \$4,050                    |
| 5   | \$4,740                    |
| 6   | \$5,430                    |
| 7   | \$6,122                    |
| 8   | \$6,815                    |

Private pay child care is offered through licensed child care centers, local community centers like the YMCA, and faith-based locations such as a church. The fees and program rules vary by location.

### Early Head Start & Head Start

Early Head Start (for children 0-3) and Head Start (for 4-year-old children) are free programs that offer a variety of services for pregnant women and children from birth to age 5, such as education, health, nutrition, and social services. Each Early Head Start and Head Start programs are regulated by the U.S. government and are required to meet certain national standards. Families can qualify through income levels, homelessness, having children in foster care, or if they are receiving funds from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

To find an Early Head Start or Head Start location, call 1-866-763-6481 or visit: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>.

To see if you qualify, you must follow the income guidelines below. You can find more information here: <https://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1941>

| INCOME GUIDELINES |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Family Size       | Maximum Income (Per Year) |
| 1                 | \$12,060                  |
| 2                 | \$16,240                  |
| 3                 | \$20,420                  |
| 4                 | \$24,600                  |
| 5                 | \$28,780                  |
| 6                 | \$32,960                  |
| 7                 | \$37,140                  |
| 8                 | \$41,320                  |

### Public Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)

Houston ISD offers full-day Pre-K programs to children who turn 4 years old on or before September 1st of the upcoming school year.

#### If your child meets one of the guidelines below, they can attend for free.

- Qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch (see income eligibility table)
- Are homeless
- Do not speak English
- Are in foster care
- Have a parent in the military or had a parent in the military that was injured or died
- Have had a parent die in the line of duty that was a police officer, firefighter, or emergency responder.

If your child does not meet one of those requirements, you can participate in the program for a fee of \$4502 per year (\$450.20 per month for 10-months).

Pre-K registration is during the spring. To register your child in Pre-K, you must enroll with the individual school campus. For more information or if you have questions, call 713-556-6823 or visit:

<http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/126062>

### Public Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten is available for free to all children who turn 5 by September 1st of that school year and is offered on the campus of local elementary schools. For more information about how to choose the best elementary school for your child visit the “What Types of Schools Can Your Child Attend?” section of this guide, starting on page 16.

### Private Pre-K or Kindergarten

A Private School is a school that is not funded by the government. Private schools receive funding from individuals or a private organization. They usually require students to:

- Pay tuition
- Complete an application process that may include applications, tests, interviews, and financial aid applications

Private schools can have a religious affiliation or be independent. Although [www.TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://www.TexasSchoolGuide.org) does not include profiles of private schools, they are one of the available options for parents.

## Choosing the Best Option

The first thing to do is to explore all of your options based on what programs you qualify for and the needs of your family and your child. Then you can decide which option is best for you. There are several different things to look for in a program.

1. **Program Quality:** It is important to try to find a program that meets a set of quality standards, not just minimum state standards. Programs that meet quality standards go above safety standards and assist your child in development and learning.

To find a child care program that meets quality standards the first thing you can look for is an accreditation (there are several). If you qualify for subsidized child care through Workforce Solutions, quality providers are certified as Texas Rising Star (TRS).

To find TRS providers in your area visit:

[www.FindChildCareNow.org](http://www.FindChildCareNow.org)

### Other national quality certifications include:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Child Care and Education (NAC)
- Association of Christian School International (ACSI)
- Council of Accreditation (COA)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- AdvancED Quality Early Learning System (QELS)

Early Head Start and Head Start programs are required to meet high quality standards to receive the grant money from the federal government.

2. **Climate and Environment:** Another important part of a program is the climate and environment. This includes things such as the number of children per teacher in a classroom, how friendly people are to you, your children, and each other. For more information about what to look for see page 28 of this guide.
3. **Availability:** Most programs have a limited number of children they can serve in order to have enough teachers for the children. You should call the programs you are interested in to find out if there are spots available for your child.
4. **Location & Hours:** Many parents consider the hours the program is open and where the program is located. For example, do they open early enough that you can get to work on-time or do they stay open late enough that you can get there after work? Is it at a place that is convenient to your home or to your job?
5. **Cost:** The cost of early education can be expensive, unless you qualify for financial aid. Be sure to explore your options outlined in this section to see if you qualify for financial assistance. If you do not qualify, call the early education provider of your choice to find out how much you would be paying.

## School Visits

Once you start to narrow down your choices for an early education program, visiting in person is always helpful to better understand the quality of the program and how teachers interact with the children. You might consider visiting a program without calling ahead. This gives you a better understanding of how the program operates day-to-day. When you visit a program, spend a few minutes walking around the building and talking to the teachers. You should spend time observing classroom routines and how teachers interact with children. Below are some questions to ask teachers and keep in mind as you visit a program.

### Things to look for in the program:

- Do the teachers follow a curriculum?
- Are infants' activities based on the needs of the children (napping, meals, or play time)?
- Is music ever played?
- Are there different types of age-appropriate toys?
- Are there goals set for each of the children?
- Do teachers encourage the children to try things on their own?
- Are there opportunities for children to work in groups and on their own?
- Are the children read to by adults?
- Is there a daily lesson plan posted in the room that includes planned activities?

### Things to look for in a healthy and safe space:

- Do they offer healthy snacks that are limited in sugar?
- Are menus posted for parents?
- Are food, drinks, and medicines labeled with the child's name and date, and stored in a safe place?
- Are the toys cleaned daily or as needed?
- Are the bathrooms clean and easily available to the children?
- Are there fire drills?
- Are there working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors?
- Are there safety gates?
- How often do the teachers wash their hands?
- Are children taught proper hand-washing?
- Is there a teacher trained in CPR?
- Is there a first aid kit?
- How do the teachers handle potty training?
- What happens when a child is bitten by another child?
- Do the teachers have paid sick days?

### Things to look for in the teachers:

- Does a teacher greet children warmly when they arrive?
- Do teachers welcome questions and visits from parents?
- Do teachers use a warm and pleasant tone when talking to children?
- Do teachers encourage children to talk to other children and the teachers?

- Do teachers discipline the children in a caring, consistent, and calm manner?
- Has your child's teacher been there for more than 2 years?
- Does the teacher have a certification or degree from a college or university?
- Does the teacher have formal training in child growth and development?
- How often and for what subjects do the teachers have professional training throughout the year? (Examples include safety practices, curriculum, and first aid.)

There are many factors to consider as you are determining early education programs for your child. As a parent, you need to be able to make a decision that works best for your family and will support the growth and learning of your child in the best way.

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE

## Why College?

College helps students learn more about their interests, themselves, and the world. It also gives them greater opportunities, such as more job options and possibly a higher paying job. Every student can go to college and should have the option to go. This guide can help you support your child in a path to college. Getting into a college is just the first step. College is a big life change, and you can help make sure your child graduates from college.

## College-Eligible vs. College-Ready

**College-Eligible** – These students have everything the college requires, and they will be accepted into a program.

**College-Ready** – These students will also be college-eligible. However, they will also have some skills that will help them succeed in the program and graduate on time.

### Your child is college-ready if they are:

- Responsible
- Organized
- Determined
- Flexible/Resilient
- A critical thinker
- Not afraid to ask questions
- Able to solve life problems or search for help when needed

In addition to those skills, college-ready students will likely meet some of the academic milestones in this chart:

| COLLEGE-ELIGIBLE  | COLLEGE-READY  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking the SAT / ACT</li> <li>• Taking required subjects and earning the needed diploma</li> <li>• GPA (typically at least a 2.0)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earning at least: 1110 SAT / 24 ACT</li> <li>• Advanced coursework such as Honors, AP, and IB</li> <li>• 3.0 GPA or higher</li> <li>• Involvement or participation in . . .                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extracurricular activities</li> <li>– Volunteer or community work</li> <li>– School Leadership</li> <li>– Summer programs, jobs, or internships</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

To help your child become college-ready, your family might begin talking about college as early as possible. For example, you might have conversations as a family as to why you want your child to go to college and all of the great possibilities they can have with a degree. You could talk to your child about the value of a college degree and your expectation for him or her to continue education after high school. This helps create a college-bound identity early on.

## College-Ready Timeline

It is never too early to consider your child's education after high school! By knowing how to prepare for college at each stage of your child's education, you can improve your child's long-term academic success. Use the timeline below to help prepare your child for college at any age.

### ELEMENTARY YEARS (Grades K - 5)

- **Stay on track in school** – Ensure that your student is reading on grade level, developing math and critical thinking skills, and practicing his or her writing skills.
- **Make reading a habit** – Determine a daily time when your child will read alone, to you, or to a younger sibling. Make weekly trips to your local library or make sure your child sees other family members reading regularly.
- **Get your child involved** – Sign your child up for extracurricular programs or activities. This can help your child find their talents and interests, build self-confidence, build leadership skills, and increase interest in school.
- **Build college-bound expectations** – Help your child believe he or she belongs in college. Nurture your child's confidence in their academic skills and encourage them to aim for college.
- **Share possible college and career options** – Show your child different professions, local colleges and universities, or other potential pathways.
- **Start saving** – Begin saving for college as soon as possible. A few dollars each month adds up and reinforces college expectations in your child. On birthdays and other occasions, family and friends can contribute to savings, too!

### MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS (GRADES 6 - 8)

- **Build study skills** – Give your child a quiet space for homework and studying. Create good habits by setting aside time after school for homework and studying. Be sure to ask your child and his or her teachers about dates for major assignments or tests.
- **Re-enforce college expectations and habits** – Continue discussing college and career opportunities, encouraging your child to read each day, and helping them get involved in extra-curricular and volunteer activities.
- **Talk with school counselors** – Ask which classes your child needs to take for acceptance into certain colleges or career paths, and discuss your child's Personal Graduation Plan (PGP).
- **Know the number and type of classes your child is taking** – Encourage your child to take challenging classes, such as upper level math or English courses and honors classes, and make sure they are enrolled in the language and math classes necessary for college.
- **Find the right high school** – Find out what high school your child is assigned to, how it is performing, and if it meets your child's needs and interests.

### HIGH SCHOOL YEARS (GRADES 9-12)

#### Freshman and Sophomore Years (Grades 9 - 10)

- **Know your student's grades** – Aim for mostly A's and B's. Grades in high school are a major factor for colleges when determining acceptance into their school.
- **Encourage involvement** – Colleges also look at what students are involved in or what life experiences they have. Support your child in joining school clubs, sports teams, community programs, volunteer activities (keep track of hours), after-school jobs, or summer programs.

- **Prepare for college entrance exams** – Help your child prepare for the SAT and or ACT exam early. Make sure your child takes the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and use resources such as [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org) for free test prep.
- **Schedule tours of local colleges** – Help your child get a feel for what college might be like. Tours are free and you can call the admissions office to schedule a tour for a time that works best for you. You can also visit websites like [youiversitytv.com](http://youiversitytv.com) to watch videos of college campuses across the US.
- **Understand the application process** – Look up college applications for a few schools with your child and get a sense of potential essay topics.

### Junior Year (Grade 11)

- **Encourage leadership** – In addition to being involved in activities, your child might take on leadership roles in school clubs, on teams, or with community projects and programs. These roles can look good on college applications and help your child develop college-ready skills.
- **Continue challenging classes** – Consider enrolling your student in AP or IB classes, which can earn them college credit and look great on college applications.
- **Create a list of potential colleges or universities** – Work with the school counselor to create a list of “safety”, “match” and “reach” schools your child is interested in. Turn to page 48 for explanations of what these look like.
- **Understand scholarships** – Research scholarship options and application requirements. The College Board website: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search> can help your search.
- **Register for the SAT and/or ACT** – register to take the SAT/ACT at least once. On average, students take the SAT or ACT exam 3 times. Schools look at your child’s best score.
- **Start applications** – Begin working on components for his or her college application, such as essays and a personal statement.

### Fall/Winter Senior Year (Grade 12)

- **Narrow down your college list** – Your child should aim to apply to 6 schools: 2 safety schools, 2 match schools, and 2 reach schools (see page 48). Keep track of application materials and deadlines.
- **Take/re-take college entrance exams** – On average, students take the SAT or ACT exam 3 times. Schools look at your child’s best score.
- **Find recommendations** – Create a list of teachers, coaches, and other adults to ask for recommendation letters. Be sure to give your recommenders plenty of time, clear deadlines, and follow up with them to make sure they submit their letter of recommendation for you on time.
- **Prepare applications** – Request transcripts from your school counselor’s office and double check all information is correct, revise application essays or personal statements, have a teacher review your applications and provide you with revisions and suggestions for improvement.
- **Submit applications** – Submit college applications before deadlines set by each college or university your child is applying to. Apply as soon as possible to schools with rolling admission, meaning they review and accept students as each application comes in.
- **Apply for financial aid** – Submit applications for TASFA and FAFSA (applications open on October 1st), file your taxes as soon as possible and update your FAFSA form based on your completed tax return.
- **Check progress** – Make sure you or your child checks your email daily; schools may reach out if they need more information from you.
- **Apply for scholarships** – Continue researching scholarship opportunities and begin applying for them (these are to supplement the financial aid that you receive).

### Spring/Summer Senior Year (Grade 12)

- **Update and monitor your financial aid** – Submit or update your FAFSA form if you haven't already, submit an application for TASFA (Texas Financial Aid) before the state priority deadline (usually the middle of March), and visit [collegeforalltexas.com](http://collegeforalltexas.com) for more information.
- **Prepare for news** – When acceptance letters begin to arrive create a system for organizing all of the information that comes with them. Again, check your email daily since most acceptances come through email.
- **Decide the best fit** – If possible, visit admitted schools to determine which schools are best for your child and what he or she needs. Read through financial aid packages and admission offers to help determine the best fit for your family.
- **Complete Acceptance Paperwork** – Review admissions information and submit any required materials to your college or university of choice, this can include housing information, a tuition deposit, final transcripts, course registration, etc.
- **Develop a transition plan** – Plan with your child how he or she will transition to college life and what will be expect of them regardless of if they are staying at home or moving away for school.

# WHAT ARE YOUR CHILD'S OPTIONS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

After high school, there are many education options for your child in Texas and across the US. These may include a four-year college or university, a two-year college (often known as a community college or junior college), a trade school, or the US military. This guide will help you and your high school student decide the best option after graduation they graduate high school. Check out the reference section in the back for options in your area.

## Opportunities after High School

Every post-high school opportunity has its own long-term benefits and admission requirements; read below to learn more about each one.

|                                 | AVERAGE TIME       | DEGREE OPTIONS                                       | POTENTIAL CAREERS   | PROS   | CONS  | OTHER FACTORS  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| Four-Year College or University | 4-6 years          | Bachelor's   | Engineer, statistician, teacher, journalist, accountant, architect, business, computer science, architect and many more | Offers the most diverse opportunities, including extra-curricular activities, allows for a higher paying job than other degree options, more access to financial aid, sense of community | Requires the most time and is often the most expensive option, depending on the type of school                            | Can be public or private, focus is on gaining academic knowledge, application has several components including, GPA, SAT/ACT test scores, essays and recommendations |
| Two-Year College                | 1-3 years          | Associate Professional Certificate                   | Nurse, cosmetologist, paralegal, pharmacy technician  | Often the cheapest of all the options, can transfer to a four-year university after meeting certain requirements   | Not as many degree options offered as at a four-year college, sense of community and additional activities may be limited | Also known as a Community College/ Junior College, must have a high school diploma or GED and meet minimum requirement on the Texas Success Initiative (TSI)         |
| Trade School                    | 5 months - 2 years | Technical Certificate<br>Professional License        | Electrician, dental hygienist, chef, computer technician, welder, medical assistant                                     | Provides hands-on job training to secure a good job quickly  | No extracurricular activities (e.g. sports) at the schools, limited sense of community                                    | Smaller classes, minimal application requirements, may not have financial aid support  |
| Military Service                | 4 or more          | Enlisted Career<br>Opportunity for additional degree | Military officer, combat operations, construction, education, cybersecurity, business administration, engineering       | Time to see the world and determine next career steps, strengthen skills, military will provide assistance for education costs   | In exchange for college tuition, the military often requires active duty service  | Must have a high school diploma or GED, take internal exams to determine placement, can pursue college degree after service  |

For more information about each of the options, visit:

<http://bit.ly/2rJrxE>

## Consider Your Options

There are many factors you and your child will consider when deciding these options. It may be helpful to sit down as a family and discuss the options that your child has and consider the following questions:

- What are your child's interests and passions?
- What skills does your child have, and what skills does your child want to gain?
- What career goals does he or she have?
- Will he or she need flexibility in their schedule?
- Has he or she chosen a career path?
- What can you and your child afford?

Once you and your child have decided which route is best to take, you can begin researching that option to narrow down your school/program choices.

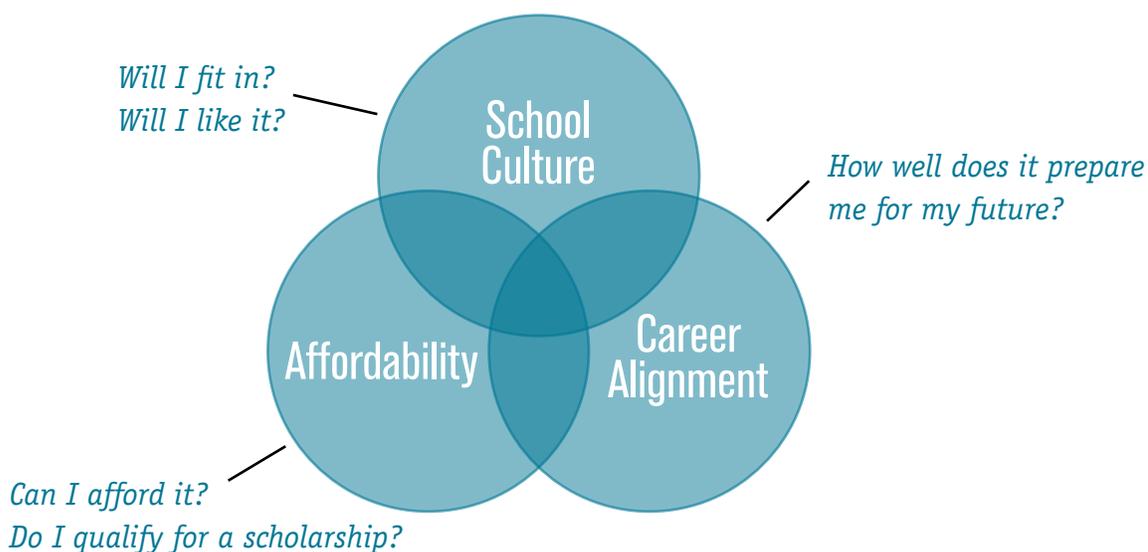
## CHOOSING A COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY OR OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

If you and your child have decided to continue their education at 4 or 2-year college, the following actions can help you find the program that best fits your needs and interests.

1. **Create a list of potential schools:** When your child is a junior in high school, develop a list together of potential colleges and universities your child may want to apply to in the fall of their senior year. When creating your list of potential schools, be sure to include safety schools, match schools, and reach schools.
  - **Safety Schools** – Your child's school grades and test scores may be above the school's average for incoming freshman, and you believe he or she will most likely be accepted.
  - **Match Schools** – Your child's school grades and test scores are within the range of the school's average incoming freshman.
  - **Reach Schools** – Your child's school grades and test scores may be below the school's average incoming freshman, and your child may or may not be accepted but there is still potential.
2. **Visit schools:** Another helpful thing to do is visit schools your child is interested in. Visiting a campus can be extremely helpful and can give you and your child a better understanding of the school's environment and culture. If you are unable to visit a school in person, there are a few online resources that can help:
  - Video tours of colleges: <https://www.youniversitytv.com/category/college/>
  - College scorecard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>
3. **Apply to schools:** You should begin helping your child apply for higher education programs in the fall of their senior year. To make sure you don't miss deadlines, check the schools' websites to make sure you and your child know the dates everything is due. To make sure your child has the best options, they might apply to two safety, two match, and two reach schools. The more options your child has the better when trying to determine which school is the best fit.
 

Most higher education programs require some type of application. Submission of an online application, standardized test scores, high school grades, essays, and information about activities outside of school is common. If you are applying to a 4-year university in Texas you can apply at [applytexas.org](http://applytexas.org). To apply for schools in other states, check out [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) or visit the school's specific website.
4. **Consider options and make a decision:** If your child is accepted to a school, he or she will receive acceptance letters and financial aid packages. At that time your child will need to decide which school is the best fit. There are three things to consider when making this decision:

- **Affordability** – The cost of your child attending the school after reading the financial aid package, scholarship awards, and future burden of any student loans – It's very dangerous to take out a loan that exceeds one year of salary in the career field
- **Career Alignment** – Whether the program matches your child's career and future goals. Does the school have the programs or courses my child wants to study and have a career in? Is there a similar degree program at another school that has more affordable tuition?
- **School Culture** – The school environment including factors such as the sizes of classes, what support services are offered on campus, demographic makeup of the campus, and location of the campus? This is especially important for students who are the first in their families to go to college. Looking at things like involvement in campus activities, opportunities to live on campus, finding a mentor and getting involved in programs can create a better overall college experience.



## Financial Aid Resources

The cost of attending a college or university may seem overwhelming, a most families have. Expenses such as tuition, dorm fees, food, books, supplies, or other fees can add up. However, there are many financial aid options that can make higher education more affordable. Financial Aid is available through state and federal governments, nonprofits, and private organizations.

### FEDERAL STUDENT AID

Federal Student Aid is made available through the Federal Student Aid Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA. FAFSA is a form that you complete each year to determine what your family can reasonably contribute to your child's college expenses and what federal financial aid your child is eligible for. FAFSA applications are accepted starting in October before each academic year. It is best to apply as soon as possible.

#### When filling out a FAFSA form you will need:

- A FAFSA application, available online at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>
- Your family's financial information including balances of savings and checking accounts and information from tax forms.
- Your most recent income tax return. If you haven't done your taxes at the time of applying, it's okay to estimate the amounts, but it is better to file your taxes first.

**Once you file your 2017 taxes, you must update your FAFSA. You can update your FAFSA by using the information from your printed version of your tax return form. If you cannot print a copy, you can go to the IRS Data Retrieval System online at <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript>**

Before your child's senior year of high school, he or she can use the FAFSA4caster to get a sense of how much federal aid may be available when he or she applies. Visit <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/estimate> for more information.

Check with your child's school counselor's office for information regarding assistance with completing the FAFSA. There are often workshops or organizations in your area that can help you complete the FAFSA on time.

A student applying for FAFSA must be a permanent resident or citizen of the US. However, if you do not have official documentation, you can apply for TASFA (see below).

### TEXAS FINANCIAL AID

The Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) is very similar to the FAFSA, but is only for students who have established Texas residency. This is a good option for students who may be undocumented. Any financial aid given to you through the TASFA can be used at Texas colleges and universities. For more information regarding this form, visit: <http://bit.ly/1SuwAC0>.

### SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to applying for financial aid packages, your child can apply for scholarship opportunities to help with the costs of college. There are lots of scholarships available to students and each scholarship has different requirements. While several scholarships are based on academics and high test scores, there are also many scholarships based on non-academic qualities such as interests, volunteering, skills, etc. Here is a helpful resource as you determine potential scholarships: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>.

### TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

After you apply for financial aid using FAFSA and TASFA, your child will receive a financial aid package from each school that he or she has been accepted to. Each school may offer your child different types and combinations of financial aid including grants, loans, scholarships, or work study options. Below is a brief description of each of these financial resources:

| GRANTS   | LOANS  | WORK STUDY   |
|--|--|--|
| Grants are money that you do not have to pay back. Many grants are based on your family's financial circumstances and need. For example, your child may be eligible for a Pell Grant depending on your income. | Loans are borrowed money from the government or a bank and must be paid back in full, plus interest. Federal student loans are not based on credit history, have low, fixed interest rates, and tend to be more flexible in terms of repayment. To learn more about the different loan options, visit: <a href="http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized">http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized</a> | Some colleges and universities participate in the Federal Work-Study Program. Work-study is a paid part-time job that allows your child to earn income to help cover his or her school expenses. If your child is awarded work-study, make sure to ask the financial aid office which jobs are eligible. |

Understanding your child's financial aid package can be confusing. Every college and university has a financial aid office. If you have questions, it is to contact them to better understand your options.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOUSTON PARENTS

## Higher Education Opportunities in the Houston Area



### TWO-YEAR COLLEGES IN THE AREA

| PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGES   |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Houston<br/>Community College</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Campus</li> <li>• Coleman College</li> <li>• Northeast Campus</li> <li>• Katy Campus</li> <li>• Eastside Campus</li> <li>• Stafford Campus</li> <li>• South Campus</li> <li>• North Forest Campus</li> <li>• Northline Campus</li> <li>• Pinemont</li> <li>• Alief-Bissonnet</li> <li>• Alief-Hayes</li> <li>• Spring Branch Campus</li> <li>• Gulfton Ctr.</li> </ul> | <b>Lone Star<br/>College System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC-CyFair</li> <li>• LSC-Kingwood</li> <li>• LSC-Montgomery</li> <li>• LSC-North Harris</li> <li>• LSC-Tomball</li> <li>• LSC-University Park</li> </ul> | <b>San Jacinto<br/>Community College</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Campus</li> <li>• Maritime Campus</li> <li>• North Campus</li> <li>• South Campus</li> <li>• Online</li> </ul> | <b>Alvin<br/>Community College</b><br><br><b>Lee College</b> |

### FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES IN THE AREA

| PUBLIC COLLEGES  | PRIVATE COLLEGES   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas Southern University</li> <li>• University of Houston</li> <li>• University of Houston-Downtown</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American InterContinental University Houston</li> <li>• Chamberlain College of Nursing Texas</li> <li>• College of Biblical Studies Houston</li> <li>• Houston Baptist University</li> <li>• North American University</li> <li>• Rice University</li> <li>• The Art Institute of Houston</li> <li>• University of Phoenix Houston Campus</li> <li>• University of St Thomas</li> </ul> |





# SPECIAL POPULATIONS:

*Meeting the Specific  
Needs of Your Child*

# MY CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS – WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

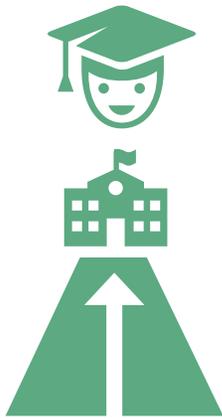
Not every child learns in the same way. Schools have different programs to meet the needs of different students. One of these programs is Special Education (also known as SpEd).

## *What is Special Education?*

According to the law, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is required to offer free, special services to students ages 3-21 with designated disabilities. Special services are usually divided into two different types of learning environments, depending on the individual student's needs.

1. The first learning environment includes the student in general education classrooms with available special services.
2. The second places the child in “self-contained” classrooms, which are separate rooms reserved only for the education of students with special needs.

Some students remain in self-contained classrooms full-time, while others split their time between both types of classes.



*Think about special education like access ramps to a building. Special education is the service that helps students with disabilities access their education. Without this service they would not be able to access learning, much like a person in a wheelchair wouldn't be able to access a building without ramps. Lack of access to support services denies them a great education.*

## HOW CAN I ENROLL MY CHILD IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

### Requesting an Evaluation

If your child is struggling in his/her classroom, has utilized other support services (tutorial help, remedial help, etc.), and is still having difficulties, you have the right to get your child tested. These tests are key to understanding if your child has a disability and could benefit from special services. You can ask for an evaluation by submitting a written request to your child's school. Once the school receives your written request, the evaluation must take place within 45 school days.

### Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Meetings

You will be asked to attend an ARD Meeting if the evaluation reveals that your child has at least one of the following disabilities: physical disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, learning disability, autism, speech disability, or traumatic brain injury. At this meeting, at least one of your child's current teachers will be present to support you (see the "What are my Rights as a Special Needs Parent" section on page \_\_\_ to learn more).

### Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

The goal of an ARD meeting is to understand your child's disability level and create an education plan together. This plan is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Once you all agree on a plan the committee will provide you with a copy. The IEP should include both academic and non-academic things such as teaching methods, social time, and classroom time. To learn more about what is required in the IEP, visit <http://bit.ly/2wtNG04>.

### Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP)

In addition to an IEP, your child may also have a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). BIP's are necessary and can be helpful when your child's behavior may disrupt his/her learning or the learning of classmates. If you believe that a BIP could be helpful for your child, you can request a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). This will evaluate to see if a BIP is needed.

## What are my Rights as a "Parent of a Child with Special Needs?"

You have several rights throughout the process of your child's special needs education. Going through the evaluation and ARD process can be difficult, and it is important to remember that you are the voice for your child.

### 1 THERE ARE SPECIFIC TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ARD PROCESS THAT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT MUST FOLLOW.

- *Once you have submitted a written request for an evaluation, your child's school district must respond to you in 15 school days with its intent to conduct an evaluation or a written notice of their refusal.*
- *Within 45 school days from your initial request, the evaluation must be completed.*
- *After an ARD meeting date is determined, the district is required to notify you at least 5 school days in advance so that you can make any needed arrangements to attend the meeting.*

### 2 YOU ALSO HAVE THE RIGHT TO DISAGREE WITH THE IEP CREATED DURING YOUR CHILD'S ARD MEETING.

- *If you disagree, you have up to 10 school days to consider the plan and meet with the ARD committee for a second time.*
- *During the 10 school days, the ARD committee must consider alternatives to the IEP.*

### 3 SPECIFIC PEOPLE MUST BE INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S ARD MEETING AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIS/HER IEP. THE ARD MEETING SHOULD INCLUDE:

- *At least one of your child's teachers,*
- *A representative from the school district,*
- *Someone who can understand the way your child learns best as a result of his/her evaluation results,*
- *Other people who have special knowledge about your child,*
- *A representative of the agency that will likely pay for services when your child is ready to graduate from school,*
- *A career or technical education representative, and*
- *Your child, if appropriate.*

### 4 LASTLY, IF ENGLISH IS NOT YOUR PRIMARY LANGUAGE, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IS REQUIRED TO GIVE YOU A WRITTEN OR VIDEO COPY OF THE IEP TRANSLATED INTO THE LANGUAGE YOU SPEAK.

- *You can also request an interpreter to be present at the ARD meeting.*

## What Happens when my Child is ready to Transition out of School?

Your child's transition plan is a section of his/her IEP that will explain what will happen when your special needs child is ready to transition from high school to life as a young adult. This stage is critical for all teenagers, but requires additional planning for a child with special needs.

Your child's transition planning should begin when the child reaches the age of 14 and is to be created, in part, with the Texas Education Agency. The plan should include things such as your role as a parent during your child's transition, education options for your child after high school, his/her employment goals, and goals for your child to live on his/her own.

### Transition Plan Tips:

- Your child's school and teachers should tell you about your child's progress towards goals beyond public school.
- You can advocate for your child's strengths and desires for what he/she wants beyond public schools.
- This is a great time for you and your child to work together to think about the future and his or her goals beyond high school!

## How Can I be sure my Child's Needs are Being Met?

### AT SCHOOL:

- Ensure that the Special Education Department at your child's school is meeting with you at least once a year to monitor and update your child's IEP.
- Meet with your child's teachers to help them understand how they can support your child's needs and maintain regular contact with them.
- Review your child's assignments to make sure that they are modified or accommodated based on his/her IEP (your child's teacher can make changes to general assignments to help your child understand the material).
- Monitor your child's progress with his/her IEP goals.
- Check your child's grades in his/her classes weekly – most schools have an online parent portal where you can do this. In HISD, you can get information about registering for their parent portal at <http://www.houstonisd.org/domain/11001>.

### AT HOME:

- Help build confidence in your child by focusing on his or her strengths, not weaknesses.
- Communicate high expectations for your child in regards to school work and behavior to help him/her stay on track.
- Supplement what he/she is learning at school with other activities and learning opportunities.
- Help your child develop his or her strengths and passions. Feeling passionate and skilled in one area may inspire hard work in other areas too.
- Work with your child to help him/her get comfortable asking for help. For example, this can be asking for a seat in front of the classroom if that helps him/her focus better.
- Discuss what it means to keep going even when things aren't easy. Talk about the rewards of hard work, as well as the opportunities missed by giving up.

For more ideas, check out this helpful parent guide:

<http://bit.ly/2vmtc9B>

# WHAT ARE SPECIAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS, AND HOW CAN THEY BE HELPFUL FOR MY CHILD?

Many students in our Texas public schools do not speak English as their first language, and classes taught only in English are not helpful for students who are still learning English. Public schools in Texas are required to provide an opportunity – known as special language programs – for every child to learn English. If your child has a first language other than English and has difficulty completing his or her classwork, there are options for ensuring your child’s educational needs are being met.

## *How Can my Child Enroll in a Special Language Program?*

School districts are required to send out home language surveys at the start of each school year to new students or to students who have not been surveyed. The home language survey will ask questions such as, “What language is spoken in your home most of the time?” in order to understand your child’s level of English comprehension.

The information provided on this survey will help the school determine the support programs that your child can participate in, which can help them find more success in their classes.

**Remember – help your child by answering the survey! If the survey shows that your child can benefit from additional help as he/she learns English, you can expect to:**

- Get a notice about joining a special language program
- Get information about the types of programs available and how they can help your child
- Have your child assessed to determine which program is best for him or her

Lastly, it is important to remember that while your approval is required for your child to participate in special language programs, permission is not required for your child to be tested.

## *What Does ELL and LEP Mean?*

After your child’s language testing, he or she will be assigned to certain categories based on his or her English comprehension level. You may hear your child’s teacher or school district refer to these categories interchangeably, but they are different and come with different recommended programs for you child. Knowing your child’s classification and understanding what it means can help you ensure your child is getting the services and support they need.

An “**English Language Learner**” (ELL) is a student who is unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English. These students often come from homes where English is barely spoken or not at all.

A student of “**Limited English Proficiency**” (LEP) is a student whose primary language is not English, whose English language skills are limited, and the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English. However, he or she is typically testing slightly higher and has a greater understanding of English compared to ELL students.

Not all school districts offer bilingual education classes. The type of program your child’s school district offers depends on available resources such as funding and qualified teachers. Even if your child’s school does not offer bilingual education, many students still succeed in ESL programs where they are fully immersed in the English language.

## What are the Various Types of Special Language Programs?

### Bilingual Education

- Full-time program where your child will learn basic skills in both his/her primary language and in English.
- The teacher and all of the students in the class speak the same language.
- The goal is to have students speak fluently in both languages while holding onto their "home" culture.

### English as a Second Language (ESL)

- Full-time program of intensive instruction in English only.
- Students in the classroom may speak in many different "home" languages and are all taught by the same teacher.
- The teacher only speaks English and is not required to speak the native language of any members of the class.

## How Can I Support My Child Who is Learning English?

Once your child is identified as ELL/LEP and is placed in a special language program, there are a few things that you can do at home and in partnership with your child's teacher to help support your child's progress with the English language:

- Stay in communication with your child's teacher.
- Ask your child's teacher to help make new information visual. A teacher can use pictures to help your student better understand a new concept or vocabulary word.
- Ask your child's teacher if your child can participate in more group work.
- Provide time for your child to practice English at home. You can have your child teach you a new word that he/she learned that day.
- Encourage reading at home.

Your child should also be receiving language support in his/her classes. This can include the use of a Spanish-English dictionary and extended time on tests/assignments. As a parent, you have the right to ensure that your child is getting his or her needs met and is receiving adequate resources to support his/her learning. To make sure this is happening, request a meeting with your child's teacher or the school's principal.

# HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILD?

If you have a child who is advanced or displays special leadership skills compared to students of his or her age, then he or she may be eligible for a school's Gifted and Talented (G/T) Education Program.

The purpose of a G/T program is to provide intelligent, curious students with an education that meets his/her needs and challenges their growth. The goal of G/T is to develop students who exhibit self-direction, research, and communication skills that reflect individuality and creativity. It is important to know that there are a wide range of students who classify as G/T, and a child can be G/T even if he/she does not make good grades.

## *How Does my Child Qualify for G/T?*

In Texas, schools start evaluating for G/T abilities in Kindergarten and continue through 12th Grade. Each district has different schedules and procedures for this evaluation, but it will take place at least once a year. Your child's test should be conducted in the easiest language for them to speak.

In order to be evaluated, a student must typically be nominated by a teacher, parent, community member, or school staff. Sometimes school districts even allow schoolmates or the student to make the nomination. Parents can call their school campus or school district to learn about the process and timeframe for nomination and testing.

There is currently no formal test to qualify as a G/T student. In general, G/T children score in the 90th percentile or higher on the state-approved achievement test or the 90th percentile or higher on the state-approved ability test. They must also meet certain criteria in teacher evaluations and surveys. If your child is eligible for G/T, you will be notified and must give approval for your child to participate in these programs. Below are some key differences between children who are bright and those who are gifted:

| AN ENGAGED STUDENT...        | A G/T STUDENT...                          |
|------------------------------|---|
| Knows the answers            | Asks hard questions                       |
| Is interested                | Is curious                                |
| Answers the questions        | Questions the answers                     |
| Enjoys peers of the same age | Prefers to be around adults or older kids |
| Is self-satisfied            | Is usually self-critical                  |

## *What will my Child Learn in G/T?*

Depending on the programs offered in your child's school district, the G/T curriculum will vary. Some programs are individualized, meaning that your child's teacher will approach each student with a unique way to pursue his/her learning according to the grade level that he or she is at academically. An effective G/T program will consider and pursue all possibilities for your child, ensuring that his/her education is challenging and their learning is limitless.

Additionally, some school districts offer special clusters of curriculum that your child can be part of. If your district offers this, your child's G/T curriculum will be specialized based on if he/she tests into a certain G/T category. For example, your child may have above average intellectual ability or may be more creative. Ideally, his/her learning will be tailored to which type of G/T cluster he/she falls into.

## *How Can I Support my G/T Child?*

Sometimes, G/T students feel that their schoolwork is too easy. When this happens, students can become bored, begin to give less effort, and be less excited for school. To ensure that your child continues to grow and develop, here are a few things you can do:

- Have a conversation with your child about the importance of learning.
- Help your child learn more about things that he/she finds interesting.
- Help your child stay organized.
- Have your child come up with solutions to problems to develop his/her critical thinking skills.
- Involve your child in programs that allow him/her to discover personal abilities, explore new academic challenges, and celebrate accomplishments. One program that does this is Duke TIP – in order to participate in this program, make sure that your child takes the PSAT in 4th grade and the ACT in the 7th grade. For more information on this program and scholarships available, check out their website: [www.tip.duke.edu](http://www.tip.duke.edu)

If you think your child may be eligible for G/T based on his/her performance, contact your district or school to check their evaluation policies.

## OTHER SPECIAL POPULATIONS

### *My child is LGBTIQ. How can I support my child?*

LGBTIQ children are more likely to experience exclusion, harassment, and physical violence than their non-LGBTIQ peers. This experience can make it difficult for a child to learn in school and feel a sense of belonging with their peers. As the parent of an LGBTIQ child there are a few things you can do in order to support your child's social, emotional, and educational well-being.

## LGBTIQ

*LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning.*

### AS A PARENT

- Listen to your child, provide words of encouragement, and check in often.
- Educate yourself on LGBTIQ terms and issues. <http://www.lgbt.ucla.edu/LGBT101> can be a great resource for this.
- Provide access to a safe and supportive environment with other students. This safe space could be your home or a community organization.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your child. They may not want you to share information with friends, family, or teachers.

### AS AN ALLY

- If your child is being bullied at school you can contact the school principal, guidance counselor, or a supportive teacher to determine how the school can intervene.
- Research local and school policies. In some cases it may be necessary to advocate for inclusive policies at your child's school. Visit the Parents as Advocates section on page 10 to learn more about advocating for change in school. Need some ideas for positive change? View this resource for ideas on promoting inclusivity at your child's school: <http://bit.ly/2vD9iZS>. Houston area parents may also want to visit <http://www.hatchyouth.org/> or <http://genderinfinity.org/> for local support.

### *My family is experiencing homelessness, how can I support my child's learning during this time?*

Your child has the right to free and appropriate public education. The law requires states to give educational rights and protections for children experiencing homelessness. All Texas public schools, charter schools, and education services centers must follow these rules.

If your family is experiencing homelessness, here are a few things you can do to ensure your child continues to receive a quality education:

Find out who your school's homeless education liaison is by contacting your school counselor, school principal, school district, or the Texas Homeless Education Office by visiting <http://www.theotx.org/>. For Houston ISD, visit <http://www.houstonisd.org/Domain/21141>.

- Set up a meeting with your school's homeless education liaison. This is a person who can provide guidance and resources for your family. Your school's liaison will assist with your child's enrollment. If you do not have the necessary documents to enroll in school, the school is still required to allow your child to enroll and then assist you with collecting those additional documents.

- Your school's homeless education liaison can provide access to organizations that can help you with free or reduced lunch programs, immunizations, health and dental care, educational assistance, and access to school supplies or other immediate needs.

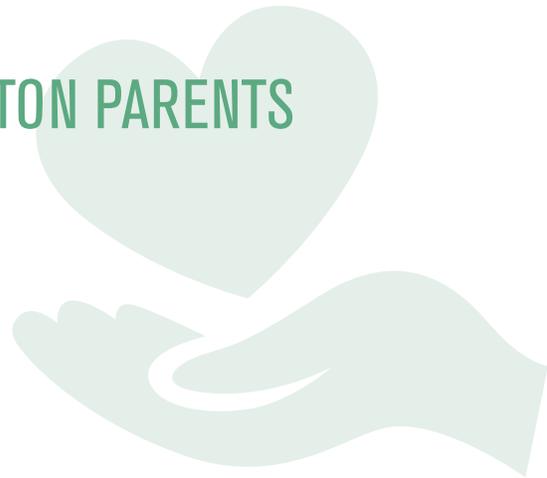
### *How do I help my foster child succeed in school?*

Research has shown that children in foster care have an increased risk of dropping out of school and are less likely to pursue education after high school. As a foster parent, you have the opportunity to provide stability in a foster child's life and teach the importance of education.

You can:

- Set up a meeting with your foster child's teacher. Students who frequently change schools may fall behind when moving from one school to another. It's a good idea to check in with your child's teacher regularly to determine if any extra tutoring or support is needed.
- Encourage your child to make friends and join after school activities. A sense of belonging is important to the well-being of children and can help them enjoy school.
- Provide regular access to a trusted adult (teacher, school counselor, case manager), so your child can talk to them about any problems or concerns.
- If your child is interested in continuing their education after high school, it may be a good idea to explore potential internships or scholarship opportunities for the future. Keep in mind that individual colleges or other non-profit organizations may offer their own financial aid.
- For resources on how to help your child success, visit <http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liasons/>. For Houston ISD specifically, visit <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/119296>.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOUSTON PARENTS



## *Special Education Services*

Website: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/58432>

Contact Person: Joan Anderson, Ed.D. - Assistant Superintendent

Phone: (713) 556-7025

Email: [jander13@houstonisd.org](mailto:jander13@houstonisd.org)

## *Multilingual Programs*

Website: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Domain/8037>

Contact Person: Dr. Altagracia "Gracie" Guerrero - Assistant Superintendent

Telephone: 713-556-6961

Fax: 713-556-6980

Email: [multilingual@houstonisd.org](mailto:multilingual@houstonisd.org)

Address: 4400 West 18th Street, Level 2SW, Houston, TX 77092

## *Gifted and Talented Education*

Website: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/31858>

Contact Person: Adam Stephens - Officer, Advanced Academics

Telephone: 713-556-6954

Fax: 713-556-6898

Email: [AdvancedAcademics@houstonisd.org](mailto:AdvancedAcademics@houstonisd.org)

Address: 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092

## *Student Support Services*

Website: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/137113>

Telephone: 713-556-6800

Fax: 713-556-6015

Address: 4400 West 18th Street, Houston, TX 77092

## *Parent & Community Assistance*

Website: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/69836>

Contact Person: Suzanne Mihaloglou - Parent Community Administrator

Telephone: (713) 556-7121

Fax: (713) 556-7119

Email: [ParentAssistance@houstonisd.org](mailto:ParentAssistance@houstonisd.org)

Address: 4400 West 18th St., Houston, Texas 77092

To provide feedback on this project,  
please visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](https://www.texaschoolguide.org)  
or contact **CHILDREN AT RISK**  
directly at:

## **CHILDREN AT RISK**

### **Dallas Office**

2900 Live Oak St.  
Dallas, TX 75204  
(214)-599-0072

### **Fort Worth Office**

3000 E. Belknap St.  
Fort Worth, TX 76111  
(817)-944-4242

### **Houston Office**

2900 Wesleyan St. Suite 400  
Houston, Texas 77027  
(713)-869-7740

[TexasSchoolGuide@childrenatrisk.org](mailto:TexasSchoolGuide@childrenatrisk.org)