

A Family Guide To Discovering Your Child's Ideal Education Experience

Empathy as your guide

How do we find the best educational experience for our family?

All parents want the best for their children. Like you, we know the journey to find the ideal school can be an overwhelming process. This guide aims to make this process easier by creating a conversation about learning, your experiences with schools, and what you hope school could be like.

How to use this guide

The first activity is one of **Discovery**. You'll reflect individually on your family values, your child's educational goals and aspirations, and list what you most value in the school of your future. However, the discovery doesn't end with you. This decision will impact your entire family and the life of your child. Therefore, the second part of discovery is dialogue. Gather around the table, cut out the cards on the last few pages, and begin the conversation.

After the dialogue, you'll unpack that information to help narrow and **Define**. It's time to look back at those assumptions and individual reflections and compare them to what you heard through conversation. You may find you were spot on! Or you might find that some of your assumptions evolved.

Finally, you'll **Design** the Ideal Educational Experience from the viewpoint of your family and your child. You'll create a quick reference Point of View (POV) and persona for your child. This POV will help direct you when you tour schools and meet admissions representatives and faculty. You'll be able to use this POV when you attend open houses and tours. A concise POV will help guide you through the questions to ask, the programs you want to look for, and ultimately, help you discover the Ideal Educational Experience for your child *and* your family.

By the end of the exercise, your family should have a deeper grasp of each other's goals and expectations and a deeper understanding of each other's aspirations and hopes as they pertain to your student's education.

Who are we?

To be done individually by parents and/or guardians. Take a moment to think back to when you were a student - this can be anytime in your academic career - and reflect on these questions.

What is your favorite memory of school? What made this memorable?

What elements of your education do you hope to find in a school for your child?

What are your wishes and goals for who your child will become?

Family Values

What is important to your family? What are the values you believe are important to leading a full and complete life?

Examples:

Acceptance, Compassion, Community, Creativity, Diversity, Education, Experiences, Exploration, Fairness, Fun, Gratitude, Honesty, Humility, Integrity, Kindness, Patience, Persistence, Play, Respect, Responsibility, Travel, Trust, Wonder

School Values

What aspects of a school are important to you and your family? What are the values you would like to see exhibited by the school?

Examples:

Arts, Athletics, Being Civic-Minded, College Prep, Confidence, Courage, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Entrepreneurialism, Global Engagement, Independence, Innovation, Intellectual, Competition, Relationships, Spiritual Focus, Risk-Taking, Being Well-Adjusted

Dinner Table Conversation

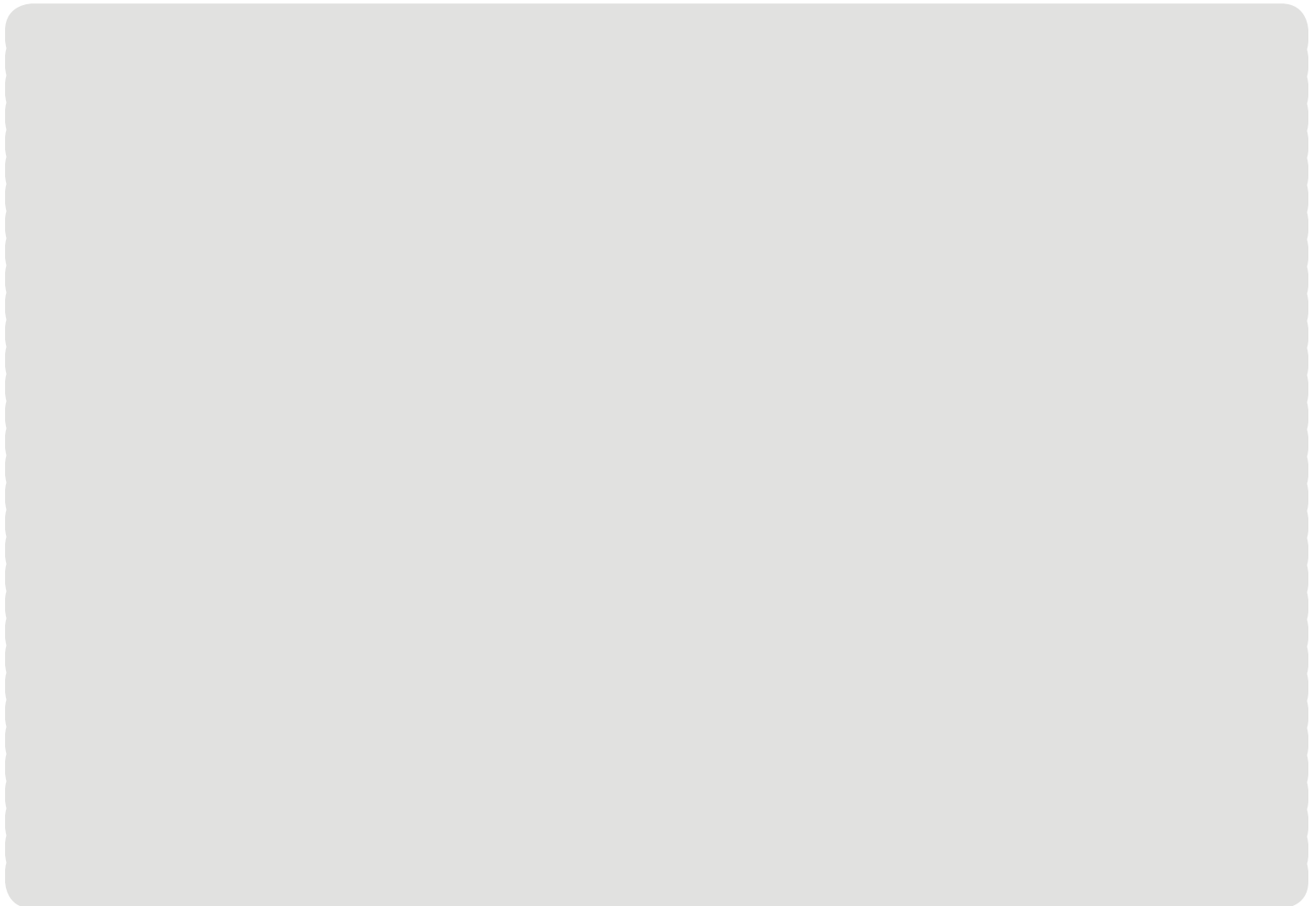
To be done by the family as a whole. In the last pages of this guide you will find a set of dinner table conversation prompts. Cut them out, sit with your family, and start asking questions! You can do this any way you want - shuffle and deal, ask and discuss as a group, answer (out loud) individually. Most importantly, be honest and listen.

Note-Taking Ideas

We encourage you to take notes. Use sticky notes, think visually, record the conversation. You'll use these notes as you begin to define the needs, wants, and hopes of your family.

What did you hear?

To get started, use the space below. However, don't feel limited by the size of this box.



Unpacking the Conversation

Look back to your Discover pages - what might you change or edit? What might you need to follow-up on? Ask yourself and your family clarifying questions! Remember, the point of this guide is to know your family better and to understand where you all are when deciding on your students' ideal educational experience.

What did I discover about past learning experiences?

What are the challenges your child is currently facing?

What does your child hope to experience in school?

What did you learn that your child values in their family and in their school?

In light of the conversation, how would you change your answers to the questions in the Discovery activity?

Constructing a Point of View

Looking over your notes and thinking through your conversations - it is now time to construct a Point of View (POV) for your child. This POV is their persona, and it helps to narrow down and pinpoint their needs and wants in a clear and concise way. It will allow you to ask very specific questions when speaking with admissions teams, teachers, students, and anyone you may meet while on a tour or at an open house.

Name your child(ren) and describe them. Be sure to include what they value and unique aspects of their personality.

What do they need in order to have the ideal learning experience?

If their need was met, what would happen? What could they be hopeful for?

How To Use Your Child's Point of View

By following this process, you and your family will have reached a deeper and more honest understanding of your needs as a *family* in regards to the ideal education experience for your child.

How can you test that? When you are on your next tour, open house, or phone call with a school, you should be able to ask yourself the following questions:

- Can this school deliver experiences that inspire my child?*
- Can I see alignment between this school's values and ours?*
- Can this school meet the needs of my child?*
- Are there outlets for my child's curiosities and passions?*
- How does this school celebrate strong parent communities?*

If you still feel there is more to learn from your child and family before answering these questions, it's time to go back to DISCOVERY or DEFINE and iterate. Ask more questions and gain more clarity.

Take this page on tours or anytime you meet with admissions, students, or faculty. This page can help direct and focus your questions as you clarify what the school can do to meet your child's needs to give them the best educational experience.

Write your own question here.

Tell me about a time when a teacher has made an unforgettable impact on you.

How did that relationship start?
What made it so special?

Tell me a story about a project that took you outside of the classroom.

What were you working towards?
Who did you work with?

Describe a time when you showed empathy for others.

How has your school helped you ask questions before making assumptions?

Tell me about an experience you had in school that made an impact in your community.

How did your school connect you with real-world problems?

Tell me a story of when your confidence really shined.

How did your school help nurture and grow your confidence over the years?

Describe a time when you failed and then learned from that failure.

How did you bounce back?
How have you grown?

Tell me a story about a time when parents at your school were champions for the students.

What was the benefit of their actions?
How did this create stronger unity among parents?

Write your own question here.

If you could design a classroom,
what would it look like?

What color are the walls?
What makes it unique?

What are your family's values?

Group activity!

Where in your community could you
make the most impact?

Doing what? For whom?

How is your school connecting
your child with real-world problems
today?

If you could redo a project or
assignment, what would it be?

Describe yourself in 5 words.

How can your school help you
to nurture and grow those
attributes?

You've been asked to plan a project
for your class. Describe it.

What is the goal of the project?
What subject is it in?
How will you measure success?

What is the parent community's
role at a school?

How do parents create stronger
unity within the school community?

Write your own question here.

What are the 5 most important values a school should have?

What makes these values so special?

What is one problem in the world that you wish you could solve?

Why are you passionate about this cause?

Describe the relationship you want to create with your teachers.

Can you share an example of a teacher who made an impact on you?

How might your family values be celebrated or affirmed in your ideal school?

What could that look like?

What was the toughest project/assignment you took on last year?

What caused the problems?
How did you overcome them?

Describe your family in five words.

How do these words relate to each other?
How are you living out these words?

Describe your ideal school in five words.

How does your ideal school celebrate these attributes?