



MOVING WITH CHILDREN

Get family members focused on and involved in the process of moving. Hold a family meeting to discuss why, where, when and how the family will move. Encourage everyone to ask questions and express feelings. If possible, drive the family to see the new home and take a tour of the new neighborhood schools, shops and parks. Take photos or videotape the new house and neighborhood. Make lists for each older child of things to do to prepare for the move and assign them a special task or two. For example, they can read and inform other family members about the area history, landmarks, special events and amusements. Help children prepare for the move by having them assist with packing. Let them pack a box of special clothes, toys or books they would like readily accessible at their new home. Let each family member help plan how to set up his or her bedroom. Have them help select paint or wallpaper. Let them share ideas how to arrange the furniture. When the move takes place, set up the children's rooms first.

Choosing a School

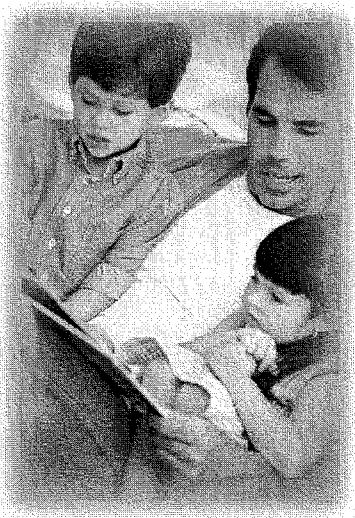
One of the most satisfying experiences a family can have is finding a school that fits its needs. That school will "feel right" because its administrators, teachers, and parents are part of a strong community that shares the family's educational values. Children are eager to go there because the school program stimulates their curiosity and provides them with outlets for their interests. Parents will be pleased because their involvement in their children's education will be welcomed and encouraged.

In order to find the best school for your child, you should begin by observing your child's learning habits. Even as preschoolers, children begin to develop different approaches to learning. These inclinations provide strong clues about what kind of school would serve them best. In her book *Your Child's First School*, educational consultant Diana Townsend-Butterworth offers these suggestions of things to watch for in determining your child's orientation to learning:

- What does your child enjoy doing?
- What excites your child and arouses his or her curiosity?
- What seems to be frustrating?
- Does your child thrive in a structured environment or seem to prefer one that offers more freedom?
- Is your child quiet or rambunctious?
- Does he or she prefer to work on projects alone or with other children?
- Does he or she have any special interests or abilities?

Make a list of answers to these questions as well as taking note of any other characteristics you notice about your child. As you read more about individual schools, and when you visit the ones that interest you, you will be better able to choose a school that suits your child.

For high school, parents often choose a new school for their children. This is frequently because their current school goes only through eight grade. As you look for a high school, consider your child's learning style as well as his or her interests when deciding upon a school. Also keep in mind your own family goals, which may involve preparing for college, in making this important choice.



What about family expectations? In order to provide a good match, a child's school must also meet a family's needs. Here again, you may want to prepare a list of expectations and use it as a guide in the search for the best school for your child:

- What goal do you have for your child's long-term education? Is college preparation a priority?
- How important to you is parental involvement in school activities?
- Do you expect the school to have a role in developing a child's character by encouraging respect for adults and peers as well as others in society, including the disadvantaged?
- How important is it to you that you have a strong relationship and share a philosophy with other parents at the school?
- How interested are you in providing a home setting that gives your child time for homework?
- How important to you is a before-school and after-school program?

Before beginning a search for a school, parents should reflect on these questions, and their expectations for schools. Parents who choose schools wisely are pleased after their children enroll because the family and the school work in harmony with a common set of expectations for the youngsters. Admissions directors at schools will gladly connect you with parents of current students so you can make an informed choice for your child.

Most schools believe parents should have a strong role in their children's education. Being involved in a child's education strengthens the whole family and sends a message to children that education is an important part of their lives. Schools know that the way in which parents choose to become active in their children's schools varies greatly. They provide many different opportunities for parental involvement. Most schools have strong parent associations that organize social events, help coordinate volunteer activities, and provide an organized means of communication between parents and school.

Each of these encounters strengthens the life of the schools and creates a community of committed adults supporting the goals of the schools and the students. This feeling of community, with adults and students working together for a common purpose, is one of the distinguishing strengths of a good school.