

Starting your High School Search: Resource Kit

High school is the last stop before your student moves on to college, a vocational school, the military, or the workforce. That's why choosing a high school that properly prepares them is important. Start exploring your options on the [Navigate STL Schools Website](#) and consider [scheduling a meeting](#) with a School Navigator here to help make sense of your choices. Consider the below questions to get thinking about what your student's needs are and what might be most important to you and your student as you work together to choose a right-fit school.

How will my school ensure academic growth and prepare students for life after high school?

Thinking about Post-Secondary

How does your school actively support students in exploring their options and preparing for life after high school?

- Who is on staff to support students in college and career readiness? Is there a counselor? A college adviser? Both?
- Does the school offer career pathways? Internships? Opportunities to gain professional certifications?
- Does the school offer programs specifically geared towards students with special needs such as transitional programming, career readiness, and job training?
- How many students take the ACT and what's the average score?
- How many graduates enroll in college? The military? How many have a job?
- What's the graduate rate?

Thinking about the academics

Academic achievement and growth is critical for all students, but schools have different philosophies and offerings to that end.

- Are you looking for a school that has a particular academic focus? STEM? The arts? Project-based learning? College prep? How does that focus manifest in students' daily experiences?
- What approach to teaching does the school take? What's the curriculum like? How much flexibility do individual teachers have?
- How does the school approach testing? How do students score on standardized tests?
- What classes are required for graduation? What electives are offered?
- What AP/Honors classes are offered? How are students placed in those classes?
- How inclusive are the special education offerings?
- What academic supports are offered?

How will my school foster a sense of belonging?

Thinking about the school culture

Research shows that a sense of belonging at school is tied to higher academic achievement as well as physical and emotional wellness for students. Consider the following questions as you assess the opportunities that you and your child will have to feel like a part of a community at school.

- How many students does the school have? What are the relationships between students and staff like? How will that serve your student's needs and preferences?
- Is diversity valued and/or celebrated within the school? How inclusive is the environment? Is there racial and socioeconomic diversity? Does the school serve students with special needs? Is there relative gender parity?
- What school traditions are in place? How does the school foster pride and community? Do students feel recognized?
- How are parents included in the school community? How does the school view and support the relationship between parents and teachers?
- How available to students are the nurses, social workers, and counselors? Are they full-time or part-time? How crucial will this type of support be to your child?
- What's the school's approach to discipline? What are the suspension and expulsion rates?

Thinking about the Extracurriculars

As important as it is for students to focus on academics, high school is also a great time for students to have fun exploring other interests. They might uncover a talent they never knew they had! Some sports and activities can also give students a chance to earn college scholarships.

- What sports are available? When are they offered (what seasons) Are there tryouts or does everyone get a chance to play? How competitive are the teams?
- What clubs are available? How many kids participate?
- Are the clubs and sports accessible? (i.e. Is transportation provided for after-school activities? Are there extra costs involved?)
- Does the school have partnerships with any outside organizations (i.e. Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club) to offer additional opportunities and support?

