



If your child feels like she doesn't fit in, consider sending her to a school with like-minded kids

When to recognize it just isn't working out

A guide to identifying the signs indicating a new approach might be beneficial for your child

by Sara Dimerman

Attending school for most of one's childhood is not a choice. However, which school your child is going to attend is, and many families like the idea of choosing what works best for them and their children.

Here are some of the signs or indicators to watch for that may point you in the direction of exploring options that may be more in line with your family's needs.

The teachers don't really know my child.

If you've sat in on a parent-teacher interview and wondered whether the teacher has your child confused with another student, you may question whether your child is either extremely different in the classroom compared to home or there may be too many children in the classroom for the teacher to really get to know any of them well. If you're concerned that your child is getting lost in the crowd, then looking for an environment with fewer kids per class may be a good option.

My child doesn't feel like he fits in.

There are many students who at times don't feel that they are included or fit with their

peers. Sometimes the dynamics in a particular classroom don't work so well. However, if this is a recurrent theme and you know that your child may be a little "different," you may find that another environment with like-minded children (for example a school for gifted kids if this is what makes him stand out) may help him feel a greater sense of belonging.

If your child tends to be bullied or ostracized by his peer group, you may also want to consider having her talk to a therapist who can help her develop increased self-confidence and assertiveness skills.

Some children also benefit from social skills groups where they are helped to develop more effective interpersonal skills.

My suggestions on how things can be improved fall on deaf ears.

One of the benefits of having your child attend a private school, for example, may be that you have more say. Let's face it, you're a paying customer. So, although there's no guarantee that your ideas will be implemented, you may feel a greater sense of validation.

other kids.

If a formal academic assessment, teachers or school administrators at your child's current school have identified him as having special needs, learning at a different pace or in a different way, or made mention that he is lacking in motivation, and they have been unable to make any headway in helping your child become more successful, then it's time to explore options. Things to consider include more one-on-one attention and more individualized teaching as with private tutoring, or extra help regarding developing more motivation might be a good option.

My child is being penalized for taking time away from school to participate in athletic competitions.

If your child has a particular passion related to athletics or the arts, there are a number of schools — both private and public — that tailor their curriculum towards promoting and accommodating for this. Some incorporate the arts or sports into their programming and others even collaborate with students who are required to take time away from the conventional school day in order to practise or compete.

I don't have time to take my child to extracurriculars after school but want to expose her to different activities.

If you're working long hours and feel like you barely have time to breathe at the end of your day, you may feel guilty at not being able to expose your child to a variety of activities, especially if she hasn't yet found a passion.

Rest assured that there are schools that offer a broad array of activities, right on their property, so that students can stay at school after their academic day and participate. This not only allows them exposure but is often a great help to parents who work long work days and are looking for programs, other than the conventional after school child care program, that will not only enrich their children's lives, but also give parents their peace of mind that their children are being productive and engaged after conventional school hours.

I hate that every day is like a fashion parade at school and that my child is always wanting to buy the latest and greatest.

One way to overcome this is to explore academic environments that insist on a school uniform and dress code.

Keep in mind, however, that if it's the cost of the latest fashion that has you most upset, then attending a private school with a dress code may cost more money in the long run than keeping up with fashion trends. If, however, it's more about not wanting to deal with the "what should I wear today?" routine or if you're concerned about your child needing to wear certain clothing in order to fit in, school uniforms may ease your concerns.

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