

Making the Most of your Campus Visit

ger than what happens in a classroom—so they should ask about field trips, overnight adventures, clubs, organizations, athletics and community service,” says John Williamson, Mid-Pacific Institute director of admissions.

Some tips before visiting:

Do some pre-visit research. Read up on the school's history. Look at a campus map on the school's Web site, so you know which classrooms, facilities or departments you and your child particularly want to see. Then when it's time for the actual visit you'll be well-informed and never lacking in questions.

Whenever possible, visit the campus during a normal school day. Weekend open houses are fine, but you'll also want to see what a typical school schedule is like. If that means taking some work time off, remember that this is one of the biggest investments you'll make for your child. You want to get the most authentic feel for a school. Besides, it's bonding time with your kid.

Make sure to talk to students and faculty while on your visit. The more perspectives you can get, the better.

Deviate from the standard tour. Once you've been given the official guided tour, ask if you can explore on your own.

Many schools offer shadow-a-student days for admitted or interested students. Children will probably feel freer to ask the questions that matter to them when you're not around. Plus, the chance to observe classes and students gives kids the best sense of whether they'll fit in at the school.

YOU DON'T OFTEN HEAR OF PEOPLE BUYING HOUSES sight unseen. So why would you even consider choosing a private school for your child without checking it out first? That's why campus visits are no-brainers, according to many admissions directors.

“A lot of people enjoy coming to the open houses, meeting the faculty, seeing what the inside of the classrooms look like and visualizing their daughters in the school,” says Sue Ann Wargo, St. Andrew's Priory director of admissions.

“Parents should realize that an education is much big-



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