Culture & tone
You don’t want anarchy… or a police state.

What’s the noise level?
- Can hear a pin drop.
- A productive hum.

What do you hear?
- Shouting and yelling.
- Grown-ups and kids speak in respectful voices.

Are parents involved?
- Parents shut out.
- Parents & staff work as a team.

Lunch & after-school
How students spend their time outside the school.

What’s the lunchroom like?
- Rowdy, messy, smelly.
- Orderly and clean.

After-school programs?
- Limited, expensive.
- Free for all students, extensive opportunities.

Gym, recess & play
Kids shouldn’t sit still all day.

Work/play balance?
- All work - no play or recess.
- Purposeful play, guided by teachers.

Are students physically active?
- No gym, dance or movement in class, watching movies at lunch.
- Outdoors every day, jumping, dancing and skipping.

Notes

What's the lunchroom like?
Rowdy, messy, smelly.
Orderly and clean.

After-school programs?
Limited, expensive.
Free for all students, extensive opportunities.

Did this school match our Insideschools profile?
We want to know what you think – so add your comments on our site.
Insideschools.org
contact@insideschools.org (212) 229 5471

SCHOOL NAME:

What to look for on an elementary school tour
A checklist for parents by the Insideschools staff.
First impressions
Trust your instincts. First impressions count.

- Security guard and office staff
  - Unfriendly.
  - Friendly.

- Building
  - Dark, dirty, messy.
  - Bright, clean, orderly.

- Student work on display
  - Bare walls, cookie cutter-work, store-bought decorations.
  - Artwork, essays, science & social studies projects, math problems.

Leadership
A principal can make or break a school.

- Does the principal have a clear vision?
  - No.
  - Not sure?
  - Yes!

- Is there a clear plan to achieve that vision?
  - No.
  - Not sure?
  - Yes!

Academics
Great schools explore all subjects.

- Reading
  - Book excerpts or really simple books, even in 5th grade.
  - Kids enjoy picture books, science books, historical novels and complex chapter books.

- Writing
  - Short essays with copied facts.
  - Lots of high-quality essays on a range of topics.

- Math
  - Nothing but worksheets or little evidence of math.
  - Legos, blocks, dice, play money, different ways to solve problems.

- Science
  - No evidence of science.
  - Plants, animals, cooking supplies, eggs hatching, experiments in every class.

- Social studies
  - No evidence of history or geography.
  - Maps, globes, timelines, thematic studies on bridges or subways.

Teaching
A great teacher will make you envy your child.

- Are students engaged?
  - Kids distracted, bored, aimless.
  - Kids so focused they don’t notice visitors in the room.

- Who does the talking?
  - Teachers do all the talking.
  - Teachers encourage kids to talk.

- Do teachers challenge top students?
  - One-size-fits-all lessons.
  - Teachers encourage children to read harder books, write longer essays, do more complex math.

- Do teachers support struggling kids?
  - One-size-fits-all lessons.
  - Teachers work with individual children or small groups.

- Do teachers plan together?
  - Random units without a big-picture plan.
  - Projects in art/technology reflect lessons in history/math.