

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUR DIFFERENTLY WIRED CHILD

STEP 1: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Is the learning environment a fit?

Does the school subscribe to a particular educational philosophy, and if so, is that philosophy a match for the way your child learns? Does the curriculum feel alive and creative or rigid and rote? Is there flexibility within the classroom to accommodate different ways of working and demonstrating mastery?

What is the approach toward neurodivergence and inclusion?

Does the school embrace differently wired students, and if so, how do they support them? What are their policies surrounding inclusion, and do they practice what they preach? How experienced are teachers and staff regarding learning and attention issues, and are they open to continue learning themselves?

How does the school handle behavioral challenges?

What is the school's stated policy surrounding discipline? How do they discipline in practice? Do they use punishment, such as skipping recess or taking privileges away? Do they shame or support?

Does the school culture feel right for my child and our family?

Does the culture of the school—the sense of community, the energy of the classrooms and school building, the tone of communication, the stated values in the school's mission statement—feel like a match for your family? Do you feel as if your child can "be him/herself" at school? Will you feel comfortable approaching the school about concerns or challenges relating to your child?

STEP 2: GATHER INFORMATION

Observe one or more classrooms

Ask to observe a class (or several) and note things like: the relationship between the teacher(s) and students, the "feeling" of the class (too quiet, too chaotic, too structured, not enough structure), mood and engagement of students, how the teacher responds to disruptions, how tuned-in the teacher is.

Crowdsource honest feedback

Speak with parents at an open house, ask to attend a PTA meeting, talk to friends with experience at the school, and/or ask for honest insight in safe communities of parents raising differently wired kids, such as TILT Together on Facebook, to learn about the experiences of families like yours.

STEP 3: CHOOSE & STAY OPEN

Trust your gut

Reflect on all the information you've gathered, the answers to the above questions, and who you know your child to be. Ask yourself: **Do I feel confident that my child will be supported, appropriately challenged, and emotionally safe at this school and/or the school will be willing to work toward this outcome with me?** Your gut will know the answer.

Regularly check in & pivot if necessary

Once you've made a school choice, hope and advocate for the best, check in with your child and school regularly to ensure continued fit, and be willing to pivot if or when it becomes necessary.