



School Options for Your City Kid

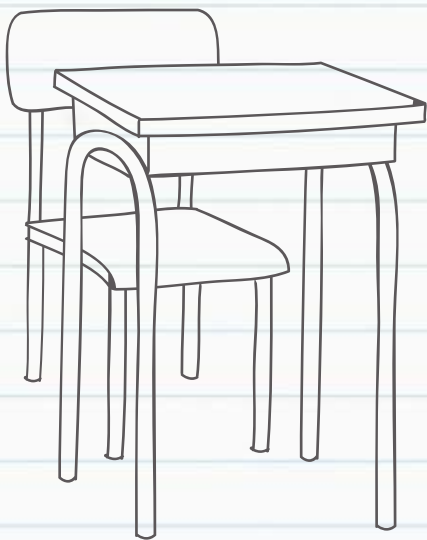




Thank you for including Live Baltimore in your school journey!

We hope you find the information in this guide—
about selecting a school in Baltimore City—helpful.

Live Baltimore is Here to Help!



Live Baltimore has been helping Baltimore City families understand their education options since 2015. We created this booklet to help in the school search process by providing next steps, answering frequently asked school questions, and busting common myths.

Don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

schools@livebaltimore.com | 410-637-3750 x118

Use this booklet to track
your school search progress.

Where Do I Begin?

Once you become a parent in Baltimore City, it's common to hear the question, "What are you doing about school?" Relax. Use this simple checklist to stay on track with your research and confidently answer, "I have a plan!"

0-1 years

- ☐ Determine your current elementary school zone at baltimorecityschools.org/schools
- ☐ Connect with other parents in your community and through social media
- ☐ Try to get some sleep



1-2 years

- ☐ Look for opportunities to interact with your zoned school (*through volunteering, school events, etc.*)
- ☐ Check out LiveBaltimore.com/5star for a list of areas in the city with larger homes AND great school options

2-3 years

- ☐ Determine if your zoned elementary school offers Pre-K
- ☐ Research nearby charter and other public schools offering Pre-K
- ☐ Considering private or parochial school? Attend school open houses (*usually offered in the fall*)

3-4 years

- ☐ Determine where you will apply for Pre-K; schedule visits; talk to enrolled families
- ☐ Apply to Pre-K (*Baltimore City Public Schools' Pre-K programs have enrollment eligibility requirements; children must be four years old by September 1 of the school year in which they enroll*)

4-5 years

- ☐ Determine where you will apply/enroll for Kindergarten; schedule visits; talk to enrolled families
- ☐ Enroll in Kindergarten (*for Baltimore City Public Schools, children must be five years old by September 1 of the school year in which they enroll*)

5 years +

- ☐ Enroll in First Grade (*for Baltimore City Public Schools, children must be six years old by September 1 of the school year in which they enroll*)
- ☐ Stay engaged with your child's school by participating in its PTO/PTA
- ☐ As middle school approaches, attend the City Schools' Choice Fair, talk to other families about their middle school decisions, reach back out to Live Baltimore with additional questions

What are My School Options?

Baltimore City offers many school options to families (many more, in fact, than surrounding counties). Below is a basic overview of the types of schools you might consider when selecting a school for your child.

Public Zoned Schools

- ✎ Your zoned school (if you live in the zone, your child may enroll; Pre-K spaces may be limited)
- ✎ An alternate zoned school (contact the school's principal for enrollment availability)

Public Charter Schools

- ✎ Seats are determined by lottery
- ✎ Attendance is free of charge
- ✎ Apply to an unlimited number of charter schools
- ✎ Apply even after the charter lottery has occurred

Private Schools

- ✎ Enrollment is by application
- ✎ Most schools offer financial aid
- ✎ Cost can be comparable to daycare



Parochial Schools

- ✎ Enrollment is by application
- ✎ Financial aid and scholarships are available
- ✎ Cost is often less than other independent schools/daycare

Home Schooling

- ✎ Networks of homeschoolers can answer questions, including the Maryland Homeschool Association

Choosing a School in Baltimore City

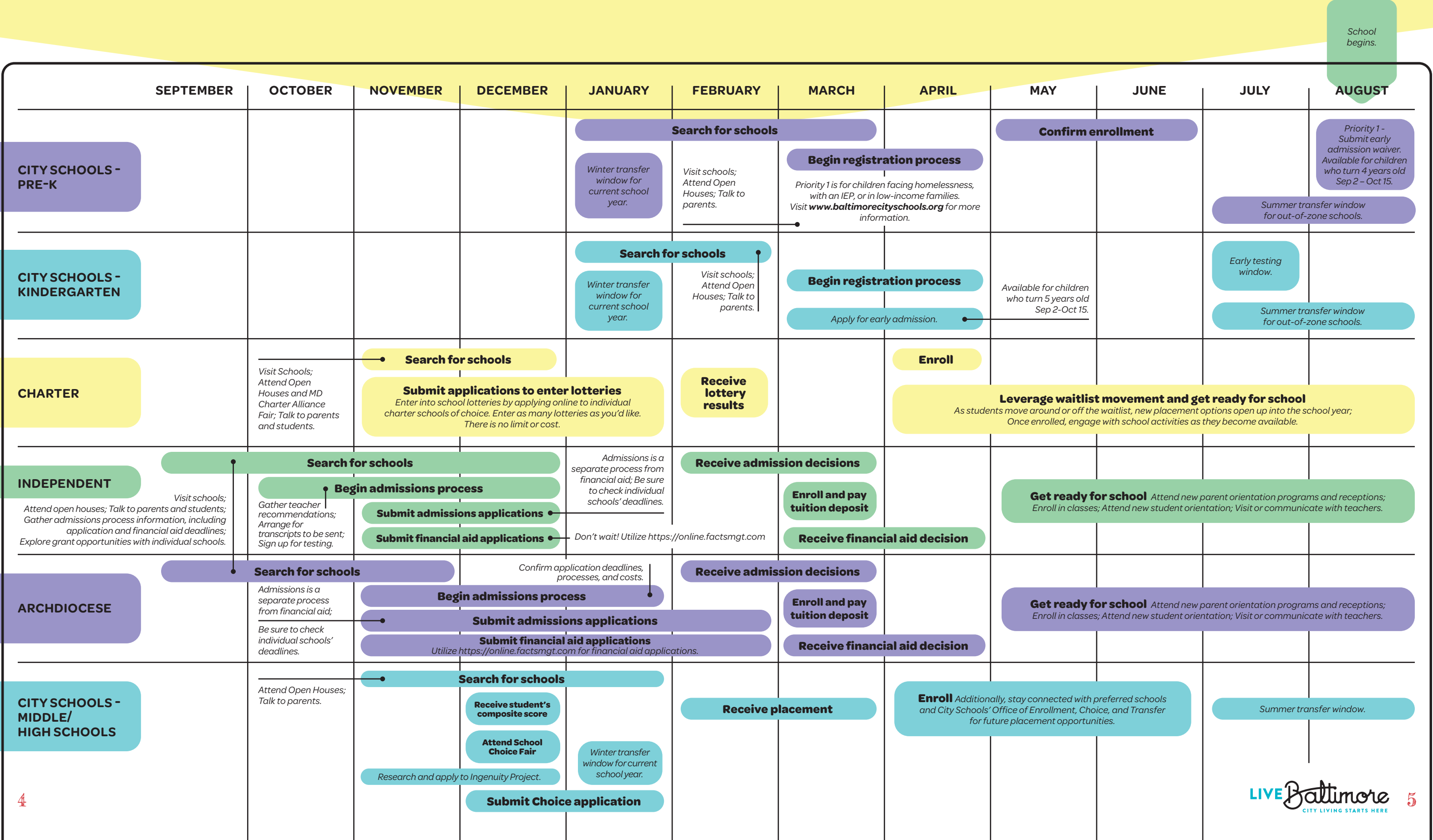
With so many options in Baltimore City, how can you decide which school is right for your family? Use this checklist to think about what's most important (or not at all important) to you. Then, take it on school visits to help frame your questions for faculty, staff, and already-enrolled families.

Academics/Curriculum	Must Have	Prefer	Environment	Must Have	Prefer
Offers individualized instruction <i>(e.g. meets learners where they are)</i>	☐	☐	Is a small school	☐	☐
Has a specific subject focus <i>(e.g. Arts Integration, STEM, etc.)</i>	☐	☐	Has small classes/low student-instructor ratio	☐	☐
Has a specific approach to learning <i>(e.g. traditional, Montessori, project-based, etc.)</i>	☐	☐	Is single-sex	☐	☐
Offers foreign language instruction	☐	☐	Is racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse	☐	☐
Offers resources for students with learning differences	☐	☐	Welcomes parent involvement/has an active PTO or PTA	☐	☐
Additional must-haves:			Additional must-haves:		

Extracurricular	Must Have	Prefer	Lifestyle	Must Have	Prefer
Offers music class or club	☐	☐	Is close to home or work	☐	☐
Offers art class or club	☐	☐	Provides transportation	☐	☐
Offers regular recess and/or P.E.	☐	☐	Offers before and after care	☐	☐
Offers team sports	☐	☐	Offers free breakfast and lunch	☐	☐
Additional must-haves:			Additional must-haves:		

PLANNING TIMELINE FOR SCHOOL OPTIONS

Each option has its own application and enrollment period. Use this timeline as a guide for planning your child’s school choices. Note that these are general, approximate guidelines subject to change from school year to school year. Check with the specific institution you are interested in to get specific details for your situation.



Common Misconceptions

As you explore schools, you may come across some misconceptions about education in Baltimore City. To help you cut to the truth, we've listed out the most common below.

There is just one "good" public school and one "good" charter school. If I don't get into one of them, I will have to send my child to private school.

There are many quality, public zoned and charter schools that families across the spectrum attend.

City schools don't have heat and air conditioning.

City school buildings are among the oldest in the state, but many buildings do have heat and air. HVAC installation is currently scheduled throughout the district and the 21st Century Schools Plan will completely build or re-build many buildings in the coming years.

The Great Schools rating is too low for me to send my child there.

Great Schools ratings are not a good measure of Baltimore City schools for numerous reasons. The scores are on a curve against the whole state so a 4-7 is good on Great Schools. Also, measures of poverty are taken into great consideration in the scoring system often leaving Baltimore City with lower scores.

I am only allowed to send my child to their zoned public school.

Your child can attend an elementary school outside of your zone if they have space in your grade.

Charter schools are better than public schools.

Charter schools are public schools. Traditional public schools and public charters both get funding from City Schools. There are both quality charter and traditional schools. The main difference is that charter schools have the ability to offer different curriculum options.

My household income is too high for public Pre-K.

Public Pre-K has different priority levels. Priority 1 is income-based and special needs-based. Public Pre-K spaces go unfilled every year because Priority 1 doesn't fill all openings.

Home school kids don't get to interact with other children.

There are extensive networks online and in person for homeschooling. There is support and opportunities to interact.

My child wouldn't qualify for aid at private school.

Families with income in the low six figures can be awarded private school scholarships.

I don't practice any particular religion so I can't go to parochial schools.

Parochial schools are open to all learners.

Our parents think it is better to raise kids in the county.

You always need to do what is best for your family, but sometimes a diverse life full of different experiences is what's best.

What's Next?

Now that you know your school options, what to look for in a school, when to visit schools, and what common myths to ignore, what's left? Use these suggested guidelines to help you make your next step.

★ Take a look at your zoned school with new eyes.

★ Find other parents in your neighborhood and navigate together.
(Let us know if you need help.)

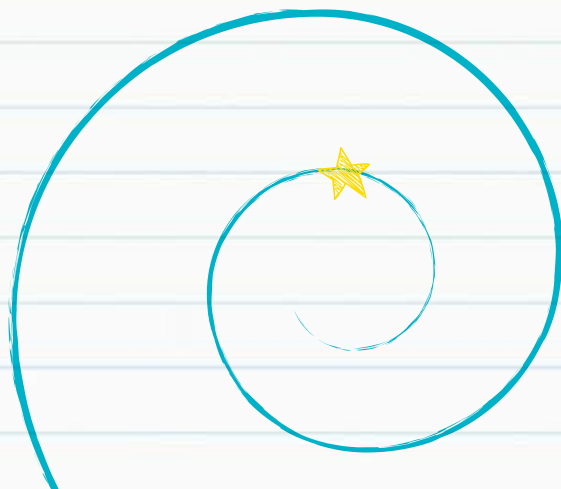
★ Visit schools and attend open houses.

Use the checklist from page 3 to help guide your questions during school visits.

★ Let us know where you landed.

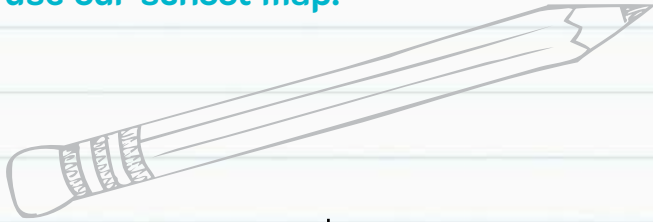
★ Spread the word! We are here to help.

Track your school journey
on the following page



School Tracker

Take notes on this worksheet as you explore school options. To help you find schools convenient to your family, visit LiveBaltimore.com/Schools to use our school map.



School Name	What I Liked	Contact Info/ Open House Dates

Questions to ask school representatives

- ★ Do you have before and/or after care programs?
- ★ What are your after school programs (*chess, robotics, etc.*)?
- ★ What partnerships does your school have and what do they provide?



		Contact Info/ Open House Dates
School Name	What I Liked	



Learn more about school options at:
LiveBaltimore.com/Schools