

OLOL High School Selection Process Tips

Our students have the opportunity to choose from a large selection of Catholic high schools in the St. Louis area. Although all the schools provide an excellent education, each school has a different personality and feel to it. Therefore, it may be useful for your student and family to look at multiple schools to determine which one is the best fit for you. To help provide some guidance to the families of our middle school, we've prepared a "road map" of helpful tips to provide assistance to families during the process.

Things to Consider by Grade:

6th Grade

- Begin compiling "resume" list
- Attend a High School Night
- Attend an Open House – one or two schools

7th Grade

- Attend a High School Night – go to schools you haven't visited in 6th grade
- Attend the Open House of two schools
- Attend a meeting hosted at an OLOL family's house where the school administration will attend and give a presentation
- Go to a school sponsored function at a couple of high schools to get a feel for the community in its typical setting (e.g.: play, sporting event, trivia night, etc.)
- Contact OLOL for a list of families that currently attend or recently attended a particular school to solicit feedback

8th Grade

- Schedule shadowing in August
- Shadow in September and October
- Attend a High School Night of the schools you are really considering
- Attend Open House of the top one or two schools
- Attend a meeting hosted at an OLOL family's house where the school administration will attend and give a presentation
- Go to a school sponsored function at a couple high schools to get a feel for the community in its typical setting.
- Contact OLOL for a list of families that currently attend or recently attended a particular school to solicit feedback

Additional Detail by Topic:

High School Nights

High School Nights are hosted at a variety of school locations and on multiple dates throughout September and October. The evening agenda is typically an introduction followed by schools giving presentations in classrooms at the host site. Typically, you have the ability to attend three presentations in one evening. Depending on your situation and schedule flexibility, it may make sense to attend a High School Night beginning in 6th grade so that you can take your time to explore options.

Link to the listing of current High School Nights on the Archdiocesan Website:

<http://archstl.org/education/page/high-school-nights>

Open Houses

The Open Houses are a good way to see the entire school, classrooms, facilities and talk with teachers. Unfortunately, almost every high school holds its annual open house on the same day and during the same time in November, which tends to be the first or second Sunday of the month. As a result, you can expect to be able to attend two high school open houses on that day. Since high school applications take place near the end of November of 8th grade year, it is important to attend Open Houses beginning in 7th grade. Again, many people will attend open houses beginning in 6th grade in order to not be rushed through the process.

Link to the listing of current High School Open House schedule on the Archdiocese website:

<http://archstl.org/education/page/high-school-open-house>

Shadowing

Shadowing is a very important aspect in the high school selection process. Most schools only allow 8th graders to shadow. Therefore, you should try and schedule your 8th graders shadow days early in their 8th grade year (e.g. September and early October) so that you could also attend Open Houses of the schools in November in the event that you are having trouble with making a decision. If you know someone at the school where your 8th grader is interested in shadowing, you can request that particular student if you'd like.

Applications and Interviews

The initial portion of the application process is administered and coordinated through the Archdiocesan online system. These applications are generally due in the third or fourth week of November. High Schools send out their acceptance notifications in the first week of February.

There is typically an additional high school specific application process and you are encouraged to contact the high school of your choice to learn more about this. Although each school is

different, generally there are questions the students and parents complete online spanning a variety of topics. Therefore, it is a good idea to begin keeping a “resume” of your child’s accomplishments, club involvement, sports, interests, volunteering, and work activities.

Additionally, many schools’ application process includes a personal interview with the student and a teacher and/or administrator. Sometimes the interview has been known to happen on a Shadow Day. Some of the questions you or your student may want to be prepared for are:

- Why do you want to be a part of this school community?
- In what ways can you contribute to this school community?
- What are your goals for high school?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Examples to support evidence strengths and examples of how to improve your weaknesses.
- What are your favorite and least favorite subjects? Why?
- What activities are you involved in at your school and in your community?

Link to the current admission process on the Archdiocesan website:

<http://archstl.org/education/page/catholic-high-school-admissions>

Scholarships and Work Study Programs

Schools offer financial aid in many forms. Some take the form of a “work study” and some are academic based scholarships. The academic-based scholarships may be awarded through school administered test or competition and some are awarded based on standardized test scores. You should inquire about these with the schools.

Link to the listing of tuition assistance programs on the Archdiocese website:

<http://archstl.org/education/page/secondary-schools-tuition-assistance>

Resources

Most high schools have information about their admission policies and processes on their website. They also have Admission Offices that will gladly answer questions and set-up meetings with you to answer questions. Also, the Archdiocesan website has several links with useful information describing much of this process. Currently locations are:

<http://archstl.org/education>

Also, if you have questions about specific schools and want some more personal thoughts, please contact the Our Lady of Lourdes School Board and we can try and connect you with alumni of our school who are knowledgeable of the schools you are considering.

Additional Considerations

- Academic offerings and strengths
- Service and faith-focus of the school
- Logistics of getting to and from the school location
- Clubs and activities offered to your interests
- Balancing your academics and activities – amount of homework, work expectations
- Student and teacher support resources
- School technology
- Social atmosphere of the school
- Parent/student functions
- Talk to students and parents of students in the OLOL community at schools you are considering.