

## **Schooling Choices and Attachment Parenting**

### **Included in this packet:**

- Considering the Eight Principles When Choosing a School
- School Readiness Worksheet
- Questions to Ask When Picking a School
- Educational Options Chart
- AP Pros and Cons for Educational Options
- The Eight Principles of Attachment Parenting for the School Age Child

# Considering the Eight Principles When Choosing a School

In choosing a school with an AP-friendly environment, we can consider how the Eight Principles would apply in an educational setting.

## 1. Become knowledgeable about your child's developmental and cognitive levels

- ✓ Assess child's needs.
  - Personality type: spirited, sensitive, likes groups, independent, etc.
  - Type of learner: visual, auditory, kinesthetic?
  - Type of environment s/he likes: structure, free-form, lots of time in nature,
  - Specialty school i.e. performance, science, etc.?
- ✓ Learn about different educational philosophies and approaches.
- ✓ Check out schools: Websites, word-of-mouth, list-serves, visits to school

## 2. Feed with Love and Respect/ Strive for optimum physical health

- ✓ Do kids bring their own snacks or does school serve them? What if child has food allergies?
- ✓ Are there limitations on type of foods allowed at school? On how food is packaged?
- ✓ How do they handle food sharing: when a child can't eat what others have b/c of allergies or other restrictions, taking of food from other children, etc.?
- ✓ Eating times: Are kids allowed to eat whenever they get hungry or are there scheduled eating times? What if child is hungry at another time? What if child is not done when scheduled time is complete?

## 3. Respond with Sensitivity

- ✓ How are the teachers speaking with and reacting to a child if s/he is upset, hurt, scared, in conflict with another child or a teacher, testing boundaries? Do teachers reflect back what child is feeling?
- ✓ What if child is having a bad day or is upset about something? Is misbehaving?
- ✓ Are children allowed to cry for extended periods?

## 4. Use Nurturing Touch

- ✓ How do they handle child's touching behaviors (grabbing, hitting, etc.)?
- ✓ How are children's varying needs for touch respected? Some like cuddles, a hand on shoulder, etc. but others do not.
- ✓ How is touch used if a child needs comfort? Needs a boundary i.e. hitting another child or needs to be removed from a situation?

## 5. Develop and Maintain Positive Sleep Routines

- ✓ How will school affect home sleep?
  - Will child have to wake up earlier in the morning to get to school?
  - Will child be so tired from school that s/he needs to go to bed earlier at night?
  - Would half-day/part-time schedule work better for sleep needs? Will you schedule school so there is no nap at school?
- ✓ How will nap work at school?
  - How long is naptime?
  - How do they transition children to nap? Do they cry it out?
  - How does going to sleep work in the classroom? Where do they sleep? Is there music on?
  - What if child doesn't take nap? Are they forced to lay still, lay on mat, or can they do other things?
  - How does nap time end? How are children woken up? What happens after nap as children are waking up?

## 6. Provide Consistent and Loving Care

- ✓ What is the school director like? How does s/he interact with the children? The teachers?
- ✓ What are teacher turnover rates? Are working conditions/salary conducive to retaining teachers?
- ✓ Will students change teachers each year or does teacher transition levels with kids?
- ✓ What are the other parents like at the school? Will they interact with your child? Do they have similar parenting philosophies? How involved are parents allowed/encouraged to be?
- ✓ What is student/family turnover like? Can your child expect to see the same kids over the course of time at a particular school?

## 7. Use Positive Discipline

- ✓ What is the school's philosophy?
- ✓ Do they use time-outs?
- ✓ What about shaming?
- ✓ The school's philosophy and how a teacher interacts with children may be different.
  - Watch the teacher who your child would have. How does s/he respond to scenarios that require discipline in the classroom? Listen to the teacher's language. Watch his or her body language.
  - What does s/he do with tantrums?
  - When children are forming cliques?
  - When children are in conflict with one another?

## 8. Maintain Balance In Your Family Life

- ✓ What is the parent's need for balance/break?
- ✓ Would sending child to school help parents be able to practice eight principles better at home?
- ✓ Would tuition of school be a burden for family/cause a parent to have to go back to work?
- ✓ What are the time requirements for parent involvement at the school?
- ✓ How would the child's balance be affected? How much time will child be away from home? Is there homework? Are there other school activities/festivals outside of regular school time?

## Resources:

- School Readiness Worksheet
- Eight Principles of AP for the School-Age Child
- AustinEd list serve: [AustinEd@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AustinEd@yahoogroups.com)
- Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia compared: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v4n1/edwards.html>
- *The Journal of API* "Schooling Issue": Overview of Five Major Schooling Options: Homeschooling, Unschooling, Private, Public, and Charter  
<http://www.attachmentparenting.org/journal/apj11-3xpahi.pdf>
- *Multiple Intelligences* by Howard Gardner
- "Your Child's School Experience" by Isabel Fox, PhD  
<http://www.attachmentparenting.org/support/articles/artschool.php>
- *The Unschooling Unmanual* by Nanda Van Gestel, Jan Hunt, Daniel Quinn, and Rue Kream
- *Raising Your Spirited Child* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, chapter on "Success in School"
- *The Highly Sensitive Child* by Elaine Aron, "Twenty Tips for Teachers" plus sections on highly sensitive children out in the world
- Visits to school, observing the teacher and class. Look for a child with a personality similar to your child's. How is s/he being treated, included, etc.

## School Readiness Worksheet

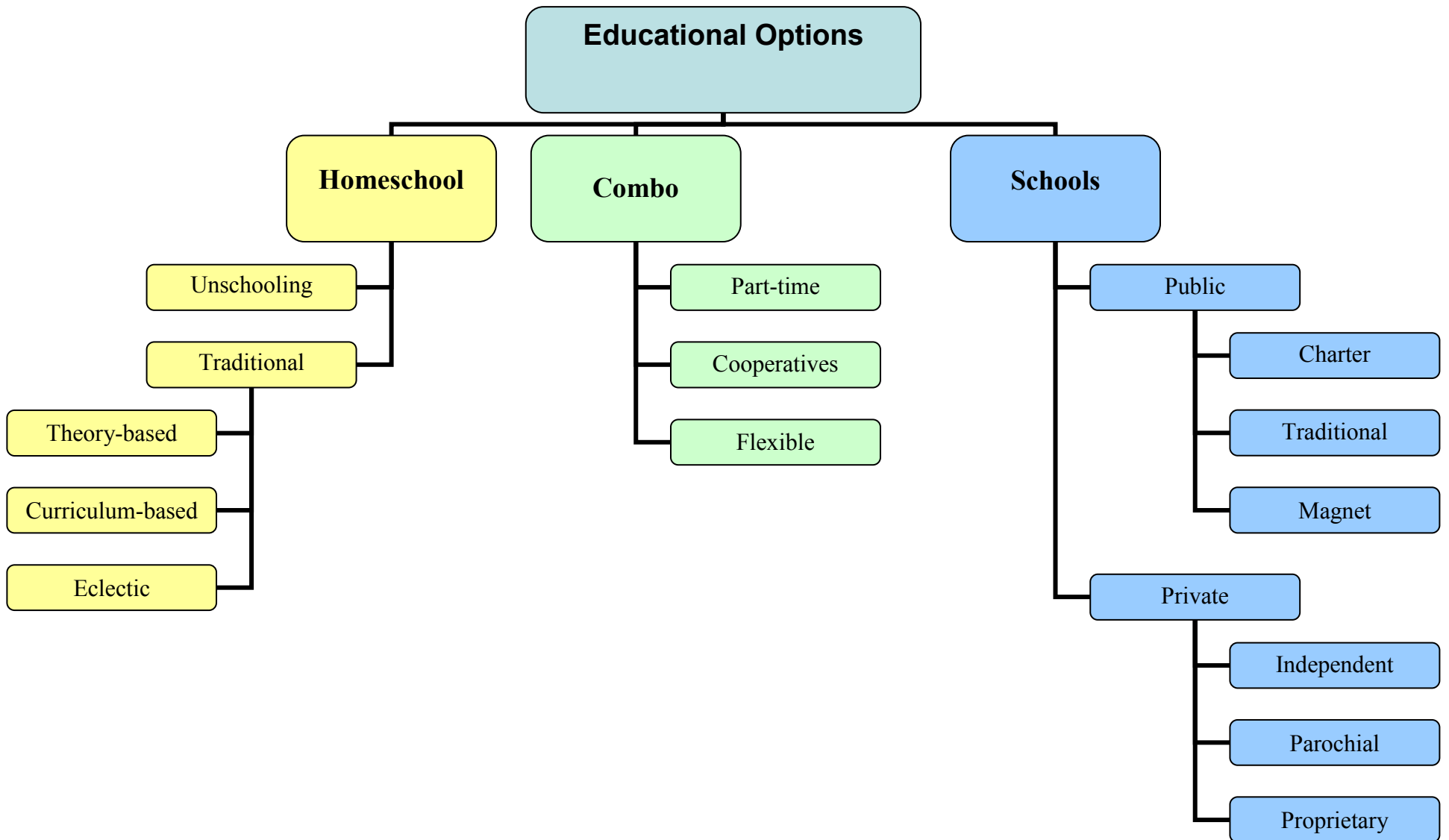
1. My child is the \_\_\_\_\_ months/years old.
2. What are your child's strengths? What areas of her or his development need more work?  
  
Social:  
  
Emotional:  
  
Physical:  
  
Cognitive:  
  
Language:
3. What do you see as your specific options for the education of your child (Full-time, part-time, five days a week, two or three days a week, specialty program, MDO, preschool, in-home, school setting, type of school: Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, etc)?
4. What are a few of the "pros" and "cons" of each option?
5. Do you feel pressure (either internal or external) to enroll your child in a program? Yes      No  
If yes, where is the pressure coming from?
6. Have you been a "critical thinker" on this issue and evaluated if your decision is truly in the best interest of your child?
7. How will your child feel about your decision regarding his/her school readiness?
8. How will your educational decisions affect your relationship with your child and your family life?
9. How would your different education options affect the various aspects of your child's daily life (routines, sibling interactions, friendships, spiritual, mealtime, etc...)?

## Questions to Consider When Picking a School

There is no one correct approach or best school for all children. The key is to look at YOUR individual child and figure out how to meet his or her individual learning needs while still meeting the overall needs and goals of the family. Consider things such as:

- Is distance a crucial factor? How far/what amount of travel time works for our family?
- Am I available to provide transportation if needed?
- Is someone available at home to care for the child(ren) before, during, and/or after school hours?
- Does my child have any special physical, emotional, linguistic, intellectual, social, or learning needs that may require special attention?
- Does my child have a special talent or skill that needs to be considered?
- If my child has siblings, is it necessary they attend the same school(s)? Are younger siblings guaranteed admission?
- How important is college preparation?
- How important are the facilities? The technology?
- Would my child do better in a small environment or a large one?
- Would I prefer my child to stay in the same environment for several years?
- How important is student diversity?
- Do I prefer a traditional program or an alternative approach to learning? Which would my child respond best to?
- How important are access to music and arts programs?
- How important is access to foreign languages and other specialized or advanced courses?
- How important is access to sports? Are certain sports more important? Is level of competition a factor (such as for scholarships)?
- How important is parental involvement and inclusion in the school community? How important is it that parents are included in decision making?
- Is it financially possible to pay tuition? Is my child eligible for scholarships or grants if they are available?
- How long of a school day is acceptable to our family without interfering with other activities or family life?
- How do we feel about homework?
- How do we feel about mandatory state-regulated testing?
- How do we feel about a coeducational versus a single-sex environment?
- How are the parents achieving balance now? How do they hope to do so in the future?
- How important is it that my child experiences similar values to those we have at home while schooling?
- How important is it that my child's teacher(s) are in close contact with me?
- How do I feel about rewards and punishments in the classroom? Do I have strong feelings about the discipline approach that is used with my child? Do I feel my child can accept things being different in different environments (i.e. school rules v. home rules)?
- Do we have access to social situations and educational programs outside of a school setting?
- Am I concerned about a school dictating some factors of our home life (such as TV viewing, food that may be brought to school, etc.)? Am I concerned that a school may not sufficiently limit exposure to unhealthy things?
- Is my child easily able to adapt to various schedules (getting-up, bedtime, meal routines, etc.)?
- Is my child comfortable separating from me?

# Educating Our AP Kids



## Educational Options AP-Pros and Cons

Type	AP Pros	AP Cons
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Homeschooling/ Unschooling</b></p>	<p>Any type of homeschooling allows us to make the environment as AP as we choose. Homeschooling lends itself well to being present &amp; available, using positive discipline, striving for optimum health, adopting positive sleep routines, and maintaining a high-touch relationship. It can allow individual needs to be carefully considered and the education tailored to meet them. Some people find Balance easier to achieve with homeschooling.</p>	<p>Some people feel that Balance is more difficult to achieve with homeschooling. This is especially true if the parents don't access ways to have time apart from their children regularly or if they feel unfulfilled without outside the home employment or other time-consuming pursuits that might conflict with traditional homeschooling.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Traditional Public Schools</b></p>	<p>Public schools of all types can help families meet balance goals if parents need substantial time away to pursue outside interests or for work. Many parents find they are better able to stay emotionally responsive when they have some breaks. Public schools can enable a parent to stay present and available by allowing them to stay at home (rather than requiring both parents to work in a two-parent household) since there is no tuition. Their large size allows for children to pursue individual interests in both coursework and extra-curricular activity.</p>	<p>The long school day used by public schools of all types topped by increasing amounts of homework can be a challenge to family time. The early start time can make forming positive sleep routines more difficult. The discipline approach in some classrooms is not positive. Exposure to junk food and sedentary activities by peers can make promoting optimum physical health more of a challenge.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Magnet &amp; Charter Schools</b></p>	<p>Magnet and charter schools offer the same pros as other public schools, but they are even more tailored to meeting individual needs than traditional public schools. The alternative approach to education offered at some charter schools may also encompass other things than promote an AP environment at school and home.</p>	

<p><b>Private Schools</b></p>	<p>Private schools often expect and encourage parents to be active advocates for their children, facilitating keeping up-to-date with their development. The wide variety of private school styles help parents’ find the environment that is best suited to their child’s temperament and learning style.</p>	<p>Many private schools have long days and some have even more homework than public schools. Further family time is taken up by longer commutes involve the family and lots of school activities such as fund-raisers. The expensive tuition at (especially) the independent private schools makes them out-of-reach for some families who value having at least one parent at home, and make balance difficult for those who opt to return to work to pay for school. Developmentally appropriate activity and expectations and positive discipline vary by school.</p>
<p><b>Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia</b></p>	<p>Montessori, Waldorf and Reggio Emilia, while very different, share many of the AP benefits of other private schools. Additionally, they are well-known favorites of the AP community both locally and nationally as education systems that focus on the child and developmentally appropriate environments. Respect for the child are of utmost importance at these schools, and often they are more helpful at assisting parents with encouraging optimum physical health with their restrictions on junk food and sedentary activity.</p>	<p>Often parents are not encouraged to be in the Montessori classroom or participate at the level that they might in other environments. Montessori schools, like other private schools, tend to be expensive, with the same resulting family difficulties.</p> <p>Waldorf schools, like other private schools, tend to be expensive, with the same resulting family difficulties.</p> <p>Not many choices for Reggio-Emilia schools in Austin. Only focuses on early childhood, so child would have to switch philosophies and schools.</p>
<p><b>Part-time programs, Flexible programs, and Cooperatives</b></p>	<p>These combination options often try to bring the best of all worlds to families and are very popular with AP families for many reasons. They tend to have schedules that promote and respect family time while offering opportunities a child may not have so readily available at home. They can help promote balance while allowing parents to be present, available, involved, and knowledgeable in their children’s growth and development.</p>	<p>Vary by individual school— nothing’s perfect! 😊</p>

## The Eight Principles of Attachment Parenting For the School-age Child

### 1. Become knowledgeable about your child's developmental and cognitive levels

- Learn about the normal stages of human development and the different kinds of temperament children have. For instance, the Gesell Institute of Human Development has a variety of parent-friendly books like *Your Five-Year Old*, *Your Six-Year Old*, etc.
- Develop an understanding of your child's learning style (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.). Howard Gardner's book, *Multiple Intelligences*, is a good resource.
- Keep expectations appropriate to the developmental level of your child.
- Investigate all the educational options available that will best suit your child and family's needs.
- Be an advocate for your child and monitor his/her schooling experience.
- Nurture his/her natural desire to learn by helping your child develop his/her interests.

### 2. Stay emotionally responsive

- Respect and acknowledge your child's emotions and feelings.
- See the world through the eyes of your child. Children do not perceive situations or think the way adults do, so try to keep your expectations appropriate to the developmental level of your child.
- Reflect back what your child may be feeling: "You're feeling angry because you want to play and it's time for us to go."
- Create an environment where your child feels safe to express his/her feelings. Listening and not over-reacting will help facilitate this.
- Keep the lines of communication open regardless of your child's behavior. Staying connected with your child is the most important thing you can do to help him/her get through the tough times. If you have difficulty handling your child's behavior, it may be helpful to seek the expertise of a professional.
- Children whose parents are empathic and emotionally responsive are better able to be empathic and responsive to others.

## **The Eight Principles of Attachment Parenting For the School-age Child**

### **3. Strive for optimum physical health**

- Establish and maintain nutritious eating habits. Start nutritious foods early and children will be less resistant to these foods later. You can find healthy alternatives to junk food in most health food stores and general grocery stores.
- Change your own eating habits if necessary; you are your child's role model.
- Research all aspects of health care for your child, including immunizations, vitamins, and/or any recommendations made by health care providers to help you make informed decisions.
- Model good exercise habits, and make sure your child has plenty of opportunities for physical activities.

### **4. Maintain a high-touch relationship**

- Warm, nurturing human touch is important no matter what the age of the child.
- Be demonstrative of your love with hugs and kisses.
- As boys get older they may tend to resist affection, but they may not mind a pat on the back, a head massage or a shoulder rub.

### **5. Develop and maintain positive sleep routines**

- Older children may still enjoy a brief snuggle time with their parents before bed.
- Long before bedtime, establish routines for quieting down like having a bath, reading younger children a story while lying in their bed, or having a quiet conversation about their day.
- Try to maintain regular bedtime hours, especially during the school year.

### **6. Be present and available for your children**

- Children still desire, enjoy, and need the presence and availability of their parents.
- Being available makes children feel safe, cared for, and secure. Parents should remember that being physically present is not enough. Active listening, making eye contact, and knowing your children's friends will help keep the lines of communication open.
- Working parents should avoid the 'latch-key' temptation and find appropriate adult supervision for their children after school. Even teenagers need supervision – most teenage pregnancies occur between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

## The Eight Principles of Attachment Parenting For the School-age Child

### 7. Use positive discipline

- Emotionally connected children trust and love their parents and are generally easier to discipline.
- Connected children are internally motivated to please their parents most of the time.
- Be an active listener.
- Using natural or logical consequences teaches your child more effectively than punishment.
- Children often communicate their feelings through their behavior. Try to understand what your child's behavior is telling you. By looking at the world through their eyes you model the first lessons of empathy. Helping your child think about and understand what others are feeling will also foster empathy.
- Remember that the ultimate goal of discipline is to help children develop inner self-control and self-discipline.

### 8. Maintain balance in your family life

- Don't overdo extra-curricular activities.
- Allow your child some free time. Avoid scheduling every minute of your child's time. Children love to have time to hang around the house, read, have their friends over, talk, play games or be creative.
- Have regular family meals together. This is an important time that helps families reconnect after a busy day.
- Emphasize to your children the importance of family time and family traditions, regardless of the type of family you may have. If parents act as if family time isn't important, the children won't value it either.
- Individual children need individual time with one or both parents. Make a 'date' on a regular basis with each of your children for special time together.
- Create special family nights, like 'game night', 'movie night', or 'music night'. Most young children look forward to special times like these.
- Parents need to nurture themselves and their relationship. As children get older and develop trusting relationships with friends and family outside of the immediate family, parents can find more opportunities to have time alone together. Parents can also develop their own hobbies, interests, or do volunteer work they may have put 'on hold' when their children were younger. Set an example for your children, and include them if possible.