

Resources for Buyers: Schools

More than half of all homebuyers with children under 18 years of age rate the quality of the local school district as a major factor influencing, according to the latest “Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers” from the National Association of Realtors (NAR). According to the NAR study, the quality of the schools is a more important factor than affordability, convenience to schools and shopping, or even proximity to family and friends. Only convenience to the workplace is more important, but only by 1 percentage point.

However, even if the quality of the schools in the area where you decide to buy is not immediately important, it may become so in a few years. This is because homes in neighborhoods with good schools are typically going to sell faster and for more money than those in other neighborhoods.

How do you determine the quality of an individual school?

K-12 Schools

1. Internet Resources

In California, the California Department of Education website (www.cde.ca.gov) provides a host of information about testing and performance of the state’s K-12 public schools. There is a section called the California School Dashboard (cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/index.asp) that contains specific ‘report cards’ for each public school in the state.

There are also several non-governmental sites that provide comprehensive information on multiple aspects of individual school performance:

Greatschools.org is one resource that compiles a wide range of data including test scores, but also other areas like college readiness, student progress, and an equity rating that assesses how well the school supports the needs of all students. On this site these ratings are only available for public schools, and not for private or charter schools.

Schooldigger.com is another site that brings together different types of information like teacher-student ratio, test scores, and ranking. Some private schools are including in this site’s school profiles and ratings.

Privateschoolreview.com focuses on information about local private schools from K-12.

Preschools

BerkeleyParentsNetwork.org is a parent-run organization which provides lots of information from other parents about pre-schools and is a good resource for parents considering purchasing a home in Berkeley, Oakland, El Cerrito, or Albany.

2. In-person Visits

Of course, grades and test scores are only one small part of what makes a particular school a good match for your child. The best way to learn more information is to contact them directly and visit, if

possible. Their transparency in sharing this information will be a good indication of what kind of partner they will be with families in supporting the success of students.