



YOUR GUIDE TO A

# **GREAT LOWER** **SCHOOL** **EDUCATION**



Staten Island  
Academy

# YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING CONFIDENT School Decisions —STARTING NOW.

Every child's learning journey is different, and finding the right school can make all the difference. The Lower School years are a foundational first step in that journey. They're where children first build academic confidence, social skills, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

## 1. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS DURING SCHOOL TOURS

### CURRICULUM + LEARNING APPROACH

- How is the curriculum designed to support developmental milestones?
- How do teachers tailor learning to meet individual student needs?
- Are learning experiences inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, and hands-on?

### TEACHERS + CLASSROOMS

- What is the student-to-teacher ratio?
- How do teachers foster independence, creativity, and leadership?
- How are students supported if they need additional help—or more challenges?

### COMMUNITY + ENVIRONMENT

- How does the school promote empathy, inclusivity, and social-emotional growth?
- How are parents included as partners in the learning journey?
- What leadership or community-building opportunities exist for younger students?

### FACILITIES + ENRICHMENT

- What facilities (STEM labs, libraries, outdoor spaces) are available to Lower School students?
- What extracurriculars, arts, athletics, and enrichment programs are offered?
- How is technology used in the classroom and how much is too much?



## 2. LOOK FOR THE GREEN FLAGS

- A warm, inclusive school community where children are known, valued, and supported
- Experienced, caring teachers who love what they do and know how to meet kids where they are
- Engaging, hands-on curriculum that builds critical thinking, creativity, and foundational skills
- An emphasis on character, confidence, and curiosity—not just test scores
- Clear communication and parent involvement as part of the school culture

## 4. EVALUATE THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS A WHOLE

- **Do the classrooms feel inviting and age-appropriate?** Bright, engaging spaces signal a commitment to joyful learning. Look for student work displayed on walls, flexible seating, and access to hands-on materials.
- **Are students actively engaged in what they're doing?** Are they talking, thinking, building, asking questions—or simply sitting still? Active engagement is a strong sign of deep learning.
- **How do students and teachers interact?** Watch how teachers greet their students, encourage participation, and guide problem-solving. Look for warmth, attentiveness, and mutual respect.
- **What's happening outside the classroom?** Great Lower Schools build learning into every corner of the day. Explore the playground, art room, library, or garden space. These areas offer insight into how the school supports well-rounded development.

## 3. KNOW THE RED FLAGS

- Classrooms where students seem disengaged or passive
- One-size-fits-all curriculum with little room for individual pacing
- Limited opportunities for creative expression or social-emotional learning
- High student-teacher ratios or lack of consistent instructional support
- A vague or outdated approach to digital learning and technology

## 5. TRUST YOUR GUT

- Could I see my child thriving here?
- Was I welcomed, listened to, and informed?
- Did this school feel like a true partner in my child's growth?



READY  
TO

# EXPLORE

## Staten Island Academy?

As Staten Island's only independent, co-educational Pre-K3 through Grade 12 school, we're proud to offer an Early Childhood and Lower School program grounded in curiosity, connection, and care.

We invite you to visit, ask questions, and explore what sets our community apart. Your child's journey starts with the right foundation and we'd love to be part of it.

If you're exploring educational options for your child, we welcome you to attend an Open House or schedule a private tour to learn more about what a difference an independent school can make.

