

What Every Baltimore City 5th Grade Parent Should Know

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As a parent of a 5th grader in Baltimore City, you now face the task of deciding where your child will attend school next year. You know that grades 6-8 are important, because they will determine where your child attends high school. College seems far off, but it's already on your mind. As you begin to think about 6th grade, you realize that the canvas has changed a bit since you were in school.

There are many factors that influence your decision about selecting the school where your child will attend grades 6-8. We have sent you this guide to inform you about Ingenuity's admissions process, so that when the time comes your child can apply for this unique and free academic opportunity. Ingenuity is the only program of its kind in Baltimore City, specifically focusing on advanced mathematics and science. There are many options now, so you have some choices. We hope this information will help.

The TOP 10 REASONS Your Child Should Apply to THE INGENUITY PROJECT®

10. Since 1994, Ingenuity has run programs for academically talented middle-schoolers. Children have the chance to take advanced math and science classes, do real lab experiments and participate in mathematics competitions.

9. Ingenuity offers a **rigorous, college preparatory education for FREE.**

8. Ingenuity is **citywide**. This means students from out-of-zone can participate. The Ingenuity Project is at three, great Baltimore City Public Schools: **Roland Park Elementary/Middle, Mt. Royal Elementary/Middle, and Hamilton Elementary/Middle.**

7. Ingenuity is a **locally grown and operated** program that works within the public schools. The classes foster curiosity and the development of good study skills.

6. Ingenuity **measures student performance and academic growth** on a yearly basis.

5. Ingenuity's **staff is dedicated** to closely monitoring the progress of each student, so if there are challenges along the way, they can be addressed in a timely fashion. Whether your student is struggling with something or requires more advanced work, Ingenuity will meet his/her needs.



4. Your child will be **grouped with other highly motivated and capable students.** Class sizes are limited to 30 students.

3. Ingenuity has statistical information that shows how well its programs are running. **Our formula for success works!**

2. Classes are led by Ingenuity teachers who have degrees in the subject area they are teaching and extensive classroom management experience. **The person teaching your child is actually an "expert."** Ingenuity provides **additional training and support** for its teachers, so that their classrooms are strong and vibrant.

THE #1 REASON WHY YOUR CHILD SHOULD APPLY TO THE INGENUITY PROJECT:

Ingenuity's middle grades program has a proven track record of success. Ingenuity students are welcomed to city-wide high schools. Graduates of Ingenuity's high school program go on to top-tier colleges and receive ample scholarships.

For the past 13 years, Ingenuity has been a positive force in Baltimore City education!

KEY TERMS:

The Ingenuity Project: No-cost, in-school program offering accelerated math and science classes for city students. Must apply and meet admissions requirements. Program has three schools: Roland Park, Mt. Royal and Hamilton.

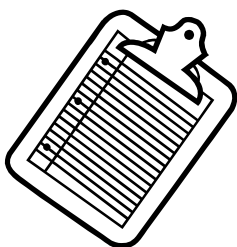
Advanced Academic (AA): A citywide, middle grades program located at select middle schools. The AA program at Roland Park features a generally accelerated academic curriculum. Another, at Francis Scott Key, is technology oriented. The **Office of Student Placement** (see below) at the North Avenue Headquarters (410-396-8600) runs **AA**. It has a completely separate application process similar to that of Ingenuity. **YOUR CHILD SHOULD APPLY TO BOTH PROGRAMS.**

Citywide: A public school program with limited spaces to which all Baltimore City residents are eligible to apply, but for which there are admissions requirements. This is different from a **Zone School**, in which enrollment is restricted to residents of a certain geographical zone, but is open to anyone in that zone. Ingenuity and AA are **Citywide** programs located inside zone schools. The seats in these programs are open to everyone who qualifies, but if a student is not in one of these programs, he/she has to be a zone resident to go to the school. Baltimore has two citywide schools with middle grades: Francis Scott Key and Roland Park. You must *apply* to gain admission to a citywide middle grades program.

NOTE: Ingenuity, AA, and Citywide are Gifted and Talented Programs

Office of Student Placement: The Baltimore City Public School System office that controls admissions to all the middle and high school citywide programs, except *Ingenuity*.

Charter Schools: A "public school" that is nonsectarian, is chosen by parents for their children, and is open to all students on a space available basis (As per the MD State Dept. of Education). Admission is determined by lottery. Every year, new charter and special schools emerge, which are generally citywide. You just have to look for them!



PREPARING FOR SIXTH GRADE: *START EARLY!*



Middle schoolers competitive state-wide

It may be surprising, but applying for Middle School programs in Baltimore City is much like applying for college: you must complete and meet an application deadline.

Start researching middle schools or middle grade programs as soon as your child enters fifth grade. (Ideally, it is good to start in fourth grade. The marks on the fourth grade report card are very important in the middle school admissions process). Find out what your child's zone middle school is like and talk to parents who have children there. Look at your child's test scores and grades. How do they compare to admissions requirements? What are his/her interests? What excites him/her academically? Use the questions on Page 4 to get more information from your child's

teacher. For example, if your child is interested in math and science and has excellent test scores and grades, the Ingenuity Project at Roland Park #233, Mount Royal #66, or Hamilton #236 may be a good fit. Many special programs, like the Ingenuity Project and Advanced Academic, have application deadlines and strict admissions requirements.

The sooner you know what you have to do, the smoother the application process will be.

Action Point: *Start looking at middle school options and special programs in the fall of 5th grade. Find out what your child's strengths, weaknesses, and interests are. Come up with a list of options and strap yourself in for the exciting ride that lies ahead.*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AT PARENT MEETINGS

The Ingenuity Project will hold parent information sessions to talk with you and other fifth grade parents about its program and the application process for sixth grade.

While attending open houses and parent information sessions, get as much information as possible. Write down any questions or concerns you have in advance. Bring those notes with you and get all the information you need.

Once you have all this information, **select programs that will be a good match for your child's abilities and interests.** Not all programs or schools will be the best place for your child. Find out what the admissions process for each program/school involves and when applications are due.



Ingenuity students at the Johns Hopkins University Physics Day

Action Point: *Check the newspapers or call schools to get information on their fall Open Houses. Ingenuity information sessions typically take place in late November and early December. Ask lots of questions and voice your concerns. Narrow your list*

of options to the schools that are the best fit for your child. Find out what you need to do to apply and when applications are due.

APPLICATIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Teamwork is a vital ingredient in the Ingenuity Classroom!

Always have a back-up plan: APPLY TO MORE THAN ONE PROGRAM! Give yourself plenty of time to fill out applications and gather the required information and recommendations. Make a list of the places you are applying to and then write the application deadline next to each entry. Better yet, put it on your calendar to limit your chances of missing it. Read through applications carefully. Most applications will

outline what is required for admissions. The Ingenuity Project, in addition to its paper application, requires prior test scores, report cards for 4th grade and the first semester of 5th grade, teacher recommendations, and a principal or guidance counselor recommendation. Applicants to the Ingenuity Project's 6th grade classes must also write two short essays and provide a statement from a parent about why this child should be in the program.

This is a lot of information to keep track of, so again, the more time you allow, the better. You'll want to ask for teacher recommendations as early as possible and give schools plenty of time to send test scores and report cards.

Be organized! Missing information from an application can hinder your child's chances of being admitted to a program. While some programs will inform you that there is something missing from your child's application, others will not. It is your responsibility to make sure that the completed applications are submitted on time. When in doubt, get confirmation that your application materials have been received. Find out if there is anything else you need to do.

Action Point: Give yourself plenty of time to get applications completed and submitted in a timely fashion. Remember, this is your responsibility so read through the application carefully.

The Application is In - What's Next?

The application review process is lengthy. Most schools and programs will tell you when you can expect a decision, but bear in mind that a response may not always come when it is expected. There are *always* more applicants than available spaces. Be patient. There are a lot of applications to process.

The Ingenuity Project reviews applications and those who meet the admissions requirements are invited to take an admissions test sometime in February. Children with scores in the 80th percentile or higher are considered "eligible to enroll" and will be ranked, with other applicants, by their qualifications (grades, test scores, recommendations, etc.). Often-

times, students with excellent qualifications are placed on a wait-list because there are simply more students ranked above them and not enough spots available. Wait-lists expire at the beginning of each school year, but you can always reapply the following year. Note: if your child is placed on a wait-list for a particular program or school, do not assume that he/she will eventually get a spot. Make other plans so that you don't end up without options. Most schools are filled by August, so you ABSOLUTELY DO NOT WANT TO wait around for a last-minute decision that may never arrive. Once a decision has been made, you will receive notification. Those who are diligent

during the admissions process typically have enough choices. Even if you have followed the recommended steps, you may find yourself without any options. Your remaining choice will be your child's zone middle school.

Wherever your child attends 6th grade, do everything you can to make it a positive experience. Get involved at the school. Find out if they have any sorts of special academic programs. Make sure your son or daughter participates in some form of extracurricular activity. Communicate with and support his/her teachers. These are things that will improve the quality of your child's education.

TIMELINE



4th Grade-Fall of 5th Grade: Start doing your research on middle school/grade programs.

October /November of 5th Grade:

- Speak to your child's principal or 5th grade teacher about your child's standing and eligibility for citywide programs.
- Visit school and program open houses.
- Pick up applications from your elementary school or call respective offices.
- Find out when applications are due.

December of 5th grade:

- Submit applications and *always* confirm receipt!

January/February of 5th Grade:

- If you have applied to Ingenuity and you meet the admissions requirements, you will receive an invitation to test.

April of 5th Grade:

- Admissions decisions are made and you will receive notification via mail.

May/June of 5th grade:

- Follow up with program staff to find out if there is anything else you need to do. For example, the Ingenuity project has a summer program for all rising 6th graders.
- Keep an eye out for summer reading and supply lists for the coming year (Schools send these over the summer).

August:

- You made it! Now that all the hard work has paid off, be sure to get involved at your child's new school. Communicate with teachers and enforce good study habits at home (see sidebar on page 4 for tips).

PARENT TIPS

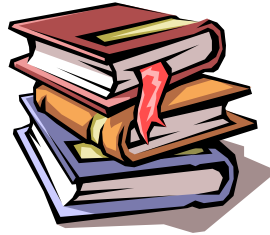
- Set aside a specific time for reading, studying and doing homework.
- Provide a neat, distraction free study area for your child.
- Help your child keep an organized book bag.
- Assist your child in keeping an up-to date record of grades:
 - Monitor grades.
 - Discuss progress.
 - Encourage child to redo assignments that received low grades.
- Encourage your child to create note cards for vocabulary words or key terms. Go over them together.
- Talk with your child's teacher! Ask questions, express concerns, and offer positive feedback.
- When no homework has been assigned, use that time for review.
- Check your child's planner each night.
- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and has breakfast every morning.
- Provide reading materials for your child. Take him/her to the library to pick out books.
- Discuss TV programs that you watch together.

TUTORING SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

If you are concerned about low test scores there are free or low-cost tutoring services available: Morgan State University offers reading and math tutors through their Office of Community Service at 443-885-4328.

Towson University sponsors a Reading Clinic, which can be reached at 410-704-2558. Since citywide schools look at report cards in making their decisions, it is important that skills be sharp and grades high.

RESOURCES & CONTACTS



Ingenuity Middle Grades Admissions

The Ingenuity Project®:
 P: 410.662.8665
 Email: info@ingenuityproject.org

Schools: Roland Park, Mount Royal, and Hamilton (2008-2009)
 Timeline: apply late fall through December; testing in Feb; decisions made by April 1

Spaces: 150

How to get applications: Visit the website at www.ingenuityproject.org. Pick up an application from your local Baltimore City Public Elementary School.

Advanced Academic

Managed by Office of Student Placement (410-396-8600)

Schools: Roland Park, Francis Scott Key (2006-2007)

How to get applications: Call OSP at 410-396-8600; pick up from Public Elementary School; print from website (<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org>)

Important Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Child's Teacher

The questions below (excerpted from Parenting for High Potential, June 2004) are a great starting point in preparing for the 6th grade admissions process.

General:

- What do you see as my child's greatest strengths?
- Where does my child need to improve?
- What do you see as my child's favorite interests?
- What have you found to be the most successful way to encourage those interests?

Thinking (Cognition)

- How quickly does my child grasp new concepts?
- To what extent does my child make connections and see relationships between things and/or ideas?

Responsibility (Commitment)

- How well does my child follow through with tasks?
- To what extent does my child take responsibility for his/her actions?
- How does my child respond to assignments?
- How effectively does my child work independently?

Breaking Work into Parts (Task Analysis):

- Is my child organized?
- How effective are his or her time-management skills?
- How can I help at home?
- How does my child perform with a multi-step problem?

Creative Ability (Imagination)

- In what areas do you see my child as creative?
- What do you do to encourage and develop creativity?
- What do you suggest that I can do at home?

Appreciation of Beauty (Aesthetics)

- How does my child respond when works of fine art, music, dance, or other forms of beauty are introduced?

Interactions with Others (Social Ability)

- Tell me about my child's peer relationships.
- What kind of a friend is my child?
- How does my child show compassion toward others?
- How do you foster cooperation, collaboration and compassion in your classroom?
- What do you suggest that I can do at home to encourage these behaviors?



It never hurts to ask for help!