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## The Parents' Perspective:

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### Former Key School Parents Speak about 3 DC Middle Schools

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#### Alice Deal Middle School

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*Interview with Melissa Mehring*

1. **Transition** - *How has your child's transition to middle school gone? What has surprised you?*

- I wasn't surprised because I did a lot of research like you're doing now.
- I think the transition's gone well – **that Key prepares students for middle school.**

2. **Strengths** - *What do you feel are some of the strengths of Deal? What have you liked so far? What do you think distinguishes this school from others?*

- **Teacher and principal enthusiasm** - The energy and excitement of the teachers and the principal.
- **Open communication** – Everything's online – homework, weekly e-newsletter from the principal. You even see the memos she sends to the staff.
- **Involved, organized teachers and staff** – They know what's going on. You don't hear about things after the fact or 5 minutes in advance.

3. **Weaknesses** - *What are some of the weaknesses? What have you not liked?*

- There's one teacher not crazy about
- **No school bus** – kids meet and take a public bus

4. **Ideal student profile** - *What kind of parent/child is Deal right for?*

- **They teach in teams – they have three teams for each grade.** You change classes and you have your classes with those 100 kids.
- **Kids who want to study language** - they require language all three years.

5. **Same decision again?** - *Would you make the same decision for your child if you could go back a year? Why or why not?*

- Yes

6. **Advice for parents** - *What else do you want Key School parents to know about Deal?*

- **You have to go and look at the schools** – visit the schools, talk to the principals, sit in on the classes
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## Hardy Middle School

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*Interview with Abbie Littlejohn*

1. **Transition** - *How has your child's transition to middle school gone? What has surprised you?*

- My eldest daughter is now a junior in high school. She went to Hardy for three years. That was when 20 kids from Key would go to Hardy. **She had a great experience. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade year there was incredible.** In 8<sup>th</sup> grade they started construction so they bused them 1.5 hours to Galludet University
- My youngest, Pieter, is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Hardy. We didn't send him to Latin because it was more of a protected environment. **Hardy requires him to be organized. Sixth grade was a surprise for him in some ways. If you leave your paper in your locker, you don't get credit for it.** It forces you to be organized.

2. **Strengths & distinguishing characteristics** - *What do you feel are some of the strengths of Hardy? What have you liked so far? What distinguishes this school from others?*

- **Forces you to be organized and responsible** - your classes change so you have to figure out what you need to bring with you, for instance. Hardy requires more self-reliance. It's more like the old junior high experience and not quite as protected.
- **They have a phenomenal music program.** Your 6<sup>th</sup> grade year you have to play a new instrument. You're in at least one band and possibly more than one. My daughter is a real musician thanks to this program.

3. **Weaknesses** - *What are some of the weaknesses? What have you not liked?*

- **Limited sense of community** - Hardy doesn't do a good of a job building community.
- **Hardy feels more like an urban school** – larger, disciplined, structured. For some parents this is a strength; for others, a weakness.

4. **Ideal student profile** - *What kind of parent/child is Latin right for? What about Hardy?*

- **Hardy is right for kids who need to become more responsible and organized** – kids who need to learn how to take responsibility for themselves. Hardy is in between – 350

5. **Same decision again?** - *Would you make the same decision for your child if you could go back a year? Why or why not?*

- Yes, for all the reasons I've said.

6. **Advice for parents** - *What else do you want Key School parents to know about Hardy?*

- Only a handful of Key school kids went to Hardy with Peter
- **Hardy is more of an urban school. If you can succeed here, you can succeed in the real world.**

## Latin Middle School

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*Interview with Abby Littlejohn*

1. **Transition** - *How has your child's transition to middle school gone? What has surprised you?*

- Elizabeth, my middle daughter went to Latin because we didn't want her bused throughout middle school.
- **She worked 3 hours a night on homework but got an incredible education.**

2. **Strengths & distinguishing characteristics** - *What do you feel are some of the strengths of Latin? What have you liked so far? What distinguishes this school from others?*

- **The relationships the teachers have with each other and the kids.** It's very collegial. It's a real nice atmosphere. The kids like and respect their teachers.
- **Teacher involvement** - They're involved in the school beyond teaching.
- **School pride** - There's a lot of pride in Latin .
- **Sense of community** - There's a strong sense of community.

3. **Weaknesses** - *What are some of the weaknesses? What have you not liked?*

- **Breadth of activities and electives** - It's a smaller school so they don't have as many different activities or choices for electives or extra curricular activities

4. **Ideal student profile** - *What kind of parent/child is Latin right for?*

- **Latin is more like an elementary school** - so it's an easier transition from elementary school.
- **Latin is the smaller than Hardy and much smaller than Deal.**
- **It is more of a protected environment than Deal or Hardy.**

5. **Same decision again?** - *Would you make the same decision for your child if you could go back a year? Why or why not?*

- Yes, for all the reasons I've said.