



Understanding

At a Glance

— THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF —
**South Orange
& Maplewood**[™]

"MANY VOICES, TWO TOWNS, ONE DISTRICT"



WELCOME!

We're so glad you're considering a move to South Orange and Maplewood – two towns, but one wonderful community and school district. This information sheet will help you to learn a little bit about our school district, and to understand how school assignments are made here in SOMSD.

Our school district is committed to providing all our students with access to high-quality education, enriched learning experiences, and a strong sense of belonging within a diverse community. As part of this commitment, we launched the **Intentional Integration Initiative (III)** in 2020 to reduce racial and socioeconomic segregation in our schools, a method that is now providing the community with stable school integration.

What the III means for potential residents

For families considering moving to South Orange or Maplewood, it is essential to understand that *school assignments* in SOMSD are based on the **Intentional Integration Initiative** rather than by neighborhood. This reflects the community's values of prioritizing equity and diversity throughout our two towns.

Although it is possible for students to attend the elementary school closest to their home, this is not guaranteed. Factors considered for placement include proximity, parental education level, parental income, and sibling preference. The impact of the III on racial demographics is monitored, although race is not a determinant for placement. Students with disabilities are placed according to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

All children receive the same rigorous academic opportunities and extracurricular programs at our preschools, six elementary schools, two middle schools, and Columbia High School.

SOMSD Fast Facts

- Over 7,000 students across 10 schools
- 360 free preschool places and growing
- Birthplace of Ultimate Frisbee
- One of the top 100 communities in the US for music education
- The highest number of Nationally Board Certified teachers in any district in NJ

Visit somsdk12.org for more information, or scan the QR code to go directly to our registration page



somsdk12.org/
registration

School Placement at SOMSD

PRESCHOOL

While SOMSD is working toward universal Pre-K, we've already expanded access by partnering with private preschools to offer many more free preschool seats across our community.

All locations teach using the "Tools of the Mind" strategies available in our Early Childhood Education curriculum. somsdk12.org/district/preschool

ELEMENTARY

Children may be assigned to any of our six excellent elementary schools, where students can explore, imagine, and pursue their passions. This means fostering a sense of belonging, encouraging active learning, and recognizing individual talents and contributions.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

The majority of our middle schoolers attend their closest school. Both **Maplewood Middle School** and **South Orange Middle School** emphasize academic excellence, cultural competency, and social equity. They engage students with a stimulating educational experience, recognizing the value of diversity as a strength and the importance of high expectations.

HIGH SCHOOL

All students attend Columbia, New Jersey's first high school. Known for its rich history and notable alumni – including **Lauryn Hill, Zach Braff, Ibtihaj Muhammad, Bisa Butler, and Marques Brownlee**, to name a few – Columbia offers students a rigorous and expansive academic program, alongside outstanding arts, athletics, and extracurricular opportunities. Students are inspired to discover their talents, think critically, and embrace the responsibilities of global citizenship. columbia.somsdk12.org