

Finding the Right Pre-K Program for Your Child

Sending a child to preschool can be a big decision for parents, especially if they are sending a child for the first time. Finding a great preschool can be an overwhelming process, but here are a few things to look for:

Teacher-Student Relationship: Interaction and close supervision are important at this age. Teachers should be busy and fully engaged with the children, guiding fun and educational activities. A good teacher talks with children, makes them feel welcome, and fosters their self-confidence. Talk with the teacher about a typical day, and ways in which he or she will keep you informed about your child's progress.

Qualified, Caring Staff: Pre-K staff should have teachers that have a background in early childhood development as well as CPR and other emergency training. The program should have a staff large enough to give your child the attention and care he or she needs.

Discipline Strategies: Ask the teacher his or her philosophy of discipline. Do you agree with the discipline strategy? It is important to discuss any questions or concerns with the teacher ahead of time so you understand the expectations for your child.

Curriculum: Parents have different ideas about how their child should be taught. Some parents look for programs with more play and social interaction and others look for a more formal education. It is important to evaluate the curriculum and consider how that falls in line with your philosophy. The best preschools have daily schedules that include plenty of time for physical activity, quiet time or story time, group programs, socializing, crafts, individual activities, and free time.

Activities: Ask about the activities the children will be involved in. Find out if there will be activities such as singing, story time, or physical activity. Will there be other activities such as swimming or gardening? Are there field trips or other community activities?

Physical Environment: Is the classroom colorful and inviting? Are there age-appropriate toys and areas for pretend play? Is the classroom clean? Look for an atmosphere that suggests learning and fun. Toys should be age-appropriate and stimulate creative, imaginative play.

"At the open house, we were struck by the colorful, kid-friendly environment and the enthusiasm the teachers showed. That first night we had a feeling our son would have a great year...and we were not disappointed!" - Steph & John K.

Happy Parents/Children: How do parents of previous pre-k graduates feel about the school? Testimonials from other families are a great way to find out first-hand information about the program plus they provide reassurance of your choice.

Your Gut Instinct: Ultimately you should trust your own instincts. How did you feel about being in the classroom yourself? While visiting the school, be sure to ask questions and take notes about what you see and how you feel so that you can choose a program that works best for you and your child.

"Our child has learned things beyond our expectations. It takes a very special person to have the patience and caring to introduce school, learning, and every day values to our young children. The Arena Club has these special people. What more could you ask for?" - Dana L.

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