



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

By: Stacey Hinman

HOW TO SELECT THE BEST CHILD-CARE OPTION:

TALK TO almost any parent who has had to select child care—one of the most important decisions a parent ever has to make—and they're likely to tell you it was an agonizing decision. With so many options, it can be a daunting task that parents do not know how to begin. Knowing where to look, and understanding the right questions to ask, will make the task of seeking safe, high-quality educational care for your child much easier.

Know your options. Ask family, friends, and your pediatrician to recommend local high-quality programs. Visit the different websites to learn more about each program. Once you've developed a short list of top choices, call each, and if you like what you hear over the phone, schedule a tour.

Your first impressions are extremely important. Many parents say they know immediately when a school has the "right" feel. They are responding to many factors, such as how they and their child are greeted, how the school smells, and how their questions are answered. If anything bothers you during your first visit, it can continue to be a source of doubt.

Getting to personally know the people at the school is critical—will these individuals partner with you as a parent and sincerely want the best for your child? Asking the right questions about center policies, educational philosophies and teacher qualifications will help you determine if a school is going to be a good fit for your family.

1. CENTER POLICIES: What are the center's or school's policies related to safety and parent communications? Does the center meet all of your state's licensing requirements? What would happen if your child becomes sick? What are the payment options?

2. EDUCATIONAL GOALS: What educational philosophies and practices does the school use to guide instruction, learning methods, and selection of materials? Does the philosophy fit with the values you have for your child? Is the curriculum research-based? Does the curriculum reflect what is known about child development and preparing for the transition into elementary school? What accreditation has the child care center or preschool achieved?

3. TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS: What are the training requirements for teachers? Is there ongoing professional development for teachers? Are teachers certified in first aid and CPR?

4. WHEN VISITING THE SCHOOL: Observe the children around you. What is the atmosphere of the classroom? Are the children engaged in organized activities and interacting with teachers and other students? Do the children look happy? Are the teachers responding to the children and talking with them? Ask to see the daily schedule for the class that your child would be in, and note if this schedule is posted outside or inside of the classroom.

The care and education that children receive early in life is crucial to their development and serves as a foundation for their future success. There are many different child care and preschool options, so keep searching until you find the one that meets your requirements and feels right for your family. 🌸



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