

Choosing the Right Childcare Program: A Checklist

Before You Go:

Ask the school, or look on the school's website for a copy of the program's learning goals, discipline policy, and other information.

1. Do the program's stated goals match my own goals for my child?
2. Do the goals address all areas of my child's development: social play and control of emotions; language skills; familiarity with letters and numbers; science, art, and physical development?
3. Am I comfortable with the discipline policy?

For Your Visit:

It is vital that you schedule a meeting with the teacher(s) that may be working with your child as well as the Program Director as they are key members to your child's educational team.

1. Does the program have a state license, or if not, is it exempt from state licensing because it meets the school district's standards instead?
2. If the state has a quality rating system, does this program have a top ranking?
3. Is the program accredited by a national, regional, or state accreditation entity?
4. Does the lead teacher have a bachelor's degree?
5. Does he/she have certification in early childhood education?
6. Does the classroom aide have specialized training in early childhood development?
7. What is the average length of time staff have worked there?
8. How many hours of in-service training are they provided each year?
9. What is the teacher-to-children ratio?
10. Does the facility have separate learning centers (reading, art, dramatic play, writing, blocks, etc.) with age-appropriate equipment and materials to encourage learning?
11. Do the lesson plans consider the various learning styles, cultures, disabilities, and languages of the children and their families?
12. Does the curriculum provide opportunities for the children to explore topics in detail and in a variety of different ways?
13. Does the class follow a daily routine that offers a variety of activities throughout the day? (i.e. art, make-believe play, outside play, reading, and science activities)
14. Do children have outdoor unstructured playtime every day, except when the weather is extreme?
15. Do teachers have access to trained professionals such as a social worker, mental health consultant, and/or behavior specialist to help children who have challenging behaviors or attention problems?
16. What kind of accommodations can the school provide for your child? (bathrooms, desks, play areas, lunchrooms etc.)
17. Are parents welcome to drop in without making an appointment?