

Ed Extras: Pre-K

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Choosing a Preschool

Choosing a preschool for your child can be a tough decision! Friends and neighbors can be a good source of information, but it's important to do your own research too. Every child is different, and what works for one may not work for another. This is particularly true if you have a preschooler with special learning or behavior needs. The following three considerations can help you get a head start on finding the right setting for your preschooler.

Who teaches the children?

Quality preschools hire teachers with credentials. Well trained preschool teacher have taken classes in early childhood education which includes an understanding of how to nurture important foundational reading readiness skills. Besides formal training, a good preschool teacher displays a passion for working with young children. He or she forms close relationships with the students and families, shares their love and interest about books and learning, and manages the students and classroom in a caring way.

How do the children spend their time?

A good preschool classroom is a busy place! Students interact with lots of different kinds of materials, including building blocks and other construction materials, props for dramatic play, picture books, paints and other art materials, matching games, puzzles, and more. The daily routine and schedule should include whole-group time as well as other time during which kids can choose what they'd like to work on, and are able to work alone or in small groups.

How does the classroom look?

A preschool classroom should engage the students, spark their imaginations and make students curious about learning. The walls should display student art work and writing that is creative and interesting. Tabletops should include things that enrich what is being taught at that time. For example, if you visit the classroom during the spring, you might see a bird's nest, flowers, butterfly nets, and more. These real life objects in the classroom help teachers teach vocabulary and concepts more easily.

Some of the answers to these questions can be found by calling the school, but to really get a sense of it, you should schedule a visit and spend some time observing the teacher and the classroom. Preschool is an investment in your child's future, so take the time to find just the right one.

**For more information, please visit the Reading Rockets Preschool section:
www.ReadingRockets.org/atoz/preschool_child_care**

