

CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING a QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS for CHILDREN AGES THREE to SIX YEARS

Preschool is a time of joy, excitement and discovery. It's a time where children learn through play and hands on experience. According to the National School Readiness Initiative the first five years of a child's life are critical to their lifelong development. Early experiences influence brain development and establish the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills and behavioral and emotional health.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	CURRICULUM & PROGRAM	SCHOOL READINESS
<input type="checkbox"/> Are children engaged in interesting activities and are they happy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the center use an internationally known, quality curriculum as its foundation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the program support the five domains of school readiness:
<input type="checkbox"/> Does the room have separate Learning Centers, including a block and construction area, props for pretend play, art supplies, books, table toys, puzzles, science & writing areas & computers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the program developmentally appropriate? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it take into account the individual ages and abilities of children?	<input type="checkbox"/> LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT Involves connection of letters to sounds, print awareness, story-telling sequences, early writing, vocabulary building, speaking & listening skills?
<input type="checkbox"/> Is staff involved with children at eye level? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the scheduled unhurried? Does it allow for active and quiet times? <input type="checkbox"/> Are learning areas labeled?	<input type="checkbox"/> Do HighScope early learning standards align with the Colorado Department of Education goals? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the center nationally accredited or star rated?	<input type="checkbox"/> COGNITION and GENERAL KNOWLEDGE Thinking, problem solving, early math knowledge, abstract thought, imagination, understanding of how the world works?
<input type="checkbox"/> Are furniture, equipment and toys age appropriate and in good condition? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the room cheerful without being overwhelming? <input type="checkbox"/> Are positive discipline methods used?	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the program emphasize developing the whole child and strengthening skills through active learning? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there written & posted lesson plans?	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL MATURITY Ability to cooperate and interact with others, function in a group, ability to control ones behavior, understand & interpret the feelings of others?
<input type="checkbox"/> Are toys and materials plentiful and changed often so children are not bored?	<input type="checkbox"/> Do "Key Developmental Indicators" guide your program? Please tell me about them.	<input type="checkbox"/> APROACHES to LEARNING Ability to instinctually apply skills & knowledge, curiosity & persistence?
<input type="checkbox"/> When children go outdoors do teachers encourage unstructured play?	<input type="checkbox"/> How do you measure the quality of your program? How do you assess my child's development?	<input type="checkbox"/> PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT Well-being, good health habits, strong eye-hand coordination & gross motor skills?

PARENTS as PARTNERS

- Does the center have opportunities for parent involvement?
- Is there a Parent Advisory Committee?
- Am I welcome to visit at any time without an appointment?
- How do teachers keep us regularly informed of our child's activities?
- How will you help me with my child's initial adjustment to your center?
- How will we work together when my child is transitioning to the next class?
- Are there Parent-Teacher conferences?
- May I have input on staff hiring?
- Are there parent events scheduled periodically?
- What types of events are offered?
- Are teachers available to talk with me at the start and end of the day?
- Is the director accessible to parents?
- What resources are available to help me with parenting concerns?
- Are parents' wishes respected when it comes to the needs of their child?
- Are there parents who would be willing to talk with us about their experience at the center?
- Will my concerns be handled promptly?

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- Does staff have the necessary early childhood training and certifications?
- Do teachers receive an orientation before they work in a classroom?
- Does staff have in-service training opportunities?
- Is financial assistance available to staff to continue their education?
- Does staff attend professional state and national early childhood conferences?
- Are teachers considered for promotion before new teachers are hired?
- How do you recruit, screen and interview prospective staff members?
- Does staff genuinely enjoy the children?
- Do teachers use pleasant voices and positive language with children?
- Are there recognition/awards events?
- Do you survey staff regularly on their satisfaction?
- For how long has staff worked here?
- Do teachers respect and listen to the children?
- Will my child have a consistent group of teachers?
- In addition to the center director, is there a program/curriculum director to train and support teachers?
- Are parents valued and respected?

HEALTH and SAFETY

- Does the center have a secure entrance? Are I.D.'s checked?
- Is staff thoroughly trained in infection control and Universal Precautions?
- Are teachers certified in CPR and First Aid?
- What is the emergency evacuation procedure?
- How often is it practiced?
- Are there fire and tornado drills?
- What is the policy on the administration of medications?
- What is the policy for handling accidents?
- What is the illness policy?
- How often does the center need a health report from our practitioner?
- How are allergies handled?
- What are the teacher to child ratios?
- What meals or snacks are served?
- Is there a menu?
- Are emergency numbers posted?
- Are smoke detectors and exit signs working and maintained?

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