

How to Choose a High Quality Preschool

Your two-year old is blowing you away with his physical and intellectual growth. In another year- one that seems to be coming faster than the speed of light - you may send him to preschool. Many studies, indicate that high quality early learning programs can give youngsters a BIG academic and social boost ...one that they are more ready for than you might be. Their little sponges known as brains develop and absorb information even better than a Bounty paper towel.

But how do you choose an appropriate preschool?

Several early education experts weighed in, all with similar criteria. They are Barbara Wolf, Associate Vice President Family Learning and Research for The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Cathy Southerland, The Children's Museum Preschool manager and Anna Hosey, preschool teacher.

- Kids should be up and around exploring, NOT sitting down doing worksheets
- The environment should be stimulating providing a sense of wonder
- Children should guide the direction of learning through their questions and interest – teachers should support the children
- Classrooms should be very hands-on with centers that promote learning through the senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling
- Play should be purposeful and guided around literacy – reading, storytelling, vocabulary
- The classroom should be noisy

The last point may have you scratching your head... a noisy classroom? "Learning is noisy because they are talking. They are communicating" says preschool manager, Cathy Southerland, "and that is as it should be." The specialists agree that a preschool does not need to be private to be high quality, nor should all private preschools be considered high quality. It is up to parents to do their homework. Also noteworthy, say the experts, some child care centers offer quality education opportunities but most do not have early education teachers who specialize in early education with specific college training to support that.

And finally, don't forget to find out if your preschool choice is accredited by the governing body over preschools, the National Association for the Education of Young Children. <http://www.naeyc.org/>