



How to Select the Best Child Care Option: A Guide for Parents

Content Provided by Primrose School of Algonquin,

www.PrimroseAlgonquin.com

Please feel free to use tips with appropriate attribution of source.

Parents will agree – selecting the right child care can be an agonizing decision. Research tells us that children's brains are rapidly developing between infancy and age five. A child's healthy development depends on positive, engaging experiences during these early years of life. Choosing the right care for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make for your child.

The first step is to know your options. Ask family, friends, coworkers and your pediatrician to recommend local high-quality programs. Visit each school's Web site to learn more about their programs. Once you've developed a short list of top choices, call with your questions. 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 intangible 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 schools is critical – will these individuals partner with you as a parent? Do you feel they sincerely want what's best for your child?

Once you have established your gut feeling, take the time to ask the right questions about center policies, educational philosophies and teacher qualifications. Here are five topics to help you determine if a school is going to be a good fit for your family.

1. **Educational goals and philosophy:** 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?
2. **Accreditation:** What accreditation has the child care center or preschool achieved? What quality standards are in place and how are they measured? Accreditation means a school is held accountable by an outside agency to adhere to research-based quality standards. The goal of the agency should be to ensure that their published standards are met and to drive continuous school improvement.
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. **Learning environment:** When visiting the school or center, 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 not at 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.
5. **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?

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. To learn more about the Primrose School of Algonquin, visit www.PrimroseAlgonquin.com.