

What to look for in a School



Kids Health by Nemours

[http://kidshealth.org/
Preschools](http://kidshealth.org/Preschools)

Preschools provide an educational program for young children before starting kindergarten or elementary school. The NAEYC lists these 10 signs of a great preschool:

- Children spend most of their time playing and working with materials or with other children.
- Children have access to various activities throughout the day.
- Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day.
- The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork and projects.
- Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences.
- Children work on projects and have long periods of time to play and explore.
- Worksheets are used rarely, if at all.
- Children have an opportunity to play outside in a safe play area every day.
- Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups.
- Curricula are adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help.
- Children and their parents look forward to school.



Other helpful links:
[U.S. Office of Education](#)
[Great Schools](#)

Ask the Right Questions, Find the Right School

<http://www.familyeducation.com/home/>
by Betsy Van Dorn

If you're investigating a new school for your child, here are some issues you might want to explore:

Attitude

- Do teachers and other staff seem welcoming? If you're made to feel as if you're disrupting their precious time, they've got an attitude problem.
- Does the principal communicate regularly with families? These days, even the busiest principals find time to send home a weekly news bulletin.
- Have any teachers gotten individual classroom grants? They themselves have to initiate the effort, so it's a good way to evaluate commitment and enthusiasm.
- Does the school seek out parents to serve on teacher-selection committees? Parent councils?
- Can you get written information that compares the school with others in the district?

Academics

- Are the principal and teachers willing to discuss the curriculum? Relate it to state guidelines?
- Do teachers use outside literature in addition to basic texts?
- Are teachers computer literate? In what ways is technology integrated into class work?
- Have there been recent cutbacks in funding? If so, what kinds of choices have been made?
- How is progress measured? Does the school rely solely on test scores? What about other ways of evaluating kids, such as journals, portfolios of completed work and artistic or musical accomplishments? Test scores can tell only so much about children's abilities. Where else do teachers get feedback to help them evaluate individual strengths and weaknesses?

Amenities

- When is the library open and who staffs it? Are parents encouraged to volunteer there?
- Are computers available to all students? Are they wired for the internet?
- What about the arts? Is there a school orchestra or band? Do local musicians and artists come in for demonstrations or hands-on teaching?
- What kinds of physical activities are emphasized? Is outdoor space available? A gym? Fancy facilities don't always guarantee a good physical education program.
- What provisions are there for after-school programs?
- Who supervises them and what's the routine.