

## CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING A QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM 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.

<b>THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>CURRICULUM &amp; PROGRAM</b>	<b>SCHOOL READINESS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are the children engaged in interesting activities and are they happy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is the program developmentally appropriate?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the program support the five domains of school readiness:</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the room have separate learning centers, including a block and construction area, props for pretend play, art supplies, books, table toys, puzzles, science, and writing areas and computers?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does it take into account the individual ages and abilities of children?</li> <li>○ Is the center nationally accredited or Keystone stars rated?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:</b> Involves connection of letters to sounds, print awareness, story-telling sequences, early writing, vocabulary building, speaking and listening skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is staff involved with children at eye level?</li> <li>○ Are learning areas labeled?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the program emphasize developing the whole child and strengthening skills through active learning?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>COGNITION and GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:</b> Thinking, problem solving, early math knowledge, abstract thought, imagination, understanding of how the world works.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are furniture, equipment and toys age appropriate and in good condition?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there written and posted lesson plans?</li> <li>○ How do you measure the quality of your program? How do you assess my child's development?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL MATURITY:</b> Ability to cooperate and interact with others, function in a group, ability to control ones behavior, understand and interpret the feelings of others.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When children go outdoors do teachers encourage unstructured play?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the center use the PA Early Learning Standards?</li> <li>○ What is the discipline policy?</li> <li>○ Does the class take field trips?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>APPROACHES to LEARNING:</b> Ability to instinctually apply skills and knowledge, curiosity and persistence.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:</b> Well-being, good health habits, strong eye-hand coordination and gross motor skills.</li> </ul>



<b>PARENTS AS PARTNERS</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL STAFF</b>	<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the center have opportunities for parent involvement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does staff have the necessary early childhood training and certifications?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the center have a secure entrance? Are I.D.'s checked?</li> <li>○ Are teachers certified in CPR and First Aid?</li> <li>○ What is the emergency evacuation procedure?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Am I welcome to visit at any time without an appointment?</li> <li>○ How do teachers keep us regularly informed of our child's activities?</li> <li>○ How will you help me with my child's initial adjustments to your center?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do teachers receive an orientation before they work in a classroom?</li> <li>○ Does staff have in-service training opportunities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How often is it practiced?</li> <li>○ Are there fire drills?</li> <li>○ What is the policy on the administration of medications?</li> <li>○ What is the policy for handling accidents?</li> <li>○ What is the illness policy?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How will we work together when my child is transitioning to the next class?</li> <li>○ Are there Parent-Teacher conferences?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do teachers use pleasant voices and positive language with children?</li> <li>○ How do the teachers handle problems and conflicts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How often does the center need a health report from our practitioner?</li> <li>○ How are allergies handled?</li> <li>○ What are the teacher to child ratios?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are teachers available to talk with me at the start and end of the day?</li> <li>○ Is the director accessible to parents?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For how long has staff worked here?</li> <li>○ Will my child have a consistent group of teachers?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What meals or snacks are served?</li> <li>○ Is there a menu?</li> <li>○ Are emergency numbers posted?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What resources are available to help me with parenting concerns?</li> <li>○ Are parents' wishes respected when it comes to the needs of their child?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the lead teacher have a bachelor's degree?</li> <li>○ How many hours of in-service training are they provided each year?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are smoke detectors and exit signs working and maintained?</li> </ul>

**NOTES**