

QUICK REFERENCE

Quality Child Care Checklist

Choosing the right care for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make. Research tells us that children’s brains are rapidly developing between infancy and age 5. A child’s healthy development depends on positive, engaging experiences during these early years of life. It is important to explore your options.

1. Ask family, friends, coworkers and your pediatrician to recommend local high-quality providers.
2. Visit each provider’s website to learn more about their approach.
3. 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.

TOPIC	THINGS TO CONSIDER	SCHOOL #1	SCHOOL #2	SCHOOL #3
School Name				
Basic Info				
Location	How close is it to your home? How close is it to your work?			
Hours	What are drop-off and pick-up times?			
Tuition	How much is the tuition? Are there different fees for different ages? Do fees include breakfast, lunch and/or snacks? Are there discounts for siblings? Are there any extra fees - registration fee, supply fees, late fees? Does tuition cover any enrichment programs (e.g., music, physical fitness, Spanish, etc.)?			
Quality Assurance	Is the school part of a larger regional or national organization? If so, does the organization have a quality assurance program? How often is the school evaluated to ensure quality and consistency?			
Accreditation	Is the school registered? Licensed? Accredited? By whom? For how long?			
Teacher Ratio	What is the teacher/student ratio? <i>Look for low ratios.</i>			
Tour - Scheduled	Scheduling a tour is a MUST!			
Health and Safety				
Security	What are the school’s policies related to safety? Is the front entry always locked and staffed for security? Does the school have an emergency preparedness plan? Are there safe, fenced, litter-free outdoor play areas?			
Health & Nutrition	Is handwashing encouraged? Are toys, books and furniture in good shape? Are medicines and cleaners locked up? Does the school provide nutritious food?			



TOPIC	THINGS TO CONSIDER	SCHOOL #1	SCHOOL #2	SCHOOL #3
School Name				
Curriculum				
Goals/Approach	<p>Does the approach fit with your values?</p> <p>Is the curriculum research-informed?</p> <p>Does the curriculum prepare children for elementary school, academically and socially/emotionally?</p> <p>Is each child's development tracked and shared with parents on a regular basis?</p>			
Social-Emotional Programs	<p>Is there a character development program?</p> <p>Does the school do activities to support the community?</p>			
STEAM	Does the school integrate science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) concepts into daily activities?			
Math	Does the school introduce foundational math concepts in fun, purposeful ways?			
Reading & Writing	Do early literacy activities go beyond teachers reading aloud? How does the school nurture reading, writing, vocabulary and listening comprehension skills?			
Music	<p>Is music integrated into the curriculum for teaching and learning rather than playing in the background?</p> <p>Is music an immersion program that combines school-to-home connections? <i>Early childhood music education has many intellectual and emotional developmental benefits.</i></p>			
Physical Activity	<p>Do the children play and learn outside? <i>Appropriate physical development is key for healthy children.</i></p> <p>Is the playground age-appropriate?</p>			
Technology	Is appropriate technology integrated into the classrooms? Is it used as a tool for creative expression and problem solving rather than just for playing games?			
Language	<p>Does the school offer a foreign language program?</p> <p>Does the school use sign language in infant and toddler classrooms?</p>			
Field Trips	<p>Do the children take field trips?</p> <p>If so, what are the policies?</p>			
Private Pre-K & Kindergarten	<p>Does the school offer a Pre-K program?</p> <p>Does the school offer a Kindergarten program?</p>			

TOPIC	THINGS TO CONSIDER	SCHOOL #1	SCHOOL #2	SCHOOL #3
-------	--------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------

School Name

Learning Environment

Atmosphere	What is the atmosphere of the classroom? Is the school safe, clean and welcoming? Does it have a positive energy?			
Quality of Interactions	Are the children engaged in organized activities and interacting with teachers and other students? Are the teachers responding to the children and talking with them, not at them? <i>Ask to see the daily schedule for the class your child would be in. Note if it is posted outside or inside the classroom.</i>			

People

Overall Feel	Are the children and teachers happy? <i>Trust your gut reaction!</i>			
Teacher Training	What are the training requirements for teachers? Is there ongoing professional development for teachers? Are teachers certified in first aid and CPR?			
Staff Turnover	How long have the staff/teachers been with the school or in early education? How does the school handle staff turnover?			

Parent Communication

Communication Methods	How does the school communicate with parents? Does school communication include:			
	• Parent-teacher conferences			
	• Daily activity reports sent through email/app			
	• Photos of your child's day			
	• Weekly newsletters			
	• Monthly newsletters			
	• Email			
	• Letters to parents			
	• Phone conversations			

Additional Notes

