

# Preschool Checklist & Interview

Use these questions to guide your search for the right preschool. Visits can be as short as 15 minutes and as long as one hour.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preschool: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Basics: A good preschool has clear rules and regulations, and firm policies on operating hours, pickup and drop-off times, and when children are too sick to attend.**

How long has the preschool been in business? \_\_\_\_\_

Are your staff Montessori trained and certified? yes/no

Which accreditation? (AMI/AMS/WMTC/NAMC etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have space for my child? yes/no

Is there a waiting list, and if so, how long is it? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your program hours? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your holiday schedule? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you offer summer programs? \_\_\_\_\_

What days do you close? \_\_\_\_\_

How flexible are you with pickup and drop-off times? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the fees? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a discount for more than one child? yes/no

Is there a late pickup fee? \_\_\_\_\_

When and how are fees paid? \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents should be welcome: These are important questions! Can you drop in unannounced? Spend the day with your child in class? A good Montessori preschool will encourage you to become an active member of the “community”.**

Do you encourage visits from parents? yes/no

Unannounced spot checks? yes/no

May I participate or volunteer at your school? yes/no

May I spend a day with my child in class? yes/no

What do you expect from me as a parent? \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff: Montessori teachers should be trained and certified, with CPR and other emergency training. Teachers should be responsible, enthusiastic, and well prepared, sharing your philosophies on key childrearing issues such as discipline. A preschool with good staff benefits is likely to have less teacher turnover, which means consistent care for your child. Be wary of schools that employ only part-time staff (or a number of teachers who only work half days). Part-time staff is less expensive (no benefits). Look for schools that employ full-time teachers. Is the school for profit or non-profit? Does the owner work full time or part-time? Like any business, a good school requires that the directress/director work full-time.**

What are the staff's credentials and training? \_\_\_\_\_

How much do you pay your staff? \_\_\_\_\_

How many full-time staff? \_\_\_\_\_

How many part-time staff? \_\_\_\_\_

Do your staff receive any benefits? yes/no

Does the school pay for on-going teacher training: yes/no

Does the owner of the school work full-time or part-time: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this school for profit, or non-profit: \_\_\_\_\_

**Size: Look for a preschool with small groups of children and plenty of staff. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends having at least one teacher for every five children between 24 and 36 months and 1:7 or 1:8 for four- and five-year-olds.**

What is your teacher-child ratio? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the maximum number of children in each class? \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities: A good Montessori preschool will have a well-thought-out curriculum with a variety of activities. TV, computers and videos should play little or no part in the day's schedule. Ask to see the Montessori materials and ask how the Montessori method of teaching is put into practice at the school.**

What is your educational philosophy? \_\_\_\_\_

How the Montessori method of teaching is put into practice at you school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you discipline a child? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you comfort a child? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will my child be doing on any given day? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What about extracurricular activities? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What role, if any, does television have at the preschool? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to share with me your lesson plans/curriculum? yes/no

For how many months? \_\_\_\_\_

**Hygiene and Safety: A good preschool is clean and observes basic safety rules. The school should have lots of natural lighting and access to an indoor (gym) and outdoor (park with swings etc) area. Posters and bulletin boards should be changed frequently reflecting the class themes, seasons etc. If you see poorly maintained equipment or the preschool seems dingy and cramped, keep looking.**

Do you offer a gym program? yes/no

How many minutes per day? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a safe enclosed outside play area? yes/no

What is your sick-child policy? \_\_\_\_\_

How often are the toys and materials cleaned and replaced? \_\_\_\_\_

How often is the classroom renewed? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a sign-in and sign-out sheet? yes/no

Are the doors secure and locked? yes/no

**Snacks: Obviously, nutritious meals and snacks are better than junk food. Make sure the preschool menu covers all four-food groups.**

Do you provide snacks? yes/no

If yes, what kind? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to share with me your snack lists? yes/no

For how many months? \_\_\_\_\_

**Web cams: Many schools now have web cams in the classrooms. Parents want to be able to log on and see their child and the classroom activities.**

Do you have a web cam in your classroom: yes/no

Who may view the children in your classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional considerations: Be sure to take a moment and ask yourself the following questions after the visit.**

Do the staff and children seem happy and engaged? yes / no

Additional: \_\_\_\_\_

Are the teachers enthusiastic about their program, eager to share? yes/no

Additional: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the preschool clean and pleasant? yes/no

Additional \_\_\_\_\_

Will you feel at ease knowing your child is in this setting? yes/no

Additional: \_\_\_\_\_

**References: Ask each preschool for a list of references, and call them.**

**Reference list:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_