

# CHOOSING A PRESCHOOL

## A PARENT'S CHECKLIST

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

(Hint: you should be able to check ALL of these of these boxes)

#### Play-based Program

Research indicates children under the age of 6 learn best when allowed to engage in various forms of play. Play is how children learn new concepts, develop problem-solving skills, become social with others, and how they learn how to learn.

##### Dramatic play opportunities

Kitchen set, dolls/babies, dress up clothes, home items

##### Sensory play opportunities

Sand/water table, play doh, loose parts play such as rice, beans

##### Constructive play opportunities

Blocks, lego, magnatiles

##### Creative play opportunities

Art exploration, loose parts art/play, fine motor activities

#### Diversity + Inclusion

Inclusive learning environments benefit all children.

**Preschool programs that are overly focused on letters, numbers, and pre-academics are taking critical time away from pretend play and socialization. Children educated in play-based environments become stronger problem-solvers and flexible thinkers."**

-Tarshis, Hendrix, Palmer, & Winner, 2013

#### Supportive staff-to-student ratio

Up until the age of 5-to-6-years, children are in a process of fine-tuning their play and social skills. As such, situations might not always go smoothly when it comes to sharing or turn-taking. Preschool staffing ratios should give kids ample access to adults, who can help model language, behaviour, and social skills directly during play. Children should also have the opportunity to play and interact with a wide variety of peers, as long as it paired with a supportive staffing ratio.

#### Responsive to my child's individual learning style and needs

Learning is not a one-size-fits-all process; each child will have their own individual learning styles, abilities, and needs that will impact their learning from an early age. Early learning programs should offer diversified learning principles implemented by professionals with adequate knowledge and training to support all learners

#### Staffing, strategies, and programming to support social and emotional learning

It is not developmentally appropriate to expect preschool-aged children to manage their own emotions. As such, strategies such as time outs, isolation, punishments/shaming for outbursts, or any form of behavioural management are neither helpful nor advised. Social-emotional development happens when adults actively participate in co-regulation with children.





# THE 8 QUESTIONS TO ASK

- 1 • Is the majority of class time dedicated to play?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 • Do the staff engage with children in play?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 • What is your staff-to-student ratio?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 • How many students will be in the class when it is full?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 • What is the education level of the staff?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 • What topics/skills does your program cover?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7 • How does your staff meet various learning abilities and needs?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 • Does your program use Gentle Discipline and/or Social-Emotional Learning principles? If not, how do staff manage challenging behaviour?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Child-staff ratios are a key quality indicator in early childhood education and care programs. Better ratios are believed to improve child outcomes by increasing opportunities for individual interactions and educational instruction from staff.

- Perlman et al. 2017

Children participating in inclusive preschool environments, which integrate children with disabilities with same-aged peers, demonstrate higher prosocial behaviours than children who do not. These children show more readiness to help others and sensitivity to the needs others.

- Diamond & Carpentier 2000

Children participating in inclusive preschool environments, which integrate children with disabilities with same-aged peers, demonstrate higher prosocial behaviours than children who do not. These children show more readiness to help others and sensitivity to the needs others.

- Diamond & Carpentier 2000

The more times we assist our kids in regulating emotions when we are with them, the less they will require assistance to self-regulate when they are not with us. You can't tell your child to calm down, you have to show them."

- Dr. Jody Carrington, 2019