



Picking a Preschool

Crazy as it may sound to some, this is the time to start thinking about which preschools to consider for the Fall of 2011!

A number of local schools open registration for their Fall programs in December of the year before your child would start. Registration for Fall 2011 can therefore take place as early as mid-November of 2010, with small programs sometimes closing out quickly. That makes now the perfect time to visit preschools in session as you start to think about what would be the best learning situation for your child.

If you are aware that your child has sensory issues, when you visit a preschool you should:

----be aware of the noise level;

----look at the amount of visual stimulation;

----look at the organization of the classroom. Does it allow for a quiet space? do they have sensory playstations out for children throughout the day?

If your child tends to be very active, when you visit a preschool you should:

----notice how long children are expected to sit and how much they are left to work independently;

----observe how teachers react to children who are active. How do they manage a child who is disorganized or disruptive?

For all children, during your visit look at these factors:

----do the children look happy?

----do the teachers look happy?

----how are the children interactive with each other?

----what is the ratio of teachers to students? of aides to students?

----where do children go for active play, and how often do they do this?

----how open were the administrators and teachers to your questions?

----visit the room your child will be in next year to see if you believe that classroom will work for your child.

----if your child will enter a school where some children your child's current age already go, look at those children. Do they seem to be at the same current developmental level as your child?

----ask yourself at the end of the visit: what stands out about your visit to the school? do you think your child's needs will be met there?

----how comfortable are you with what you observed?

Your instincts about a school, and whether that school will meet the needs of your child, are usually correct. Go with your gut!