

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Choosing the Right Preschool

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A child reaching preschool age can be both an exciting and frightening time for parents. Is she ready? Where will he be most successful? Will she make friends? Will he like his teacher? With so many similar-sounding preschool philosophies available, the decision can also feel overwhelming. Choosing the “right” preschool for your child depends on his/her individual needs, your family’s resources, and the overall goals of preschool education.

Types of Preschool Programs



Waldorf

Designed to facilitate both independence and inclusion, Waldorf schools aim to develop “life-long learners.” Children are encouraged to explore the world on both tactile and intellectual levels. This is often accomplished through integrating the arts into each area of curriculum. Children engage with developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities through song and dance. Waldorf schools recognize technology as an important part of education, but only when developmentally appropriate.

Ideal for children who...

- enjoy hands-on, play-based activities.
- have an interest in the arts.
- learn at their own pace in structured and unstructured settings.



Montessori

Children are in the driver’s seat in a Montessori classroom. Instruction is child centered, and comes in the form of play-based learning. Children learn through trial and error in play, not by being taught or shown by an adult. With this in mind, children learn at their own pace no matter the level at which they are performing. The teacher-student relationship is developed and nurtured in Montessori classrooms, and older students are encouraged to help younger students.

Ideal for children who...

- work well independently and in groups.
- are comfortable playing with older and younger children.
- enjoy hands-on, play-based activities.

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(cont.)



Cooperative

Partnership and conflict resolution are often the focus of this type of preschool setting. Parents play an active role in both the classroom and how the school is run. Parents are encouraged to develop partnerships with teachers as they observe their child learning in the classroom.

Ideal for children who...

- enjoy hands-on, play-based activities.
- work well in groups.
- may be shy and benefit from adult models or encouragement.

Preschools vary in philosophy and structure, and some may be more appropriate for your child than others. Before deciding on a preschool, carefully consider what type of learning environment you prefer for your child. If you find a preschool that looks appealing, also consider whether it will be a good fit for you as a parent. If the school appears to be a good fit for your family and child, schedule a visit. A good way to determine a school's overall philosophy and instructional methods is to spend time observing. This will provide a snapshot of what a day in the life of your child will look like if you determine they are to enroll there. It may be helpful to speak with parents whose children attend a particular preschool to learn more. Lastly, trust your parental instincts. No one knows your child better than you and has better insight into what will help your child be the most successful.



Resources:

- "Comparing Preschool Philosophies: Montessori, Waldorf and More" accessed July 3, 2018 from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/choosing/comparing-preschool-philosophies-montessori-waldorf-and-more/>
- "Choosing a Preschool or Childcare Center" accessed July 3, 2018 from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/choosing/preschool/>
- "Is a Waldorf school right for my child?" accessed July 5, 2018 from <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/waldorf-school/>
- "The Parent Co-op Model: A Pre-School Option, PART ONE" accessed July 5, 2018 from <https://midpeninsula.citymomsmag.com/parenthood/theparent-co-op-model-a-pre-school-option-part-one/>

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