

Identifying High-Quality Pre-Ks



Why High-Quality Pre-K?

Research shows that attending high-quality pre-K helps prepare four-year-old children for success in school and life. These children have stronger math and reading skills in elementary school, are more likely to graduate high school, attend college and develop social and emotional skills. High-quality pre-K programs emphasize positive interactions between children and their teachers, peers and environment. These areas of focus can be broken down into Nashville's Core Four: Language, Literacy and Vocabulary; Social and Emotional Skills; Hands-On Learning and Learning in Steps.

What to look for when visiting a pre-K program:

Language, Literacy and Vocabulary

- Does the teacher speak with a warm tone without using “baby talk”?
- Does the teacher introduce and explain new words to children?
- Does the teacher encourage children to use words to talk about their environment, their feelings and classroom activities?
- Are books available to children to use and does the teacher read to children?

Social and Emotional Skills

- Does the teacher encourage children to keep trying when they don't get something right the first time?
- Are children encouraged to use their words to express their feelings and solve problems?
- Does the teacher create a caring community of learners by helping children learn how to play, work together, solve problems and make friends?
- Are there signs that the teacher includes every child's family, language and culture in the classroom?

Hands-On Learning

- Are the children encouraged to talk and get involved?
- Do children spend a lot of time waiting between activities? Does the teacher use games, songs or chants to encourage learning during that time?
- Does every child get a chance to interact with the teacher?
- When children are learning and playing on their own, are teachers observing and assisting when children need help?
- Do children practice what they are learning with hands-on activities?
- Do the children seem to use materials appropriately and seem to have a respect for the environment in knowing what items belong where?

Learning in Steps

- Does the teacher have a way to capture each child's daily progress toward their goals?
- Do children use skills taught at the beginning of a lesson to help them solve harder problems later in the lesson (*Example: Does the teacher make connections to previous lessons?*)
- Do the materials and activities have ways of providing feedback to children without a teacher's help (*Example: A puzzle gives feedback because a child knows a piece is not correct if it doesn't fit?*)
- Do children have access to an assortment of materials that can be used by children of varying interests and abilities?
- Does the teacher have a well-prepared daily schedule that includes lesson-planning and daily goals?

For more information, visit childcarenashville.com.