Greatstart Early Learning

Making the best decision for your child: a parent checklist

This checklist will help you make an informed decision when visiting Greatstart Early Learning or other preschools and child learning centers. This list covers topics relevant to programs, teachers, facilities and other topics.

Keep in mind that our checklist doesn't cover basic health and safety standards that all licensed programs must meet, because these vary by state. Nor does it cover whether nutritious meals and snacks are provided. Be sure to inquire about these topics during your visits.

About the Learning Process		Center 1	Center 2
Questions to ask:			
Is the program based on age-appropriate development objectives?	☐	☐	☐
Does the curriculum prepare children for Kindergarten based on the state standards for school readiness?	☐	☐	☐
Does the curriculum provide opportunities for children to explore topics in detail, and in multiple ways?	☐	☐	☐
Does the curriculum take into account the various learning styles, cultures, disabilities and languages of the children and their families?	☐	☐	☐
Do activities change regularly so the children have a chance to learn new skills?	☐	☐	☐
Does the class follow a daily routine that offers a variety of activities throughout the day?	☐	☐	☐
Are critical pre-writing and pre-reading skills practiced every day?	☐	☐	☐
Does the program emphasize school readiness skills, such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary building, pre-writing and math?	☐	☐	☐
Do all classrooms provide a record of growth and progress for your child	☐	☐	☐
Things to look for:			
Do you see evidence that the teachers use a variety of methods to teach letters, numbers, shapes and new vocabulary words?	☐	☐	☐
Is an activity and lesson plan posted, and is the teacher following it?	☐	☐	☐
Do the children appear to be happy and engaged in activities?	☐	☐	☐
Is the program based on age-appropriate development objectives? (Including Basic Motor Skills, Senses Development, Self-Help Skills, Listening-Responding	☐	☐	☐

		Center 1	Center 2
and Game Play)			
Do the children seem to be sharing, playing cooperatively and working well with one another?	☐	☐	☐

About the Teachers

Questions to ask:

		Center 1	Center 2
Is an activity and lesson plan posted, and is the teacher following it?	☐	☐	☐
Do the teachers participate in 10 hours or more of in-service training each year?	☐	☐	☐
Does the teacher use a quality curriculum to guide what children are taught?	☐	☐	☐
Do teachers receive program training, support and ongoing training?	☐	☐	☐
Do teachers use educational resources like curriculum guides, lesson plans and child-development resources?	☐	☐	☐

Things to look for:

Are you introduced to teachers on your tour?	☐	☐	☐
Are the teachers warm and caring with the children?	☐	☐	☐
Do teachers have one-on-one conversations with children?	☐	☐	☐
When the children are outside, are the teachers engaged and encouraging the children's play?	☐	☐	☐

About the Facility

Questions to ask:

Do the children have outdoor unstructured playtime every day with access to age-appropriate playground equipment? Are there inside play areas in the case of extreme weather?	☐	☐	☐
Do rooms have separate learning centers (reading, art, dramatic play, writing, etc.) with interesting equipment and materials?	☐	☐	☐

Things to look for:

Is the furniture and playground equipment clean and in good condition?	☐	☐	☐
Are the toys age-appropriate?	☐	☐	☐
Do display areas on walls contain children's artwork and writing and photographs of class projects or activities?	☐	☐	☐
Does each child have enough room indoors and outdoors to move around without interfering with other children's play space?	☐	☐	☐
Is there an abundance of age-appropriate children's literature?	☐	☐	☐

About the Parents

Questions to ask:

Are parents welcome to drop in without making an appointment?	☐	☐	☐
Does the teacher have face-to-face or phone contact with parent(s) regularly?	☐	☐	☐
Does the program hold parent/teacher conferences at least twice a year?	☐	☐	☐

		Center 1	Center 2
Are there suggested involvement activities for parents?	☐	☐	☐
Are there daily and/or weekly progress reports sent to parents? Ask for examples.	☐	☐	☐
Things to look for:			
Do you feel welcome?	☐	☐	☐
Do the program's stated goals match your own goals for your child?	☐	☐	☐