

Is This Program A Good Match for My Child?

Observation Checklist for Community-based Childcare & Preschool Programs

Each child is unique, and each child will respond differently to various types of childcare/preschool settings and programs. This checklist may help you identify characteristics of programs that may be good matches for your child. Be sure to add your child's own unique interests and needs to this list when using it to observe and evaluate childcare and preschool programs.

Physical Environment

Is there a balance between ___indoor and outdoor play? ___quiet and active play? ___small group & large group play?

Is there space to be alone?

Are indoor and outdoor areas and play structures accessible to your child? Are pathways clear?

Are there defined activity centers?

Are toys and materials...

organized and within reach so children can access them independently?

accessible to your child? (In other words, are the toys and materials provided appropriate for your child?)

Are duplicate or sets of similar toys available?

Do you have any safety concerns?

Sensory Environment -- Sound

How much sound is there?

What kinds of sounds?

Are there any sounds that may bother your child?

Are there quiet times for everyone?

Are there quiet places for children who need it?

Sensory Environment -- Visual

Are pictures & displays organized & at child's eye level?

Are there things that may be distracting?

Examples: too many pictures/displays?

things hanging from the ceiling?

Are colors inviting but not overwhelming?

Are there some blank, soft spaces/walls?

Environmental Stability and Predictability

Is staffing predictable?

A co-op may have different adults serving as classroom staff. Will your child adjust to frequent staff changes?

Are daily and weekly schedules provided for children?

Are schedules posted where children can see them?

Can your child understand the posted schedule? (e.g. Does the schedule use words and pictures?)

Does staff review schedules with the children, and tell them if there will be changes?

How many transitions are there during the day? (Transitions include arriving, changing activities, and leaving).

Does staff prepare children for schedule changes and transitions?

Does staff use words, pictures and/or objects to communicate what the next activity will be?

Example: Teacher states "Now we are going to play soccer" and shows children a soccer ball.

Relationships

Does staff...

have individual relationships with children? greet children individually when they arrive?

seem to appreciate differences among children?

use positive strategies to support children's behavior (e.g. praise for desired behavior)?

With respect to your child...

What are the strengths of the program? What concerns about the program do you have?