

Decision-Making for School Placement

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About a year ago, my daughter and son-in-law were getting ready to choose a preschool for their daughter, who was not even three at the time. There were several alternatives, as well as pressure to get into a

preschool before all were fully enrolled. One school even required that my granddaughter come and visit the school without her parents to see if it would be a good fit for one of the two remaining spots. This was hard to believe given her age.

One important decision at the end of a school year is school placement for the following year. The following steps should be considered:

Accurately assess your child's skill set, academically, socially and emotionally.

Check with your child's current teacher.

The teacher can provide valuable input through a behavioral rating scale, at a teacher conference, or with anecdotal evidence.

At the parent-teacher conference, ask questions about your child's performance at the school that include:

How are the child's verbal, gross motor, fine motor and social skills relative to their classmates?

Does your child prefer to play alone?

Is your child resistant to participating in certain activities such as circle time while at school?

Is your child younger than others and therefore likely to benefit from an additional year of preschool?

A child who prefers structure will benefit from a smaller, quieter and more predictable environment. A child who has a lot of energy and enjoys sports might do better in a less academic and more physically active placement.

Consider your own personal needs.

With so many demands from work and home, it is important to keep things simple.

Advantages of a neighborhood school include reduced driving and time commitments. A neighborhood school leads to a greater likelihood of forming a carpool.

Parents who are relaxed are more available to engage in their child's current interests, to visit or volunteer at school, and to help build a community with other children and parents.

Seek input from outside professionals.

Consult your child's pediatrician if you or the current teacher suspect something is out of the

norm such as a behavioral issue.

Focus your attention to pinpoint your child's strengths and weaknesses.

Identify resources for additional support.

Advocate for your child.

You and your spouse know your child better than anyone else.

Advocate for collecting as much information as you can to make an informed placement decision.

Support services can be added as priorities may shift. It is important to be creative and resourceful to meet your child's needs.

Mine the treasures that your child will bring into your lives.

Do your homework.

Visit the school with your child.

Talk to parents of other students at the school.

Factor in the cost of a school as not all schools cost the same.

Prioritize what is most important to you and your child, even as you recognize that no decision can be perfect.

Happy decision-making for school placement!

Karen

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