

Pointers For Parents

Selecting A Preschool— Making The Best Investment For Your Child

(NAPSA)—With preschool enrollment quickly sneaking up on families, now is the time to get ready and find the perfect school for your toddler. According to national research, children who attend a high-quality preschool are more likely to read proficiently by third grade. In addition, nine out of 10 kindergarten teachers say that children who attend preschool are better prepared for school than those who don't.

The first step to get the most out of your child's preschool education is finding the right school that fits your child and family's needs.

Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) is a nonprofit that is changing the landscape of how preschools provide quality education in Los Angeles County. LAUP has created innovative programs that place the emphasis on making children truly kindergarten-ready. With that in mind, Gary Mangiofico, CEO of LAUP, suggests asking a few questions to narrow down the choices for your preschool-age child:

- What is the school's focus? Does it follow a research-based curriculum?

- What sort of policy does the school have for parent involvement?

- What is the student-to-teacher ratio? While requirements vary from state to state, it should generally range from 12-15 students to one teacher.

- What are the surroundings of the neighborhood? Is the area safe for children?

- Does the preschool have any licensing violations? Violation reporting varies from state-to-state so check with your state's guidelines.



LAUP CEO Gary Mangiofico reads to preschoolers at a high-quality site.

- Does the school have accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or similar organization? NAEYC sets professional standards for early childhood education programs and helps families identify high-quality programs.

- How are academics and play interwoven through the day? High-quality preschools do both, and success in children's early education often allows them opportunities to explore the building blocks of learning through play, exploration and experimentation.

If a school satisfactorily answers all your questions, Mangiofico recommends that if after your child has been at the school and you feel you made the wrong choice; don't feel "stuck." Better to take him or her out of an ill-fit place than simply continue out of convenience. "If there's a school you really love but it is full, keep calling or get on a waiting list. Spaces often open up as the new school year approaches," he added.

For more information on choosing a preschool or about LAUP programs, visit the website at www.laup.net.