

Elan Esprit News

Preschool - What's the big deal?



One might ask just this question when it comes to preschool. The Silicon Valley has no shortage of preschools to choose from.

Preschool children and their families are who I devote my time and energies to helping. What do I get in return? Hopefully a brighter future for all.

Parents should and do have a choice of the type of program chosen for their child. It can however be difficult to know what to look for.

The obvious things to look for are whether the preschool will provide for the health and safety of your child. This is specifically what a license to operate a preschool addresses. So, generally, if the preschool is licensed, those basics are supposed to be in. So, what else is there?

There are many words bandied about: age appropriate, learn through play, developmentally appropriate, readiness programs, etc. I have found these descriptions and what is actually done with the kids has a wide variance. What's age appropriate for one child, may be too difficult for one child or too easy to the point of boredom to another.

I continually hear of programs that hold children back from expanding socially, academically, etc., because they are still in diapers. I find that I can teach a child to read just as easily in diapers as not.

So what do you want for a young child? I will boldly share my suggestions, both as a parent, an educator of 18 years, and an advocate of and for children.

1. First of course are health and safety issues.
2. Next, are the teachers and staff happy, smiling, enjoying their students.
3. Are the children enthusiastic, happy, eager to learn new things.
4. Is their day structured so the children can predict what to expect throughout the day.
5. Are a variety of group activities offered?
6. When it is writing time, for example, do all of the students do writing at their correct level.
7. Are there lists of skills and abilities listed for each child to learn. Are these lists available for the parents to view?
8. Very important--are the children growing in their confidence of self, their ability to handle many situations, and taking pride in what they are learning.
9. Children are very bright. They won't really develop a great deal of pride from knowing 1 letter, if they don't continue to learn more and more. If a child is told what a beautiful picture and it's just scribble, then does not improve this ability--all the beautiful picture statements made to them will mean nothing.
10. Do the children have too much free play or too much nap time?

11. Are the children learning to help each other and the teachers, and allowing themselves to be helped, when needed. As parents, are you getting the help and care you need?

It's a funny thing, but there seems to be so much trouble getting all of the kindergarten children, throughout the states, learning the alphabet, reading, writing, helping each other, etc. In other words a solid base with which they can grow and become more and more literate. Yet, we can easily teach these things to preschool children that are not yet 5. These same children enjoy most everything presented to them--as long as presented well by the teachers and the children are assured of win after win after win.



So, what is the big deal? There are far too many children not being allowed to reach the potentials that make them happy, confident and cocky. They are far too few children given the correct help to win, win, win. There are far too many adults believing that what is occurring in Kindergarten, first grade, etc. to be a normal state of affairs. There are far too many adults giving other adults false information about children and education. A few truths mixed in with a large amount of false information can at first glance appear to be all true. There are far too few presenting any solutions which work much less save our children. There are far too many willing to label our children rather than help them.

As this is the current state of affairs, giving children the most help that really helps at the preschool level, gives them the edge in the school systems they are going into. It will be much more difficult to turn their attitude towards not liking learning, when they have had so many wins enjoying learning. It will be much more difficult to convince parents to settle for less for their children.

Elan Esprit Preschool's program is so unique that it is not easily seen as what "normal" should be. A high percentage of families and educators look but don't see or don't believe. The gap between the brightness, desires and interests of children and the current educational scene is so wide it's like looking across the Grand Canyon to try and find what is true.

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