



Why Choose an Accredited Preschool For Your Child?

The first five years of life will create the foundation that will help your child succeed in school and at home. How much your child's brain develops will mostly depend on the great learning experiences and care he or she receives.

Because the quality of your child's earliest experiences shapes his or her overall development, it is so important that you are aware of what your child needs. This is not the time for worksheets or "school-like" learning. Your child needs:

- A safe and healthy environment
- A wide variety of materials and books so that children can explore and learn at their own pace
- A nurturing caregiver that provides guidance to help them learn and develop self-control and social skills
- Opportunities to engage in conversations with children and adults
- Daily exposure to literacy activities, such as story time and other age-appropriate learning experiences

Your child learns through direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. It is important to look for a preschool with educated staff that understand child development and will guide and support your child's learning. A good teacher will encourage and celebrate your child's individuality and make him or her feel welcomed.

Remember, learning takes place when your child feels safe and loved.



Licensing and Accreditation

You will find most child care providers are licensed, but some are licensed and accredited. What is the difference?

Licensing means the child care facility meets the minimum standards required by Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) for a child care program to be open. These requirements include minimal standards for health and safety, ratios, group size and more. To get more information about DCF's licensing standards for child care centers or family child care homes, please visit <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/laws.shtml>.

Accredited means that the child care provider has met higher quality standards, usually set by a national organization. These child care programs have met standards beyond those established by DCF. Accredited programs seek to provide the best quality of care for your child.

For child care centers, there are many different types of accreditation, for example NAEYC, APPLE, NACECEP and others. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation sets the highest standards. For more information about NAEYC, please visit <http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org/> or call or 1-800-424-2460, extension 333 to request a list of NAEYC-accredited centers by mail.

If you choose a family child care home, ask if it is accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). For more information about NAFCC, please visit <http://www.nafcc.org/include/parents.asp> or call 1-800-359-3817 to find a NAFCC accredited family child care in your area.

To help you in your search, please call Child Care Resource and Referral at 305-373-3521.