

Things To Consider When Choosing a Preschool

Everyone wants the best preschool for their child. But what factors should you consider when choosing a school? There are the obvious features, such as convenience to your home, cost and schedule. But here are a few other points to consider:

Philosophy – make sure the school’s educational philosophy meshes with your own preschool goals for your child. At Chestnut Grove, our mission is to help children develop a love of learning, a readiness for their school years and a foundation for academic and life skills. Many preschools place heavy emphasis on academics, computer use and homework. But our focus is on developing social skills and kindergarten readiness skills in a nurturing environment that encourages curiosity and a love of learning.

Length of Day/Hours – when comparing tuition rates for schools, be sure to compare the cost per hour. Each school offers different hours, so an accurate cost comparison must take the number of hours into consideration.

Class Size – the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requires a maximum student/teacher ratio of 10:1. Some schools adhere to the ratio, but have 20 or more children in a class with 2 teachers, or a teacher and an aide. At Chestnut Grove, we believe small classes allow for the best teacher/student interaction. We have a teacher dedicated to each class, and aides that rotate throughout the school to assist where needed. Our 2’s Drop-Off classes have a maximum of 6 students, 3’s classes are usually limited to 8 students and 4’s classes have a maximum of 10 students.

Program Class Options – Look for a preschool offering a variety of class options for their 2’s, 3’s and 4’s programs. For instance, at Chestnut Grove, we offer the following 4’s options:

- MWF Morning 4’s
- MWF Full-Day 4’s
- 5-Morning 4’s (Mon-Fri) with an option to add Afternoon enrichment 2 or 3 days per week.

Early Drop-Off – Flexible schedules can be a great help for a busy family. At Chestnut Grove, we offer early scheduled drop-off starting at 8am. Also, our Extended Day runs most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for morning-only students, providing on-the-fly coverage from 12:30pm to 3pm.

Staff Experience / Staff Turnover – High employee turnover can be common at many daycare centers and large preschools. When considering preschools for your child, ask about employee turnover and teacher experience. Stability is important for your child, and experienced teachers are more effective teachers.

Continued education is required by the Maryland State Department of Education, but be certain that your school encourages pertinent and timely ongoing training, even beyond state requirements.

Playground and Outdoor Time – look for a school that values outdoor time for the children, and offers a safe outdoor play area with a variety of equipment to explore. Outside playtime is vital to children’s physical, social and emotional health. Chestnut Grove offers a large playground in a beautiful wooded setting with an abundance of room for imaginations to run wild. Swings, playhouses, a bike track, sandboxes, a construction zone, a small sledding hill and sliding boards give our preschoolers plenty of fun opportunities to increase their gross motor skills and play with friends.

Environment – cost is important, but money can’t buy a nurturing atmosphere, respect for your child and love. Before you commit to a preschool, check it out! And if possible, take your child with you for the tour. You’ll know when you’ve found the right place!