



# PARENTS AND PRESCHOOL

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A QUALITY  
PROGRAM

# WHO WE ARE

We are a not for profit organization that is fueled by a shared passion for purposeful, transparent, and high quality early learning experiences for all children birth through age eight. We are composed of educators, leaders, advocates, parents and professionals who see a need to collaboratively facilitate our community efforts to ignite high quality early learning.

*Mission: Our mission is to facilitate and accelerate our community to ignite high quality early learning*



# DATA/KEY FINDINGS

- Over 26,000 children age 0-5 in Hamilton County
- Over 400 sites providing child care and early learning
- Preschool costs 40% above the state average
- *63% of participants in our early learning community survey identified cost of early childhood care as one of the top three challenges in our community*

# DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

- Physical Development/Motor Skills: opportunities to build *fine motor skills* strengthening their hands and arms (threading, cutting, playdoh, puzzles drawing, blocks) and *gross motor skills* strengthening their bodies through physical activity (running, jumping, climbing, dancing)
- Social/Emotional Development: children learn ways to manage their emotions, perspective taking, empathy, taking turns, negotiation, communication, how to handle conflict with teacher guidance

# DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)

-Language Development: through listening and reading stories, songs, and fingerplays, playing and interacting with peers, puppets, dramatic play, children build literacy and communication skills

-Cognitive Development: children learn about themselves and their place within the world while exploring, creating, problem solving, experimenting (trial and error), questioning, building complex thinking.

# BENEFITS OF PRESCHOOL

- Building trusting relationships outside of their primary caregivers
- Build self-confidence (learning new skills, exploring new materials, risk taking)
- Enhancing self-help skills (serving their snack, putting on their coat, helping clean up)
- Opportunities for sensory experiences and messy play
- Trust in knowing their caregiver will come back



# BENEFITS OF PRESCHOOL FOR PARENTS

- Building a community of parents and caregivers and that you can share experiences and have as a support network
- Parenting support/Parent education opportunities
- Caregivers can have a break knowing that their child is safe and loved!

# ENVIRONMENTS

- Literate environment - books, fingerplays, language rich
- Engaging and inviting, reflecting the image of the child
- Flexible to the needs and interests of the children
- Promoting inquiry and hands on investigation
- Materials are open ended, natural
- Variety of opportunities in art, dramatic play, music, building, light exploration, sensory, experimentation, child directed play, and outdoor play





# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Nurturing and supportive environment
- Learning how to navigate difficult situations and strong emotions with gentle guidance
- Building empathy and understanding the feelings of others
- Mindfulness/Yoga
- Opportunities for negotiation through child directed play
- Socialization
- Ample outdoor play



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS / ENRICHMENT

Opportunities for real-world experience through site visits with field experts and guest visitors providing contexts which are authentic and meaningful to the children's lives.

- Library

- Musicians

- Yoga

- Visiting a donut shop, nature center, grocery store, bank



# AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

- Process art vs. Product
- Embracing the natural creativity and curiosity of children
- Use of open ended materials
- Emergent curriculum vs. pre-planned themes
- Progressive snack (builds self-help skills, children decide when they are hungry)

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT

- Opportunities for parent education
- Deepening understanding of children's learning through communication and documentation of project work
- Parent involvement in extending experiences beyond the borders of the classroom into the real-world
- Volunteer opportunities
- Parents sharing talents to deepen learning

# MANAGEMENT

-What is your staff turnover?

- *47% of respondents in our early childhood community survey expressed concern about teacher wages and staff turnover*

-How are your staff typically recruited?

-What kind of training do you provide to your staff?

-What kind of experience and education does your staff have?

-What is your teacher-student ratio and average class size?

# MANAGEMENT (CONT.)

- How do you communicate with families about school happenings?
- What is your educational philosophy?
- What opportunities are there for community involvement and field trips?
- How do you guide children through difficult situations?

# OBSERVE: WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE?

- Do the children seem happy and engaged in their learning environment?
- Are teachers getting down at eye level when interacting with children?
- Are teachers using calm, supportive tones when talking with children?
- Are children's feelings validated?
- Is there ample space and a variety of materials to explore and interact with both inside and outside?

# OBSERVE: WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? (CONT.)

- Are there opportunities for messy play?
- Are children engaged in self directed play?
- Are materials and activities open ended and developmentally appropriate?
- Does the environment feel calm and inviting or over stimulating?
- Is children's work displayed at their eye level?



# KINDERGARTEN READINESS

The Alliance aims to help bridge the gap between preschools and Kindergarten as teachers pointed to the concern of lack of lack of continuous communication from early learning to elementary. Participants in our community early learning survey voiced similar concerns.

- *29% of respondents in our community early learning survey expressed concern about expectations for Kindergarten readiness and transition to elementary school*



# KINDERGARTEN READINESS (CONT.)

-Key findings from Community Kindergarten Conversations

- *Teachers shared concern around behavior and social/emotional issues*
- *Those who showed more academic (rote) skill, showed less depth, self-direction, excitement for learning*
- *Children lacking independence and self-confidence - centered on adult affirmation*
- *Importance of development of the whole child*
- *Empowering young learners by igniting an appreciation for and a desire for learning*

# RESOURCES

- For more resources (*including our Kindergarten Transitions Packet*), data and events surrounding early learning in Hamilton County, please visit our website at [www.earlylearningalliancenenetwork.org](http://www.earlylearningalliancenenetwork.org)
- Directory of preschools and activities for preschoolers in the area can be found at [www.myprek.org](http://www.myprek.org)
- Follow us on Social Media
  - Facebook: /earlylearningalliancenenetwork
  - Twitter: @earlylrnntwk



# DISCUSSION

-Why is preschool important to you?

-What are the most important skills that preschool helps develop in children?

-What type of experience do you want your children to have at preschool?

-What are the top 3 factors you consider when picking a program?

# DISCUSSION (CONT.)

- How do you know if a preschool is a “quality” program?
- What does it mean to be play-based vs. academic?
- How do you find preschool programs in the community?
- What challenges do you have when selecting a preschool program?
- If you could create the ideal preschool program for your child(ren), what would it be like?

# DISCUSSION (CONT.)

-What is the most important question you ask to a potential preschool provider?

-If you could change one thing about preschool in our local community, what would it be?