

THE ULTIMATE

DAYCARE

..... and

Preschool

RESEARCH STARTER KIT

5 super important things to look for when choosing a Daycare or Preschool - And why!



Hi There!

My name is Assia and I'm a wife, a mom of 2 littles, and the owner of a large Daycare and Preschool - Windhaven Academy.

After my daughter was born in 2017, everything changed. The world was a different place for me. I had a keen sense of responsibility and a new found work ethic. I sent her to daycare at 2 months old, as I committed myself further to creating my place in the Hospice Industry. Every day I dropped her off at her daycare, I was just so grateful to have a place I trusted for my daughter - the most important thing in my life.

Still, despite having a good experience at the Primrose we sent her to, I couldn't help but think: "I could do this better". That's where the obsession began.

I spent hours, days, weeks learning about the childcare industry and researching facilities for sale. I considered franchises but I knew that in order to do this right, I had to build my own brand.

At the end of 2019, I found Windhaven Academy - an existing child care center that was just hurting for some loving. I was 5 months pregnant when we took over the facility.

Since that day, I've given birth to my (now toddler) boy, sold my Hospice Agency, dealt with a global pandemic, and gone from 4 students in my school to now having provided care for hundreds of them!

As a parent of young children, I know that choosing a daycare or preschool can be overwhelming. That's why I created my own!

Once you make sure things like proximity to work or home, curriculum style, and hours of operation work for your family - this list contains some important considerations you may have never thought of!

Wishing you the best of luck in your search!



Assia Mahmood

SECURITY



I think of security in *2 parts*

ACCESS SECURITY

Locked doors with individualized access control systems set up are what I consider **best case scenario** - *which is why that's what I have at my facility.*

a

Essentially, you want to ensure that not just anyone can access the children. Look for locked doors that stay locked.

You also want to confirm that they have a strict authorized pick-up procedure in place for pick up by other family members and friends.

And for good measure, find out how likely is it that someone can share their access control with other people.

CAMERAS

There are some childcare centers that have cameras that parents can watch from home. Now, if this is a non-negotiable for you, no worries!

I have my reasons **against** it, which I'll get to in a second.

BUT - either way, **there should be cameras!**

b

Cameras hold everyone accountable. They can help answer questions and ease your mind as a parent! They can also help identify training opportunities for staff.

They are a must-have. I truly don't understand not having them.

Now, that being said, I do not allow parents access to my camera system.

Just hear me out for a second on this.

First off, people share logins. They do. They always will.

So not only will the parents in the class be watching *your kid*. So will their grandparents, their friends, and maybe even their "super kid-friendly neighbor, Ted".

Once access is allowed, it can't truly be controlled, and I don't want to risk video footage of the children getting into the wrong hands (or eyes?).

Second, I had a tour come in one day and the dad stood in my lobby and pulled up the camera from his previous daycare *that he left 3 months prior*.

So...

There's that.



NUTRITION



At my school, I serve all organic fruits, vegetables, and dairy.

All meals are cooked on-site by our chef and we focus on seasonal ingredients. We also don't do added sugars.

My abhorrence of what is considered "nutrition" in early childhood centers is one of the reasons I bought my own school.

Now, I know most schools don't do this.

Organic is expensive and not all facilities are willing to spend extra on food with the kind of low margins there are in childcare.

[That is a conversation for another day.]

But there's no excuse for our children eating "fruits" that are sitting in high fructose corn syrup.

The most important question for you to ask is:

Do you serve fruits or vegetables *from a can*?

And if the answer is "yes"...

Um, bye.

CONTENTMENT OF THE KIDDOS

Now, you've vetted a school, everything checks out on paper, and you're ready to take a tour:

Try to pay attention to how the kids are interacting with each other and the caregivers.

Are they gravitating toward the teachers?

Are the teachers interacting with the children at their level?

Is there a lot of screaming or crying? (*I say "a lot" because it's still a building full of kids, amirite?*)

How content the current children are can speak volumes about the kind of space that the teachers, caregivers, and management have created. It indicates trust and comfort on the child's end and it is one of the most authentic signs of a good facility!



PARENT PARTNERSHIPS



I've given a lot of tours of my facility and many parents are leaving other schools. One of the biggest sources of dissatisfaction I hear is a "lack of communication".

Some great things to look for:

Is there a way to communicate directly with the teachers and caregivers?

Do they use an app for updates throughout the day?

Other things to look for when it comes to parent partnerships with the facility are:

- Family Events
- Accurate App Updates
- Collaborative Potty Training
- Open Door Policy
- Flexible drop off and pick up
- Open to feedback and new ideas

OWNER INVOLVEMENT

The level of involvement by the owner *makes a difference*.

I am on-site at my facility almost daily, but I'm not saying that's a requirement. Just try to get a feel for how involved the owner is.

- Are they credited for the vision?
- Are they available to support their team?
- Do they know the parents?
- *Do the parents know them?*

Owner involvement gives you, as the parent, the peace of mind that there will always be someone guiding and adhering to the vision for the company. When the owner has their finger on the pulse of the school, it allows for the school to grow and change as needed. It levels up the accountability of the staff and the other families, because nobody is going to care as much about their school as the one who owns it. So look for an owner who really cares!





Interested in learning more about my school, Windhaven Academy?

Visit our website for more information and to
book a tour!



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