

What is High-Quality Preschool?



When you walk into a high-quality preschool classroom you immediately see learning occurring. A high-quality program has a sense of purpose, organization and excitement. The following elements are critical to providing the kind of preschool that produces the best results for children.

Hallmarks of high-quality preschool program include:

People: Teachers and Families

Teachers

Early childhood education teachers and assistant teachers:

- are expert, well-trained and have received specialized training in early childhood education;
- receive ongoing professional development and opportunities for reflective practice;
- are professionally compensated with salaries commensurate with their education and experience;
- reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the children and families they serve; and
- are given time to reflect on their classroom practice, observe and track children's progress and develop curriculum plans based on each child's needs.

"The good news is that high-quality early learning and care programs with effective educators can improve children's readiness and school success, with higher test scores, better attendance, less grade retention and long-term benefits in school completion and lifetime earnings."

— Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee 2010 Final Report

Families

- Programs build trusting relationships with families, including respecting and supporting each family's home language and at-home teaching efforts.

- Family members and teachers exchange

information about the child's strengths and successes, favorite activities and learning progress.

- Family members are engaged in the program through conferences with teachers, opportunities to assist in the classroom and other activities.
- Family members are offered information about nutrition, parenting and social services, when needed.

Hallmarks of a high-quality preschool program:

People



Place



Program



High-Quality Preschool: People, Place and Program

Place: Classrooms

- Each classroom has at least one teacher and one assistant teacher.
- There is at least one teacher for every 10 children
- The preschool environment welcomes children of all cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in inclusive settings designed to meet individual needs.
- Classrooms have supplies, materials and equipment that support learning.



Program: Curriculum and Comprehensive Care

Curriculum



The program uses a curriculum that:

- evaluates progress through ongoing monitoring and evaluation, sets goals specific to preschool and uses learning and developmental foundations that are research-based, age-appropriate and aligned with the state's K-12 standards;
- provides learning opportunities in a wide range of areas and a variety of settings including whole-class activities, work in small groups and individual interactions with the teacher;
- builds on each child's interests and natural curiosity and provides daily integrated learning opportunities across children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development; and
- supports the needs of English learners and supports all children in developing their home language and English.

Comprehensive Care

- Programs provide vision, hearing and general-health screenings to identify children's special needs early and provide appropriate supports and referrals.
- Children are offered breakfast and/or lunch.



"Participating in early education can provide academic and social benefits that last well beyond kindergarten. However, researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that for children - particularly children from low-income backgrounds - to benefit from preschool, it must be of high quality."

— Linda Espinosa, Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Missouri, Columbia

For more information, visit www.preschoolcalifornia.org