



Aniyah King wins second place in Sugar Land Magazine's Cutest Kid Cover Contest

Look to see if teachers work with students individually



Happy, engaged children are a sign of a good program

Just Right for Me

Choosing the Perfect Sugar Land Preschool

Written by Jennifer Heath

Mention the word 'preschool' to any toddler's parent, and expect to see a cartoon bubble with a question mark appear above their head. As a parent, you may ask yourself, "Is my child ready? What should we look for in a preschool? How many days a week should he go? When should we register? Should it be a religious education? Does he have to be potty trained? How much is this going to cost?" When finding the right fit for your Sugar Land sweetie, start by doing your homework.

List Learning Goals

The best way to begin is to make a list of criteria that you want your child to accomplish. Why, exactly, are you sending your child to preschool? To learn his ABC's? To work on sharing? To have more social interaction?

Nena Metcalf began the hunt for her daughter's perfect preschool months before 4-year-old Peyton even sat down inside the school. "Going to preschool wasn't really an 'if' just a 'when and where' for us," she says. "I knew that I could teach her the educational things she would need to know before kindergarten, but in preschool she

gets social skills, learns to follow directions, (and learns to) sit and pay attention in a classroom setting."

When a school works with each child, they will develop social skills they may lack or physical skills, including motor skills, says Lonnie Hutson with Kids R Kids Preschool in Sugar Land. "Children in a school setting learn quickly they cannot always get their way," Hutson says. "They learn quickly they have to share with their friends, take their turn, and play well with others."

Keesha O'Brien has taught her 2-year-old son, Xander, the ABC's and one-two-threes so far, but knows attending preschool will offer him more opportunities to learn important skills. "I want him to have social interaction with other children on a regular and consistent basis, to learn how to follow instructions, to learn how to listen to others, to learn about taking turns and sharing, as well as honing the skills he already has," she says. "I want him to also get used to going to school, so that kindergarten isn't a huge change for him."

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Consider Campus Environment

Another important factor in finding the perfect preschool is choosing the type of schooling you want your child to receive. Parents should consider different educational atmospheres, including traditional, religious, and Montessori.

At Primrose Schools in Sugar Land, the approach to education is a key factor to students' success. "We have always had a blend of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities with a special emphasis on character development in our schools," says Primrose Area Director Elizabeth Moore. "But what makes us unique is that we have created a meaningful learning path that enables teachers to guide children in the development of the knowledge and skills they need to move successfully from one year to the next."

Most parents also must find a way to mesh together what they want for their children with the cost of the education. No matter what type of preschool parents choose, they should expect to pay tuition either monthly or per semester. Many schools may also charge for registration, arts and crafts supplies, and snacks.

"As a stay-at-home-mom, cost is important," says O'Brien. "In order for me to be at home, we have to live within a budget. I have a feeling as we start visiting schools and finding out the costs, there will be a lot of places we will have to cross off our list, because we won't be able to afford the monthly cost."

Ask About Accreditation

Check to see if preschools have done their homework, receiving accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This well known organization issues accreditations based on a long list of criteria. Schools voluntarily

undergo a lengthy process and must pass numerous education and quality standards in order to receive accreditation. The Walden School and The School for Little Children are two of a small handful of programs accredited, according to naeyc.org. Parents should also explore the Texas Department of Family Services' website to further investigate whether the school has had any infractions or problems. Visit dfps.state.tx.us.

Investigate All Options

Once you nail down what you are looking for in a preschool, start researching nearby schools and make a list of potential campuses. Websites are a good first step for researching possible choices. Once you've compiled a list of potential schools, start calling around. "I contacted nearly all of the local preschools and asked a series of questions," Metcalf says. Then, she went and toured the campuses of the schools she most liked, taking time to speak with their directors about factors she considers important. "Education was most important," she says. "While I think socialization is great, a school with a good curriculum was my number one priority." She also considered the teaching backgrounds and teaching styles of staff members at the school.

Getting started early will provide you the best opportunity to find the right fit for your child's first experience with education. "Ask lots of questions," Metcalf says. "If there is anything that doesn't feel right to you, move on." **SLM**

JENNIFER HEATH is a freelance writer. She also works as a mother to her sons, Landry and Ryan.



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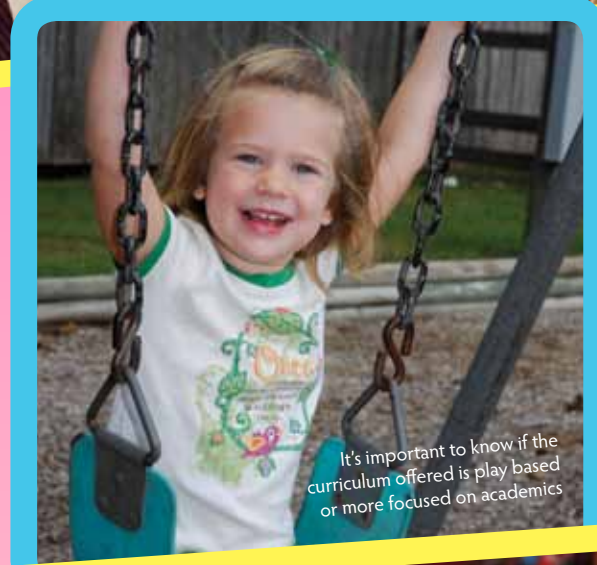
Ethan and Peyton Posey were finalists in Sugar Land Magazine's Cutest Kid Cover Contest



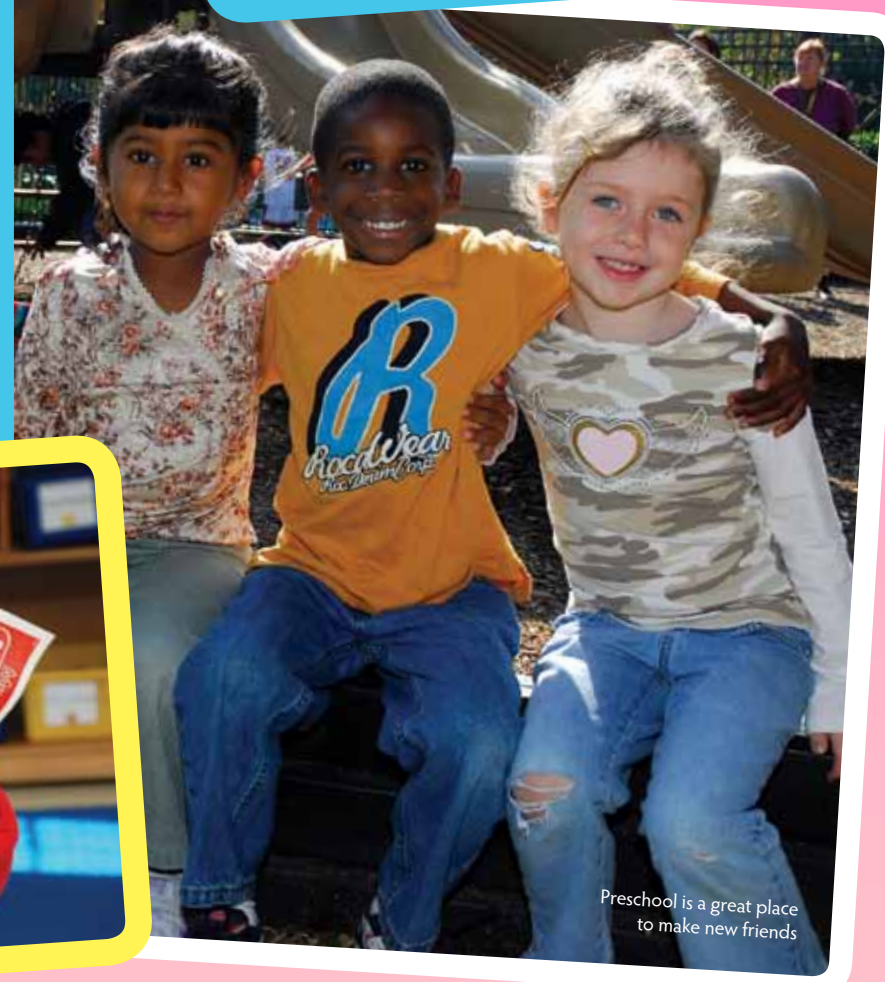
Good centers will teach children how to work in groups



Look for a center that offers age appropriate activities at the child's level



It's important to know if the curriculum offered is play based or more focused on academics



Preschool is a great place to make new friends



Good centers will have plenty of hands-on projects

Choosing The Right Campus Environment

Which style of school will work for your child?

- ✓ Montessori preschools allow the child to learn at her own pace, while the teachers guide the students.
- ✓ At traditional preschools, the teacher actively educates the students.
- ✓ Religious preschools introduce learning through a religious curriculum.

Ready or Not?

How to tell if your Sugar Land sweetie is ready for preschool

- ★ Is she independent?
- ★ Has she spent time away from you?
- ★ Can she work on projects on her own?
- ★ Is she ready to participate in group activities?
- ★ Is she used to keeping a regular schedule?
- ★ Does she have the physical stamina for preschool?

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281-242-2988

Apple Orchard Learning Center
4103 S. Main St.
Stafford
281-499-7205

Apple Tree School
502 Eldridge Rd.
281-240-1565

Brazos Montessori and Early Childhood Program
4022 Angel Springs Dr.
281-980-9830

Calvary Episcopal School
1201 Austin St.
Richmond
281-342-3161

Cambridge Montessori School
6380 Hwy. 90A
281-491-2223

Children's Haven Daycare
13511 Florence Rd.
281-240-1173

Childtime Learning Center
4935 Sandhill Dr.
281-494-4800

Childtime Learning Center
1120 Soldiers Field Ct.
281-265-4800

Childtime Learning Center
4418 Sweetwater Blvd.
281-265-7070

Christine Smith Early Headstart
1000 Pultar Rd.
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281-239-2350

Colony Kids
7555 Hwy. 6
Missouri City
281-499-2454

Colony Lakes Montessori School
6248 Hwy. 6
Missouri City
281-208-8282

Cornerstone Christian Academy
2140 First Colony Blvd.
281-980-0842

Crayon Academy
2861 Dulles Ave.
Missouri City
281-261-4000

Creative Minds
9920 Hwy. 90A, Ste. 290B
281-313-6463

Early Learning Program
1200 Walker School Rd.
281-565-1070

Education Station
3111 Hwy. 6 S.
281-980-1112

Faith Lutheran Preschool
800 Brooks St.
281-242-4453

Faith School for Young Children
4600 FM 359
Richmond
281-239-7397

Fellowship Christian Academy
16425 Old Richmond Rd.
281-495-1814

First Colony Montessori
2229 Settlers Way Blvd.
281-980-9744

First Colony Montessori South
2511 Williams Trace Blvd.
281-980-6100

Fun & Learn Kintacademic
2601 G. Cartwright
Missouri City
281-499-1365

Greatwood Montessori
6633 Greatwood Pkwy.
281-343-1888

Holy Cross Preschool
5653 W. Riverpark Dr.
281-633-2000

Honor Roll School II
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281-265-7888

Kids R Kids
17317 Bellaire Blvd.
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281-491-4090

Kids R Kids
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Missouri City
281-261-6442

Kids R Kids
1250 Crabb River Rd.
Richmond
281-343-5437

Kids R Kids
246 Fluor Daniel Dr.
281-240-5437

Kids R Kids
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281-575-0011

Kids R Kids
8202 Homeward Way
281-494-5437

Kids R Kids
4401 Sienna Cir.
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281-778-3600

Kids R Kids
12475 Sugar Dale Dr.
Stafford
281-240-1111

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832-451-1111

Kindercare Learning Centers
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281-343-9979

La Petite Academy
838 Eldridge Rd.
281-240-0237

Lakeview Montessori Inc.
211 Wood St.
281-494-2667

Learning Stages Inc.
12780 S. Kirkwood
281-240-0480

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2011 Austin Pkwy.
281-265-5656

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281-208-9545

Methodist Day School
3900 Lexington Blvd.
Missouri City
281-499-2581

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4502 Austin Pkwy.
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281-277-2702

Munchkins' Drop-In Childcare
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281-265-5437

New Beginnings Academy
12240 Murphy Rd.
Stafford
281-561-7238

New Southwest Montessori
12707 Alston Rd.
281-277-7788

Oak Point Montessori Academy
3130 N. Pebblebeach Dr.
Missouri City
281-499-9555

Oxford Little Scholars Academy
339 Dulles Ave.
Stafford
281-261-9613

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281-565-2707

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6550 Greatwood Pkwy.
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281-343-8889

Primrose School of Sienna
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Missouri City
281-431-8687

Primrose School of Sugar Land
1315 Soldiers Field Dr.
281-277-8585

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281-980-0500

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