

Choosing School-Age Child Care

Before and After School & Summer Care

Some things to keep in mind when you look for school-age child care:

1. Caregivers should be caring and resourceful, and understand the important role adults play in school-aged children's lives.
2. Caregivers should understand the importance of peers and friends to your child, and the program activities should reflect that understanding.
3. Programs should use both mixed and same age groupings, and offer activities according to interests, not just age.
4. Activities should be primarily child selected, with guidance and planning from staff. School-age children have a strong need to plan their own activities, and make decisions.
5. Activity areas, inside and out, should be flexible with separate spaces for different kinds of activities. For example, there should ideally be an outdoor area where children can run and play sports, an indoor space for cooking and eating, a space for homework (computer stations) and quiet reading, and a space to visit with friends or play games.
6. Children need to unwind after a scheduled and rule oriented school day. Is there time and space, when need, for your child to "kick back" and "do nothing", just as a child might do at home?
7. The program should use conflict resolution and positive guidance rather than punishment to help children develop self-control and to learn appropriate behaviors.

School-age children, grades K-8, spend a lot of time outside of school. He or she may be in care for several hours before and after school, and for entire days during school holidays and vacations. This is a significant amount of time in your child's life, and

The needs of school-age children are different from those of younger children. Your child needs a skilled caregiver with knowledge of child development and appropriate activities for this age group; someone who can offer a program that supports your child's self-esteem, physical, social and intellectual development.

Kids think on their feet, they need to be active. Your school-age child will not thrive in a program that does not offer activities that satisfy his or her needs and interests. Your older child will not want to be in a program that he/she feels is designed for little kids.



Take the time to visit several centers or family day care homes. Think about your child's needs and interests ahead of time. Spend at least an hour talking to staff about how the program can meet those needs. Spend some time observing other children, and try to determine if your child would be happy there. When you're ready to make a decision, take your child for a site visit. Listen to what your child has to say, ask them if they would be happy there.

To find out more about the history of a licensed child care program or to file a complaint, call Community Care Licensing at 510.622.2602