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# What to Look for When Observing

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A preschool has the responsibility of providing experiences, which invite children's interest, stimulating their creativity, and satisfying their desire to explore and discover.

There should be equipment and materials freely available to children for use in their own way, within the limits compatible with the groups needs. It should provide for the full development of physical, social, and intellectual needs.

## 1. Look at the Staff

- Is there a close, warm feeling between adult and child?
- Do the adults show a real understanding of children, liking them as they are?
- Do they give the support needed by guiding, rather than correcting, respecting feelings?

## 2. Look at the Equipment

- Is there a variety of toys, attractive, safe, and in good condition?
- Are there toys that can be used in many ways?

### ***DRAMATIC PLAY***

- Is there a dramatic play centre with enough equipment/space to play out family living and other experiences they know?

### ***ART***

- Is there a rich collection of creative materials, such as paint, clay, dough, paste, finger paint, fabric, paper, foil, or wood scraps to be used regularly?

### ***BLOCK PLAY***

- Is there a generous supply of blocks of different sizes and shapes?
- Is there plenty of space for several children to build?
- Are there interesting accessories like trucks, trains, and wooden animals?

### ***SCIENCE***

- Is there a table or shelf on which objects of interest may be displayed regularly?
- Are there interesting things for children to study and handle (such as seeds, shells, etc.)?
- Are there tools to aid scientific study such as magnifying glass, color sheets, etc.?

### ***MUSIC***

- Is there some kind of music program offered?
- Is there a CD player or a tape recorder to which the children may listen?

- Are the children given the opportunity to express their feelings and their bodies with song and dance?

### **BOOKS**

- Are there books available all the time?
- Is there a good quantity of quality books in good condition?
- Are the books about familiar objects and situations to consolidate children's knowledge and extend experience?

### **OUTDOOR PLAY**

- Is the play area fenced or properly protected?
- Does the play area provide opportunity for strenuous climbing and running?

### **3. Look at the Children**

- Are they moving freely about choosing their own activities?
- Is there enough equipment to challenge their interests?
- Are they encouraged to use their own ideas, solve their own problems?
- Are they just filling in time or are they absorbed with their activities and each other?
- Is there space for floor play and is it used?
- Are they really interested in the books, genuinely enjoying the music, experimenting, and singing spontaneously at play?
- Is there real social learning going on – children playing imaginatively together?
- Are they playing strenuously outdoors – or indoors if it is a rainy day?

### **ASK:**

- About the supervisor's qualifications and experience.
- About discipline at the preschool.
- If parents can stay with children the first few days if they need that care to feel comfortable and secure with a new experience.
- About the fee policy; what are the terms if you withdraw?

It is important to develop an awareness of the general atmosphere as well as the above specifics. Good luck and enjoy yourself!