



Should my child fit in or stand out?

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The United Arab Emirates with its diversity provides all parents a magnitude of choice and freedom to decide on a program of study for their children

Most parents decide on a pre-school following extensive research, but one crucial element that a parent should consider their child's personality

Why is the child's personality important when choosing a curriculum and an environment, one may ask?

Your child's personality determines to a great extent his or her behavior in class, attention span, learning capacity and individual grasp of topics.

Modern Schools using 21st-century buildings yet curricula from the 19th century is testimony to the fact that our education system has not progressed much over the decades, however, one positive aspect is that there has been a tremendous shift in focus on 'type of learners' and approach towards teaching.

Your child's personality also governs the type of learners they are, Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and read/write. Therefore we must sit down as parents and find reasonable answers to the following questions before we meet the deadline of School application forms.

- Is my child easygoing and happy or quiet and thoughtful or is strong-willed and challenging?

- How do I want to shape his or her personality, what aspects of his character do we nurture, condition and which ones do we try to tame?
- Further, as a parent, what is your expectation from a pre-school experience? Is it purely academic or is your priority helping them gain social competence, cultivate trust and mutual respect, gain perspective, exposure and understand different cultures as well as the overall development of their emotional quotient?
- How much time can you dedicate to our children as parents, outside their schools, how can you supplement their learning at school?

Only once you have answered/understood the above, you can start exploring schools.

A 2010 study by Harvard researchers stated that kindergarteners are young, impressionable and vulnerable. The impact that the teachers have on the students can follow adults well into their 30s.

So how do you go about accessing the most suitable curriculum for your child?

Schools may primarily follow these approaches, especially in Pre-school years:

- a. Classroom activities based on child's interest and not on pre-scheduled topics chosen by the teacher
- b. Activities based on a set schedule developed by teachers/curriculum
- c. Asking parents to actively become part of the learning process
- d. Curriculum based on activities appropriate for the age of the children in the class

Have a heart-to-heart with your spouse, reflect again on your child's personality and determine how best your child [easy/ happy, quiet/thoughtful, strong-willed/challenging] fits with the chosen curriculum approach.

The primary agent of educating a child is often considered to be a class teacher, but the day-to-day schedule of a classroom requires additional support in the form of an assistant teacher. Another vital aspect, parents should recognize is the role that teaching assistants (TA's) play in pre-school classrooms and their direct impact on children.

How often do parents take this into account? As the main teacher juggles with the multidimensional demands of a modern teaching establishment completing at break-neck speed in a highly competitive education market, the TAs take on a combination of educational and child care duties.

TAs provide supplemental instruction in the classroom and usually, they teach at least one lesson per day. It might therefore help if the TAs and their role in delivering the curriculum and activities you choose is taken into consideration in your evaluation of the school

We must acknowledge that children learn best when they feel secure, so an environment where the teacher appears less threatening through their verbal and non-verbal communication would help the child thrive, take risks, ask questions, make mistakes, learn to trust, share their feelings and grow.

Most parents want the best for their children yet we all struggle to be the change agent, by not differentiating in our approach, often succumbing to societal norms and pressures and not looking beyond report cards and achievements.

To conclude, I want to leave you with a thought...

“We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.” - Stacia Tauscher