

## **Choosing a Preschool in Austin Texas**

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### **Visiting**

Visit schools as soon as possible. Ask how long the waiting list is. The application process can be done at anytime. The registration usually begins in January and ends March. Acceptance is mailed out by April. Class lists may be mailed out as late as July. Please visit various schools to see and observe. You are the best one to decide which school is a good match for your child and your family. I would be happy to join you on your visits if you like as I naturally have an interest in seeing early childhood centers. I also would be happy to discuss with you your considerations after you do visit a few schools. Please write-up your questions you want each center to answer to enable you to adequately compare schools. Ex. Ask at each center "How much choice play time does my child have?" "How will my child be challenged?" Remember your gut level reaction to a school is quite important. Trust your inner voice.

See <http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org>

"NAEYC Accreditation: The Right Choice for Kids -- a family-friendly introduction to NAEYC Accreditation, available in English and Espanol".

### **Directories of Schools**

Note that the AAEYC (Austin Association for the Education of Young Children) is our local chapter. See [www.austinaeyc.org](http://www.austinaeyc.org) . You may want to look for the NAEYC accredited seal. See:

<http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/search> for a search of schools in your zip code. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredits programs that apply and meet the NAEYC standards. There is a book called the **Family Guide to Austin**, which lists by area/zip code early childhood centers and public schools including descriptions of each school. The Austin Public Library has this book. For elementary schools, there is also the **Guide to Private Schools in Austin**.

### **Our Son's Schools**

Tommy, was born in New York City and started school at 2 ½ years old. He went to a morning program, Creative Steps Preschool that was based upon play and a set routine. It had 3 teachers, 15 children and was 9am to 12pm each day. Here in Austin Texas is Child's Day\*, a large full day program. I can recommend the program as my son went there as a four year old and I taught there for a year. Merrick Leler was one of the owners along with his wife Justy. (They have recently sold the school.)

### **Some Austin Schools**

I have visited these schools\*. Preschools unless otherwise noted.

Some interesting programs here in Austin include:

First United Methodist Preschool\*

<http://www.fumcaustin.org/preschool> – developmentally appropriate, play, Christian

All Austin Cooperative\* <http://allaustincoop.org> - a parent co op - Reggio Emilia,

Town & Country Montessori AMI <http://townandcountrychildrensmontessori.com>

Parkside Community Montessori\* <http://local.yahoo.com/details?id=19397294>

Starbright Waldorf\* <http://www.starbrightpreschool.com/> - Waldorf

Austin Waldorf School (K-12)\* <http://www.austinwaldorf.org>

Beth Israel CDC Child Development Center [http://www.bethisrael.org/education/child\\_dev.php](http://www.bethisrael.org/education/child_dev.php)

Sri Atmananda Memorial School\* <http://www.samschool.org> – From India – child centered

Austin International School <http://austinape.org/> - foreign language based

Open Door\* <http://www.opendoorpreschool.org> - special needs

The Rise School of Austin\* [www.riseschool.org/austin/school.html](http://www.riseschool.org/austin/school.html)

children with developmental disabilities and children without disabilities

Capitol School <http://www.capitolschool.org> - Special Needs in language acquisition,

Rawson Saunders <http://www.rawson-saunders.org> - Dyslexia

Odyssey <http://www.odysseyschool.com> -Dyslexia, AHAD ADD grades 4- 8  
Huntington-Surrey [www.huntingtonsurrey.com](http://www.huntingtonsurrey.com) (9-12) small group  
Austin Youthworks <http://www.americanyouthworks.org> (9-12) – charter small group.  
Kirby Hall \* <http://www.kirbyhallschool.org> (K-8) academic  
St. Mark's Episcopal\* traditional and Christian based  
St. Andrew's\*, Regents\*, St. Austin's\*, St. Stephens\*, (K-12) - traditional academic Christian  
Girl's School of Austin (K-8) – all girls  
Public schools - elementary – Barton Hills\*, Brykerwoods\*, Gullet\* – small well rounded  
Highland Park – academic  
Austin Home Base <http://www.austinhomelbase.org/> For families looking for a balance between  
homeschooling and private school. Provides children with nurturing and small group class time  
of 15-18 hours each week, ages 5-13

**Philosophies** There is a diversity of philosophies in early childhood education.  
See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_childhood\\_education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_childhood_education) “The philosophy of early childhood education is largely child-centered education. Therefore, there is a focus on the importance of play. Play provides children with the opportunity to actively explore, manipulate, and interact with their environment. It encourages children to investigate, create, discover and motivate them to take risks and add to their understanding of the world. It challenges children to achieve new levels of understanding of events, people and the environment by interacting with concrete materials. Hands-on activities create authentic experiences in which children begin to feel a sense of mastery over their world. This philosophy follows with Piaget's ideals that children should actively participate in their world and various environments so as to ensure they are not 'passive' learners but 'little scientists' who are actively engaged.”

When looking at schools there is a range from flexible/creative to academic/structured. I believe that early childhood should be based in play and social/emotional development, which will provide the foundation for future academic learning. An early childhood environment will introduce many academic concepts and facilitate each child's individual learning path. The child leads the way and is not coerced into early academic learning. If a child has a strong play foundation, & a good sense of self and others, they are in the position to go into elementary school and be ready to learn what is **developmentally appropriate** for that age and stage. A good early childhood environment is developmentally appropriate. Early Childhood Centers and Primary Schools are set up for different developmental ages/stages.

I will highlight some of the different philosophies in early childhood education. I will note a few of the Austin Area Schools. Remember to get more information on any one of these just Goggle the name. See <http://www.parentspress.com/edupreschooltypes.html>. The approaches detailed are: Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, Developmental, Bank Street, Parent Co-ops, High Scope, Head Start, Academic, Play Based/Child Centered, Religious, and Foreign Language.

**Montessori:** I have taken the Principle and Practices of Montessori I & II and Montessori Math. Maria Montessori was an incredible early childhood teacher. All teachers should have the foundation classes. Montessori Schools can be AMS, American Montessori Society, or AMI, American Montessori International. AMI is usually more structured less flexible than AMS. See <http://www.amshq.org> and <http://www.amshq.org>. Montessori is a structured approach that was developed in Italy in the poorest neighborhoods. The structure provided a way to organize the learning for these children whose lives were chaotic. The "work" is done on mat, is taught by the teacher and then replicated by the child. Once instructed the child is able to do the work, as they want, The teacher will then teach the next level, as it is needed. The Montessori environment is prepared. The areas include practical life, math, language, sensory, geography.

Austin Schools include:

Parkside Community School, Primavera Montessori, Town & Country Montessori,  
Austin Montessori School

**Reggio Emilia** was founded in Italy after WWII. The families believed in education and came together to build schools. The program is art based and child centered.

All Austin Cooperative Nursery School – a parent co-op- parents sign up to teach a number of days a year.

**Waldorf** is a child centered approach that is nature based and holistic. The family signs on and agrees to not watch television. Rudolph Steiner is the innovator of this approach.

Starbright Preschool, Austin Waldorf (K-12)

**Developmental, Play Based/Child Centered**, - See list of schools above as most are a combination of these.

**Religious** - See list of schools above - most are Christian.

Beth Israel CDC Child Development Center [http://www.bethisrael.org/education/child\\_dev.php](http://www.bethisrael.org/education/child_dev.php)  
-learn through play. A strong Jewish environment also fosters awareness and appreciation of our multicultural society.

Jewish Community Association of Austin <http://www.jcaaonline.org> see early childhood program

**Academic** – most elementary and secondary Christian schools.

For **Resources for early childhood and positive parenting** see:

<http://www.familyconnectionsonline.org>

For a **PARENT RESOURCE DIRECTORY** see:

<http://www.austinfamily.com/resources.shtml>