Important Questions to Ask

- Does your family feel **valued**, **respected**, and **included** in the school community?
- Can your child **access** all learning opportunities and materials, regardless of ability?
- Are **relationships** between children and teachers warm and nurturing?
- Is the environment **safe** and **healthy**?
- Are teachers and staff **trained** in child development?
- **How many** children are in the classroom? **How many** adults support them?
- Is there a **daily plan** to guide learning? How is it **shared** with families?
- How is **play** included in daily learning?
- Do teachers use **observation** to track children's progress?
- How can families be **involved** in the classroom and school?
- How do teachers support your child's **home language**?
- Does **outdoor play** support learning and physical development?
- Do teachers and children engage in **meaningful conversations**?
- Does the learning space include **art**, **dramatic play**, **blocks**, **books**, **math**, **science**, and **writing areas**?
- Do children find **joy in learning**?
- Can children **move** freely in their learning environments?
- Can your child express **personal needs**, like using the bathroom?

Other Considerations

Curriculum/Philosophy of Program
Student Support Services
Before/After School Care
Hours/Months of Operation
Child Expectations
Readiness of Child
Transportation
Meals Provided
Cost

Partners for Pre-K & TK resources

PRESCHOOL - Resource & Referral

Marin Child Care Council 415.472.1092

TK - School Districts

Bolinas Stinson Union.....415.868.1603
Kentfield.....415.458.5130
Laguna Joint.....707.762.6051
Lagunitas.....415.488.4118
Larkspur-Corte Madera.....415.927.6960
Miller Creek.....415.492.3700
Mill Valley.....415.389.7700
Nicasio.....415.662.2184
Novato Charter.....415.883.4254
Novato Unified.....415.897.4201
Reed Union.....415.381.1112
Ross.....415.457.2705
Ross Valley.....415.454.2162
Ross Valley Charter.....415.534.6970
San Rafael.....415.492.3200
Sausalito Marin City.....415.332.3190
Shoreline Unified.....415.878.2266

Contact Us

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Preschool or Transitional Kindergarten?

Finding the best educational program for your 4-5 year old

MARIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

UPK Universal PreKindergarten California's Great Start

Play is the highest form of research.

-Albert Einstein

Families of four year olds face a unique range of educational options for their child in California.

Attending a high-quality early education program prepares children to learn and succeed by developing social emotional, pre-reading and math skills, helping them to be ready for kindergarten and beyond!

Finding the best option for your child takes time and research. You know your child best. This guide will support you in determining which program will best meet your child's needs.

Differences between programs for 4 & 5 year olds

Name	California State Preschool Program (CSPP)	Head Start	Private Center, FCCH, FFN	Transitional Kindergarten (TK)
Ages	3- and 4-year-olds	3- and 4-year-olds	3- and 4-year-olds	4-year-olds, depending on birthday
What it is	Preschool program run through contracts from the State of California	Federally-funded preschool program.	Variety of half-day and full-day preschool and childcare programs	Part of the public elementary school system that takes place the year before kindergarten
Schedule	Part-day and full-day options available	Part-day and full-day options available	Part-day and full-day determined by individual program & providers	Part-day and full-day options available, depending on local school district decision
Cost	Free or low-cost, based on income eligibility and other factors	Free, based on income eligibility	Fees determined by individual program & providers. Some families may be eligible for state subsidized vouchers to cover the costs of care.	Free, regardless of income

4 & 5 year olds need...

- A learning environment that reflects their identities and families
- Inclusion-focused spaces that celebrate each child's unique strengths
- Age-appropriate learning experiences based on developmental needs
- Teachers who honor cultural and language diversity
- Warm, respectful interactions with caring adults
- Hands-on, play-based learning that sparks curiosity
- Opportunities to explore, question, and reflect
- Teachers who guide and extend learning through play
- A balance of small- and large-group learning
- Freedom to move and explore their environment
- Time to practice and develop new skills
- Social experiences to build friendships and cooperative learning skills
- Engaging activities that inspire creativity and problem-solving
- Playful learning that integrates literacy, math, science, and social-emotional growth
- Rich language experiences that build vocabulary and communication skills

Information for families on Children's Early Development:

All About Young Children

https://allaboutyoungchildren.org/