ForeWord Reviews

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

**Preschool for Parents**
Diane Trister Dodge
Toni S. Bickart
Sourcebooks
978-1-57071-172-5
(August 1998)

Parents who have determined that their child should attend preschool have some homework of their own to do before completing an enrollment form. Locating a program that meets the needs of the parents and the child can be a major chore, as the popularity of preschool in recent years has led to a dizzying array of choices in many locales. *Preschool for Parents* is a valuable guide for parents trying to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Dodge is the author of more than 20 books and president of *Teaching Strategies, Inc.*, a national curriculum and teacher training company. Bickart is a senior associate at the company, a workshop leader and a former teacher at the prestigious Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.

The authors utilize the breadth of current understanding of early childhood development to assess how a quality preschool should meet the needs of children aged 3 to 5. Their guiding premise is that "the best preschool teaching practices make the most of children's natural inclination to play." Traditional "academics" exist in the context of the child's environment and daily activities; for example, a quality preschool may expose children to mathematics by encouraging them to figure out how to divide a snack. The authors warn parents to avoid preschools in which children use workbooks or engage in any type of formal learning. Summary checklists help parents identify many other features they should and should not see during a visit to a quality preschool.

Although the authors assume their readers have already decided to send their children to preschool, parents who are skipping preschool will find the book useful as well. The authors include wonderful and simple actions parents can do at home to help their children develop important skills.

Parents looking for endorsements of specific preschools or specific types of preschools will not find any in this guide. The authors do not discuss any program by "brand name." However, they provide a fairly comprehensive list of books, web sites and national

organizations for further research.

*Sharon Flesher*