

NAEYC Accreditation – A Commitment to Excellence in Early Childhood Education

The National Association for the Education of Young Children – the world’s largest organization of early childhood educators – established its accreditation system to raise the quality of early childhood education and help families and others identify high-quality child care centers, preschools, kindergartens and other early childhood programs.

NAEYC-accredited programs are committed to providing high-quality educational services to young children and their families. While the accreditation process examines all aspects of a program – including health and safety, teacher qualifications, and administration – the focus is on the interactions between teachers and children, and the quality of the child’s experience.

To earn accreditation, programs comply with national standards of quality that go well beyond state health and safety licensing requirements. The NAEYC Accreditation criteria address all aspects of an early childhood education program, including:

- Teacher qualifications and development
- Teacher-to-child ratios
- Teacher/child and teacher/family relationships
- Curriculum
- Physical environment
- Health and safety

(Details about the NAEYC Accreditation criteria – and other helpful information for families – can be found on the Web at www.naeyc.org/accreditation.)

A program begins the accreditation process with an extensive self-assessment to determine how well it meets these criteria. After the program makes

necessary improvements, it is observed by early childhood professionals, and then reviewed by a national commission of experts in child care and early education. Early childhood programs that substantially comply with the NAEYC guidelines are accredited for a three-year period.

The accreditation system was established by NAEYC in 1985, and the criteria have been revised several times to reflect best practices in the field of early childhood education. In 1999 NAEYC established a commission of early childhood care and education experts to recommend improvements for the future of NAEYC’s accreditation system. Those recommendations form the core of key changes NAEYC is making in the system.

NAEYC Accreditation has become widely-recognized as a leading measure of quality in early education, and in recent years the number of programs earning accreditation has grown significantly. There are more than 8,000 NAEYC-accredited child care centers, preschools, kindergartens and other early childhood programs – serving nearly three-quarters of a million young children – and many other programs working toward accreditation. However, while NAEYC Accreditation is growing, most early childhood programs are not yet accredited.

Go to the NAEYC Web site (www.naeyc.org) to search for NAEYC-accredited programs using your city, state or zip code, and to get a variety of information and services for families of young children. Many accredited programs display a torch – the symbol of NAEYC Accreditation.



In NAEYC-accredited early childhood programs you will see...

Frequent, positive and warm interactions among teachers and children

Children who enjoy themselves as they learn and play are signs of a quality program.



Planned learning activities and materials appropriate to children's age and development

With appropriate materials and expectations, quality programs help young children learn how to learn, and nurture their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.



A healthy and safe environment for children

A clean, well-supervised program is essential



Communication with families

Families should be involved in the program, and teachers and staff should welcome your interest.



Nutritious snacks and meals

Good nutrition is a key part of a young child's development.



Enough adults to respond to individual children

The ratio of children to teachers helps determine how much individual attention your child will get.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
www.naeyc.org/accreditation