



When Looking for a Preschool...

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to invest in your child. As a parent it is your role to select the most appropriate preschool for your child. Learning is a lifelong process and beginning it the right way is the best foundation you can give your children. Preschools come in all shapes, sizes and styles.

When looking for a preschool you should be asking questions that will help you decide which the best school is for you and your child. The questions should include:

1. **How long has the school been in existence?** CPNS was founded in 1984 by the First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury. We began with 16 children and have grown to 144.
2. **Is the School Accredited?** CPNS is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This is a very prestigious accreditation which recognizes that we are committed to reaching the highest professional standards and lets families know that the children in our program are getting the best care and early learning experiences possible.
3. **What type of school?** We are a Christian preschool and part of the First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury. You are always welcome here at our church and school, no matter what your religious background is. You are always welcome to explore membership here at the church as well as participating in the many wonderful opportunities our church provides. We are administered by a 10 member board, individuals that are part of our community with a variety of backgrounds in personnel, finance, education and administration.
4. **What kind of experience do the teachers have?** Our 3 and 4 year-old teachers have a certification in early childhood or elementary education. All of our staff members have first aid training and are certified in CPR. They are encouraged to

witness their faith in Jesus Christ by showing our students what it means to be a child of God through positive classroom activities and relationships. We believe each child comes to us with God given gifts and talents. God has created each child differently and specially-with love. All of our teachers love being with children and it shows everyday. The one thing that stands out about our teachers is their love of the children and their dedication to our school and to teaching. We are blessed with each and every one of them.

5. **What is the daily routine?** The components of each class are the same but the times are different. Our class time consists of a circle time where our lesson takes place as well as some of our classroom responsibilities. Children are given jobs and take ownership of their classes. Believe it or not they love to do them and they love to clean up after our activities. We enjoy outside time each day and have the opportunity to explore our many classroom centers. We have a snack each class time and say a prayer before each. We also say prayers for friends that are sick.
6. **How do the children learn?** We learn through fun. Believe it or not playing is the most important learning that they will do in their lives. It serves 3 very important purposes:
 1. Promotes very significant mental capacities: Stretches attention span, builds vocabulary, and develops perseverance and most importantly: Play is the young child's way of beginning to organize ideas and to plan to think. To successfully function in school and beyond, children need to learn more than a set of facts and skills. They need to master a set of mental tools, before the rest can come.
 2. Play is the young child's emotional equalizer. Young children need some defenses against the realities of life and play does that job.
 3. Play turns children into social human beings. It starts a child on the way to becoming civilized: a companion, a contributor. Now that children are in school the temptation is to push children into "serious things" forgetting how serious play is to them.

7. **Is there Parent Involvement?** We are not a coop or a day care. We do not require parents to contribute hours of service: we do offer many opportunities for parents to participate in their child's nursery school experience. Our parents are encouraged to share their experiences, ideas and feelings. We have special days, monthly newsletters and calendars, class trips and room parents and helpers.
8. **Is there time set aside for the parent and teachers to discuss the child?** We have 2 parent teacher conferences and communicate with families each class day.
9. **How is discipline handled?** We have a positive guidance policy, providing children with the appropriate words and behaviors to be successful in school and with others.
10. **What are the Class sizes and hours?** Our student/teacher ratio is 12 to 2 in our 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ year old program, 14 to 2 in our 3-year-old program and 16 to 2 in our 4 year old program. Our AM classes are from 9:00 - 11:30 and our PM classes are from 12:30 - 3:00.
11. **Is there a Lunch Program and or Enrichment programs?** Yes there is a lunch program 5 days a week and we offer a variety of enrichment programs including Math & Science, Music & Movement, Art & Literacy and the Power of Play.
12. **Is there outdoor space and how often is it used?** We have a fenced in playground area with appropriate play structures and classes go out for 20 minutes during each session.
13. **Do you have field trips?** Yes our children visit local establishments that directly relate to our curriculum. We always transport children in the appropriate car seats and utilize parents for transportation for our trips.
14. **School calendar schedule?** Our school year runs from the Monday after Labor Day through the first or second week of June. We follow the Cranbury Public School calendar.
15. **Is there a policy for taking care of injured or sick children?** To help us prevent the spread of germs, if your child is sick with a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, infected sores, or any of the other symptoms listed in our handbook, we are asking that you keep your child home until he or she is

symptom-free for 24 hours. The Harvard School of Public Health researchers found that children whose bodies have to fight bacteria and viruses early develop more robust protection against infection than those who are more sheltered.

16. **What kind of curriculum does the school have?** Our curriculum assists in a child's cognitive, social and emotional, physical and religious development. We do a lot of learning, not through pen and pencil, teacher directed activities, which can stifle a young child's love of learning, but through concrete ideas and examples. Research has shown that preschool children learn best when they participate in an active learning environment. It is reviewed constantly; we not only meet but surpass the NJ Department of Education's Early Childhood Program Standards. We recently adopted a new curriculum resource called Creative Curriculum and are currently evaluating a new curriculum for resource use called "Tools of the Mind"

We feel:

1. We feel very strongly about the total care we give our students-not just ABC but a nurturing, loving environment for learning.
2. We believe each child comes to us with God given gifts and talents. God has created each child-differently and specially-with love.
3. Our strength of purpose comes from our commitment to affirm your child's gifts and to help your child grow developmentally in an environment bounded by Christian love and caring.

Preschool children learn best through play. There has been a great deal of research done on how children learn through play and the relationship of play to future academic success. To survive and be successful in a changing world as we have today, people need to think creatively. Social problem solving is a necessary life skill. Play is the most basic way children develop these very important skills. It's not just any type of play, but the type of play that promotes the development of self-regulation and it should be fun. Children should be enjoying themselves-smiling, talking, laughing and pretending.

There has been much debate about how children are required to have more academic skills at younger and younger ages. So it is critical that we continue to provide children with the skills they need as well as maintaining our CPNS belief about how children learn best. We teach children the important emergent reading and writing skills so they will be successful in all aspects of their education. The human brain continues to grow as a result of learning and the early years are sensitive periods for brain development so experiences children are given during their early childhood years are extremely important.

The preschool experience helps children gain an appreciation of what school is like and gains a positive attitude toward learning Remember education is not a race; it's who stays with it the longest.

We hope we have answered the important questions that will help you choose the appropriate preschool for your child. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any others.

We look forward to sharing your child's preschool years together.