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**Subject:** Choosing a Nursery School

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Sesame Family Newsletter

March 19, 2009

## Choosing a Nursery School

by Elana A. Halberstadt

One family finds an extension of home at school.

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### Featuring:

Ready for School

The Nursery School Challenge

Searching for Just Right

School is Cool

### Sesame on the Web

Did you know that Sesame Street is on YouTube?

[Check us out!](#)

## Games and More

### School Days!

- [Explore Elmo's Class](#)  
Click to find the fun things there are to do at school.
- [Make Time to Rhyme](#)  
Join Hoots and Elmo in the classroom for some rhyming fun.
- [The School Song](#)  
A song and video about what it is like to be in school.
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

## Parent Survey

The Parents Section of the Sesame Street website will soon have a new focus; providing you with all the media (videos, games, activities, and articles) that

### Backstage with Elmo

Elmo talks to Season 39 celebrity guests David Beckham, Neil Patrick Harris, Jack Black, Heidi Klum, and

Jenny McCarthy about their favorite things.

[Watch Videos](#)

you need to help you navigate your child's milestones.

Help us make the Sesame Street site even better for your child! Take our survey and tell us what you think.

[Take the Survey](#)



### McDonald's A Proud Sponsor of Sesame Street

McDonald's is a proud supporter of Sesame Street's efforts to help parents choose a preschool. Together, we believe in bringing a sense of joy and imagination to learning and life.

## READY FOR SCHOOL

Last spring, I thought my son Max might be ready for a preschool program in the fall (when he'd turn 2). He was around 18 months old and left me in the dust at the playground. Max explored, made new friends, and seemed to thrive in social activities like music class or playgroups. I imagined him in school with his pals, sitting at a table with those impossibly cute chairs, and a teacher who wasn't me, making some adorable craft with sparkles and glue. I had about six months to find a place. But, I soon discovered that registration starts a year ahead for many schools, and that many already had waiting lists. What? I had to get a move on!



### [EASING THE TRANSITION TO DAYCARE OR PRESCHOOL](#)

Helpful tips on learning to separate.

I wanted a safe, warm, and loving environment for Max -- one that would challenge and inspire him through play. I wanted the school to encourage his natural curiosity and love of learning. I was less concerned with curriculum than finding the feeling of an extended family -- a home away from home. After all, he was only going to be 2. He needed cuddles and patience within a structure that was flexible and secure. I needed reassurance that he'd be well taken care of, treated respectfully, and as an individual.

Like in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, we had to find our "just right." I figured I'd know it when I saw it. There were many elements to consider. First, there were the practical, such as location, schedule, rate, and age requirements. Then there were the intangibles, like mood in a classroom, teaching style, and the way teachers communicated with kids *and* parents.

## THE NURSERY SCHOOL CHALLENGE

At our usual play spots, I asked parents where they send their kids to preschool. Did they like the school or not, and why? An online, neighborhood parenting forum I belonged to also had helpful information.

I had many questions for the schools I would ultimately visit. Here are a few:

- What is the student-teacher ratio?
- What is the education and experience of the staff?
- Does the school have an open and exploratory approach, or is it more structured?
- How do they handle the separation process?
- How do they handle discipline?
- What is a typical day like? Are there a diversity of activities?
- Are there safe indoor and outdoor play areas?
- How much will it cost?

Soon I had a list of schools, questions, and advice straight from the sandbox, "Trust your instincts." "What's right for you will be right for Max." "You have to feel comfortable."

I was a nervous wreck.



### [IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?](#)

Help deciding what's best for your child.

### [LETTING GO IS A LIFE SKILL](#)

How to ease separation anxiety.

## THE SEARCH FOR JUST RIGHT

Max and I visited several schools. One was in a gorgeous space, and is highly regarded in the community. Seeing Max play independently during the open house proved to me that he was ready. This school, however, was too expensive for our budget.

Another school offered a flexible schedule, reasonable rates, and the owner seemed straightforward and kind. But I was saddened by a reading corner that was dirty and disorganized. Max was oblivious and fit right in, but there were other red flags, and overall it didn't feel right to me. Here I learned that Max would probably be fine anywhere, but I hadn't found our "just right" yet.

There was a new home-based program in the neighborhood, but because it was new, there were no classes to observe yet. I needed Max's first school to be tried and true. At this point, I stopped the search.



### [DEVELOP A LOVE FOR BOOKS](#)

Learn ways to encourage a love of books.

## SCHOOL IS COOL

Last September, due to local demand, a well-established nursery school had opened up enrollment for a second 2-year-olds class. Maybe it wasn't too late after all!



### [PRESCHOOL MUSICAL](#)

This video features a song about preschool.

It was love at first sight. Everything felt familiar and just right. Big sigh of relief! The director patiently answered every one of my questions. The head teacher and her assistant were kind, warm, and welcoming. The classroom, as well as the indoor and outdoor play areas, was well-stocked with every imaginable toy and learning tool. The school was inviting and clean, yet lived in and comfortable -- just like home. The book corner made me cry happy tears -- it was cozy and cared for. I wished I was 2!

Max enjoyed playing there so much, he didn't want to leave. I knew we had found our "just right" place when Max hugged the teacher goodbye, and his eyes lit up when I told him he'd be going there again soon. Max started school at the end of October, one month before his second birthday. He still goes two mornings a week. Now that we are nearing the end of the school year, I can look back, see how much he has learned, and know in my heart that I did the right thing. I was determined to make his first school experience a positive one, and I was willing to wait until we found a good fit. Thankfully, we did. Max calls nursery school, "Cool!" and I don't correct him. School is cool.

I fretted about this project, but I learned a lot in the process:

- Trusting my instincts is key.
- Each family is unique and there is no ONE way.
- Everything is subject to change so it helps to be BFFs with Flexibility and Patience. (Easier said than done.)

Our family is probably moving again this spring, and we are now looking for a new school for next year. But this time, I know I can do it, and so can Max.

I wish you the best of luck finding your "just right" situation.

Elana A. Halberstadt  
Sesame Workshop

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## WEEKLY TRIVIA

### Did You Know?

Kermit's song *Bein' Green* has been sung on the show by Lena Horne, Ray Charles, and of course, everyone's favorite amphibian: Kermit.

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## ABOUT THE WORKSHOP



Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary *Sesame Street*. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like *Dragon Tales* and *Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat*, *Pinky Dinky Doo* and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of *Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales* and *Sagwa* products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org).

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