



## FROM THE GROWING KIDS' PARENTING RESOURCE LIBRARY

### The Positive Role Quality Childcare Plays in Your Child's Life

Most people are of the opinion that a child's parents can care for them better than anyone else. While this may be the case, many parents are forced to find alternate childcare options for their children for a variety of reasons, such as work demands, illness, or death in the family. And while you may understand that you are your child's best advocate and caregiver, that doesn't change the fact that you need help. In childcare, like any other facet of life, not all caregivers are created equally; but in childcare, unlike other aspects of life, the stakes are extremely high. After all, whomever you entrust with the care of your child will have a huge impact on his or her life, as well the lives of your family members. You cannot afford to take lightly the decision of who to use as a childcare provider, and here's why:

- Smaller child to caregiver ratios have proven to result in greater gains in children's language skills, general knowledge, and overall behavior, including less exhibited hostility than in children who attend childcare centers with higher child to caregiver ratios.
- The education and specialized training of caregivers makes a huge difference in the level of care provided, as well as the outcomes for your child. According to a study performed in 1997 by Carollee Howes, an internationally recognized childcare researcher, preschoolers' receptive language skills are higher when a caregiver has an Associate's degree or higher. In addition, infants have superior expressive language skills when caregivers are better educated. At 36 months of age, children whose caregivers had advanced formal education or specialized training exhibited fewer behavior problems and were more school-ready, and their language comprehension scores were higher than those children with less educated caregivers.
- Childcare quality has also been linked to the development of math skills in children.
- Children at childcare centers that more thoroughly meet standards set by the American Public Health Association have fewer behavioral problems at 24 and 36 months, according to the 1999 Study of Early Child Care by *The Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

It has been shown numerous times through countless studies that children are hugely affected by the environment in which they are raised. When making the crucial choice of which childcare to trust your child to, remember that the caregivers there will be standing in your place for whatever amount of time your child is there. Base your decision not only on your instincts as a parent, but also on the care center's track record, client testimonials from people you trust, and from your own observations of the way the center is run. Your child's safety, well-being, and emotional and intellectual development will all be influenced by the care he or she receives there, so make the choice a matter of much thought and research.