

## **Secrets of a Great Preschool Classroom**

By Tina McLaughlin

### **Your child's preschool classroom....**

#### **..Should be a safe, attractive and comfortable setting.**

The furniture should be child-sized and in good repair. The furniture should also be arranged so a teacher can see all the children in the room. Toys and materials should be appropriate to the child's age and cognitive level. Materials are stored on low shelves so children can reach them without help. The room includes decorative touches, including plants, displays of collections (such as shells, leaves, or stones), and fabric covered pillows. A cozy area should be accessible to children throughout the day. The children's art work is displayed in the classroom along with displays that relate to current activities. Each child has a cubby to keep their personal belongings and pictures of family members are displayed for each child.

#### **..Should be divided into interest areas where children can explore, make things, experiment and pursue their own interests.**

Separate interest areas with varied materials offer children a range of clear choices. Sometimes children want to work quietly, either alone or with another child. Areas devoted to books, art activities, or toys and games provide several choices for quiet activities. Areas set aside for dramatic play, block building, or movement activities provide choices for active engagement.

#### **..Schedule should allow time for large-group activities, small-group time and choice time.**

During large-group time children experience a sense of belonging to a group. Children practice communication skills as they express thought, ideas, and feelings. The purpose of small-group time is to introduce a new concept or teach a particular skill to a smaller group to give more one-on-one attention to each child. Teaching preschool children how to make choices is such an important skill that it deserves some systematic teaching in the classroom. A well-defined, illustrated schedule is prominently displayed so children learn the order of events that occur each day and know what to expect.

#### **..Has a teacher that treats every child with respect and acceptance, viewing all children as capable, competent learners.**