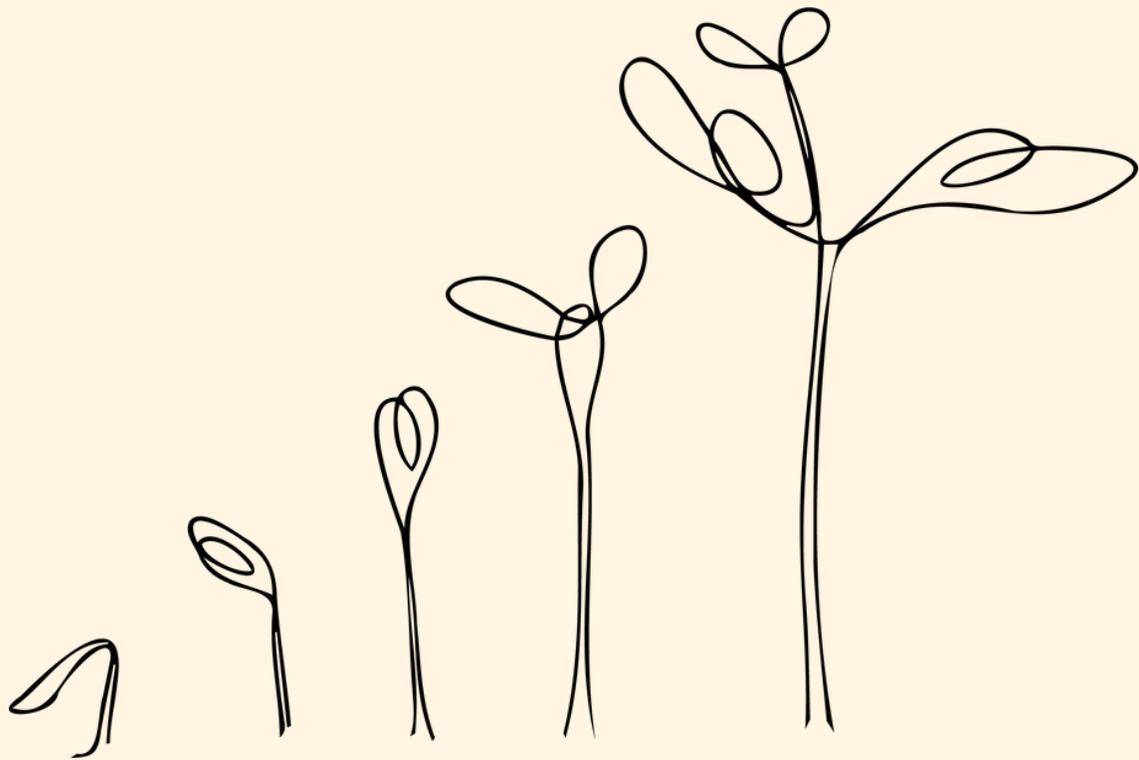




# We Skoolhouse

# Ultimate School Guide

Your one-stop guide for childcare center ownership.



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*\*Please note that the templates and example documents cannot be edited. You can make a copy of the file, or, simply copy and paste the content into a new file on your personal drive or device.*

# Introduction

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to ensure worldwide access to high-quality early childhood education while also supporting holistic care for children in the classroom or at home.



## ABOUT US

We Skoolhouse, grounded in developmentally appropriate practice, guides teachers, business owners, and parents in facilitating early learning and development of children from pre-birth to six years old.

## VALUE PROPOSITION *A partnership with We Skoolhouse offers...*

1. **Economic Advantage:** Our approach allows your business to avoid substantial upfront costs and high royalties, making it easier to achieve financial success.
2. **Curriculum:** We offer a world-class Reggio Emilia inspired curriculum that promotes the holistic development of the whole child, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth from pre-birth through age six.
3. **Custom Consultation:** Our team of early childhood experts and business leaders offer customized consultation services to address the specific challenges and opportunities of your business.
4. **Teacher Training:** Our professional development training for teachers ensures that your team is continuously learning, growing, and delivering exceptional care and education.
5. **Autonomy:** By maintaining brand identity and control, your business can adapt locally and grow on your terms, while benefiting from our expert guidance.

# Why Open a Child Care Center?



Before we dive into the planning and operational considerations, let's take a moment to recognize the significance of this work. Thank you for considering the prospect of opening a childcare center. Early Childhood Education has profound benefits—not only shaping the future of the children it serves but also creating a lasting positive impact on the broader community.

Early Childhood Education lays the foundation for success in school and beyond. Quality childcare during the first five years boosts children's academic achievement, career opportunities, and overall well-being, creating a ripple effect that strengthens the workforce and benefits society as a whole.

For parents, access to quality child care enables workforce participation and provides the support of a “village,” improving their overall well-being and confidence in their children's care.

## Trends in the Childcare Market

We are seeing, in many areas around the world, a greater need and a greater appreciation for child care centers. More families these days consist of working parents & guardians. With an ever globalizing world, many families do not live nearby grandparents, or other family members, who may be able to assist with childcare. There are more and more scenarios in which we are seeing families desperately in need of support in the form of a childcare facility.



There is also an increase in the awareness of the importance of Early Childhood Education. The mentality that childcare is “glorified babysitting” is being challenged, and this is a conversation growing in popularity. We are seeing more families actively seeking quality programs with research-backed pedagogical approaches for the benefit of their children’s development.

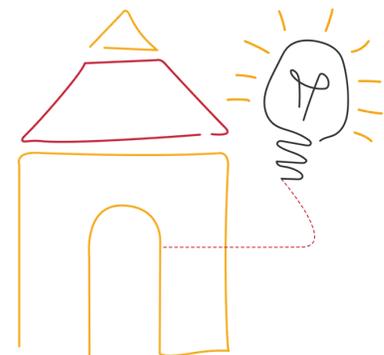


Childcare facilities are seeking more opportunities to improve in their professionalism, in both their operations and in their pedagogical practice. Facility owners and directors are seeking more ways to enrich professional development for their staff.

As Early Childhood Education is approached more professionally, and as more research is being done, there is a rise in interest in more progressive pedagogical approaches, such as Montessori and Reggio Emilia inspired schools. These more child-centered approaches have shown promising results in developmental outcomes for children during their early years. As more parents actively seek childcare, for the benefit of their child’s development, they are also seeking centers with these more progressive approaches.



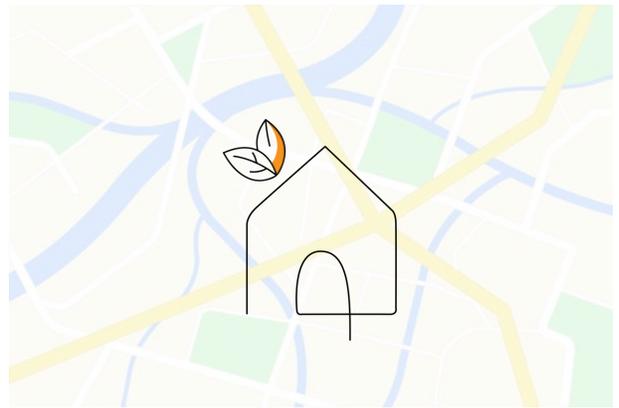
In alignment with this growing professionalism, and in alignment with the movement towards more progressive approaches, We Skoolhouse specializes in helping childcare professionals deliver more developmentally appropriate practice, and offers many forms of professional learning for Early Childhood Educators.



# Site Selection

## Demand

Before selecting the facility for your child care center, or even committing to a neighborhood, you should analyze the demand of the area. Ask, "are there enough families in need of childcare?"



Some research you may do is to turn to city data – the local municipality may be able to share neighborhood demographics, revealing if this area has a lot of young families with young children. You may look for trends in growth and development, as well. Is this neighborhood growing? Are there new families moving in?

You may also assess the demand of the area by checking for other childcare centers nearby. Do they have waitlists? If other childcare centers in the area have waitlists, this is a good indicator that families are in need of more options for childcare.

## The Neighborhood and Location

The quality of the site you choose for your early childhood development center will be dependent on how well it caters to health and safety, and functionality and appeal. And, in addition to the facility itself, you will need to consider its surrounding area and neighborhood.

## Health and Safety

Beginning with safety, your childcare center needs to be easily accessible for emergency services. It is worth considering the facility's proximity to the nearest hospital, fire station, and police station. Also, consider accessibility features like wide roads, and clearance to entry points.

Be mindful of nearby factories, gas stations, nail salons, or automobile repair shops, as they may exude harmful chemicals, and try to keep a distance from such businesses and facilities. You should also consider environmental factors such as flood zones.

If you are in an urban area, you may look for nearby playgrounds and other means for enrichment as you go on neighborhood walks with the children. However, be mindful of the surrounding roads. No one should be crossing unsafe roads or walking excessive lengths. A playground or park with a walking distance of just a few blocks is ideal. Are there proper street lights and traffic signs in place? If not, you may need to advocate for such with your local municipality, or look elsewhere. A location with heavy or chaotic traffic can lead to issues with noise, safety issues, and make drop-offs and pick-ups problematic for parents.

## **Functionality and Appeal**

Consider the appeal and impact of your center's location on the families and community. Families may appreciate a location near the local high school or elementary school, as parents may need to drop off older siblings as well. Having childcare near retail and metro stations helps streamline errands and travel for parents who commute. Landlords may see childcare as an attraction in their mixed-use sites, as childcare may bring additional traffic to their property.

It is important to think about accessibility for school staff. It is helpful to be within a half mile from train or bus lines, to offer alternative means of transportation for commuting staff.

Consider competition: are there other childcare centers nearby? In suburban areas, franchises look for at least a few mile radius of separation from other childcare locations. In cities, childcare centers may be separated by a few blocks; more or less, depending on city density.

Being close to residential areas also has a benefit, as parents appreciate the convenience of a childcare center that's close to home. Being in or near residential areas also sends a comforting message about being part of the community. This proximity allows parents to easily drop off and pick up their kids, saving them time and reducing the stress of commuting.

Lastly, consider the overall development of the neighborhood itself. Does this neighborhood have a stable population of families with young children? Is this a neighborhood that is growing, where families are moving into? If so, this area may cater to the growth of your childcare business.

# The Facility

## Health and Safety

In the case of an emergency, your facility should have two means of egress, or evacuation options, not including any fire escapes. You will need to conduct specific safety and facility inspections, such as water-lead testing, contamination testing, mold, and check for properly functioning plumbing and electrical systems. Is there a sprinkler system, and working detection and alarm systems in place for smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide?

A child care and development center should also reside no higher than the third floor of a building. Infants and toddlers must remain on the ground floor. Basement spaces, only to be utilized by children over the age of 2 years, must not be lower than one level below the ground level. Stairs will need to have gates installed, and low handrails for the reach of small children, for the prevention of falls. Any free-standing structures such as poles, pipes, columns, and radiators should be covered with protective padding or other shielding.

Aside from plumbing for your staff, there are plumbing considerations for the children. You will need one child-sized toilet and sink for every 15 children who are 24 months or older (or a fraction thereof). These toilets and sinks must also be accessible and as close as practical to children's classrooms and play areas.



Running water should be available both warm and cold, but should not exceed temperatures of 115 degrees fahrenheit. Additionally, all classrooms will need a sink for handwashing, for children as well as staff, who will be changing diapers and cleaning up other regular messes.

The facility should also have working, proper, and balanced ventilation (either natural or artificial), providing fresh air while also managing drafts, vapors, gasses, or any fumes. All spaces should be well-lit where children will need to be supervised at play.

Play and climbing equipment, such as climbing bars and slides, must be appropriately sized for child age and development. For example, children under the age of 4 should only be climbing on equipment under 32 inches tall. After age 4, children can graduate to equipment 60 inches in height. Resilient surfaces, such as rubber tile or wood chips, should cover all ground beneath climbing and play areas.



## Functionality and Appeal

In terms of functionality for your families and staff, consider if the facility offers a safe parking lot, if necessary to the area. Envision your site layout, and various uses of space: Consider needs such as stroller storage, school materials storage (such as spare art supplies or furniture), a reception desk, an administrative office, a staff break room, and all classrooms. Will your school also have an indoor playspace for gross motor movement, for days with inclement weather? Will you have an art room or STEAM room? Also consider the placement of the classrooms: infants and toddlers should be on a ground floor, not in the basement or up any flights of stairs. It may be helpful to assemble a team of construction professionals experienced in child care intricacies. Professionals such as architects, engineers and contractors who have experience with childcare facilities will be a great help!



The quality of your facility will also be depending on details such as the amount of windows and natural light there is. Classrooms with large windows (even into the hallways or other rooms) are a great way to allow for a flow of light and to open up space. Adequate outdoor space, with space to move around freely (run, climb, jump) and be in connection with nature, is imperative to child development. If your facility does not have its own outdoor space (preferably in the back, away from any traffic and fenced in), it should be within close proximity to nearby parks, as mentioned when considering the location and neighborhood. Outdoor play areas should be safely fenced in, ideally with climb-proof fencing.



# Permitting

In order to operate a school, your region will likely require a permit. In order to obtain a permit for childcare, you may need other permits, first, such as for building occupancy,



In this process, you can expect certain inspections and paperwork or documentation required. These inspections and required documentation may include:

1. **Certificate of Occupancy:** A Certificate of occupancy is a statement of approval that the premises complies with all applicable building laws and codes and may be used as a school or for childcare purposes. You may need to contact your local Department of Buildings to arrange inspection.
2. **Technical plans:** Technical plans include blueprints, architectural or engineering drawings. They should be drawn to scale, and labeled to show floor layout, all indoor rooms and outdoor areas to be used by the program, the dimensions of the various rooms and areas, and intended use of each area, and all toilets, sinks and kitchen(s) to be used by children and staff.
3. **Emergency Preparedness:** This is a check that the facility has updated and working fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, clearly lit exit routes and exit signs, new fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide alarms, and/or emergency preparedness and first aid supplies. You may need to contact your local Fire Department for such an inspection and approval.
4. **Safety Plan:** Routes and plans for emergencies which may include emergency evacuation, lockdown drills, severe weather plans, trails of communication and ladder of demand, and more. [Please see our template for writing a full safety plan here.](#)
5. **Staff Background Checks:** Staff will likely need to be screened in order to work with or around children. This may involve some paperwork with personal information about each staff member, such as date of birth and history of home address. There are agencies designated to conduct background checks, so you will need to find the agency for your region.

6. **Proof of Staff Credentials:** In addition to a background check, you may need to provide proof of staff experience or training in the field of education. The expectation for different roles may differ from region to region. Credentials may include: level of education (Associates, Bachelors, or Masters Degree in field of work, or relative field), a certain number of years experience in the field, and/or particular professional certifications. You will need to research the requirements for your region. Try contacting your local Department of Education, and/or, your local Department of Health.



Throughout your school preparations, you will be working very closely with your local municipality, in order to meet all their requirements and stay within all regulations necessary for operating a safe and quality school within your district or region. You will also be working very closely with professionals such as contractors, plumbers, and electricians, and using their expertise, in order to be sure your facility is structurally sound, functional, and safe. Consider these professionals important members of your team and counsel!

# Staff and Supervision

Your school staff will be the heart of your program. They are the ones providing quality, safety, care, warmth, and personality to your program. It is imperative that staffing be taken seriously in your program, in regard to hiring enough staff, and onboarding them efficiently with the proper support they need to start off a successful career within your school.



## Staff Roles and Ratios

**Your administrative team may include an educational director, school director, assistant director, receptionist, or curriculum coordinators.** Below are some potential definitions for possible administrative roles. Depending on the size of your school, you will need to decide how large of an administrative team you will need, and how you will define their role and responsibilities.

- **Education Director:** Head of school; Oversees the pedagogical practice of your school. Oversees all operations and communication throughout the school community.
- **School Director:** Oversees operations and communications, and possibly pedagogical practice.
- **Assistant Director/Associate Director:** Aids in operations, communications, and possibly pedagogical practice.
- **Curriculum Coordinator:** Oversees pedagogical practice, coaches teachers, determines curricula and runs professional development.

Education directors, school directors, assistant/associate directors, and curriculum coordinators are generally degreed in education (or a related field) and have years of experience in the field. Specific required credentials may vary by region.

- **Receptionist:** Oversees operations and communications of the front desk. May help with filing. Answers phone calls and relays accordingly.

**Your teaching staff will include lead teachers, assistant teachers, and floater teachers.**

- **Lead teacher:** Head of the classroom; these individuals have qualifications suitable for planning, decision making, and delegating within their classroom. This may be a combination of childcare experience and formal training, education, and/or certification. Your local municipality may have requirements already set in place for a lead teacher's credentials, so be sure to check with them.
- **Assistant Teacher:** Helps the lead with the planning, implementing of lessons and practice. Helps with classroom setup and management. The assistant teacher may have less credentials than the lead teacher, but they should be prepared to step in as lead teacher, in the absence of the designated lead teacher.
- **Floater Teacher:** A floater teacher is generally the least credentialed staff member, and their role is to visit various classrooms, per the needs of various rooms. One school may have 2 - 3 floaters, depending on the size and needs of the school. Floaters may spend their mornings in one room, and then switch to another room in the afternoon. They may help cover lunch breaks of teachers across the classrooms. Just as assistant teachers should be prepared to step in as leads, floaters may occasionally need to step into a classroom as an assistant. Some floaters may work part-time hours.



Proper supervision is essential to the quality of childcare you provide, both in means of safety and in means of developmental care. Check with your local municipality for guidelines on child care supervision ratios within your district or region.

Below is a chart outlining the class size and supervision ratios we recommend for quality care:

<b>Age of Children</b>	<b>Staff:Child Ratio</b>	<b>Maximum Group Size</b>
Under 12 months	1:4 or 1:3	8
12-24 months	1:5	10
2 - 3 years	1:6	12
3-4 years	1:10	15
4-5 years	1:12	20
5-6 years	1:15	25

Each classroom should have at least one lead teacher, one assistant, and a floater teacher on hand. A classroom of 8 infants, therefore, would have one lead teacher, one assistant, and a floater teacher who comes in to help as needed. This would be a minimum requirement. It is potential you may need to consider having two consistent assistants, in order to meet the needs of the children.

# Hiring and Onboarding Staff

Hiring and retaining high-quality staff is crucial for creating a nurturing and stimulating environment for young learners. With the challenges of high teacher turnover and finding dedicated educators, a well-structured recruiting and interview process is essential to address these issues effectively. Be sure to establish your needs: how many teachers do you need in order to always be safely within the appropriate child:teacher ratio? And know what you are looking for in high-quality staff for each role.

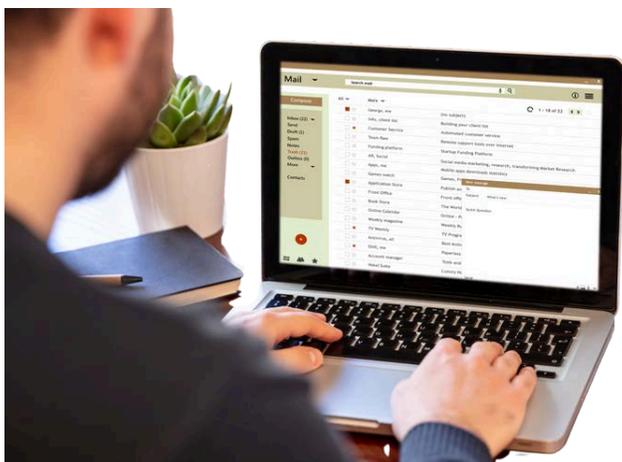
## Establishing Your Needs

Depending on the size of your school, you'll need to decide how many staff you need to hire. Any school should always have at least one qualified supervising director, though ideally there are at least two present administrators for a school with 4 or more classrooms.

Follow the ratio guidelines for staffing classrooms, and decide the amount of administrative supervision you'll need depending on the size of your school.

## Posting Job Listings

When looking for staff, you may turn to recruitment websites such as Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and ZipRecruiter. It may also help to share listings with nearby colleges and universities. Young adults who are studying fields such as Early Childhood Education, Education, Child Development, Psychology, or related fields, will have a passion and commitment to the work. They will be looking for opportunities to gain experience working with children and families, to learn, and to practice their developing skills. Students soon to graduate with a degree will be looking for full-time work. You can reach out to school administration such as the head of the education department, student counselors, or the college's career services department.



Some websites, like Handshake ([joinhandshake.com](http://joinhandshake.com)), partner with nearby colleges to help find work for their enrolled students.

[Click here for some example job listings.](#)

## Interviewing Candidates

The interview process may consist of two or three parts: initial interview (in person or virtual); and an in-person follow up interview. Third, or conducted on the same day as the follow-up interview, you should offer the opportunity to see how the candidate interacts in the classroom environment and with the children.



**Initial Interview:** At this time, you will ask the candidate about their experiences, training, and interests and intentions. The initial interview may be held with the school Owner or Director. Possible questions may be:

1. Why do you enjoy working with young children/infants-toddlers/preschoolers?
2. What led you to working with children/Early Childhood Education?
3. Do you have a preferred age group that you like to work with, and why?
4. What makes you unique as an Early Childhood teacher/caregiver?
5. How do you ensure the safety of the children in your care?
6. How do you ensure a positive work culture with your team?
7. What are some skills you feel you have strength in?
8. What are some skills you are working on?
9. How do you build healthy relationships with children in your care?
10. What do you think is the best way to communicate with a child?
11. How do you build relationships with the families?
12. Why are you interested in working with this company/school?
13. Imagine a child in your care is unhappy. How would you make them feel better?
14. Have you handled a situation where a parent was upset or angry before?
15. Tell me about a behavior challenge you once had in the classroom and how you handled it. (Or give them a scenario and see how they would respond to it).
16. Describe your philosophy about caring for children and toddlers.

**Follow-Up Interview:** The follow up interview may be conducted with another member of the administrative team, or even a trusted lead teacher (depending on the role being hired for), to see how their experience goes with the interview. The follow-up interview can include some of the same questions as the first interview, or new ones.

**In-Person Observations/Mini-Lesson:** We recommend that you dedicate time to allowing the candidate to enter the classroom, conduct their own observations of the classroom. As they do this, you should observe them as they interact with the classroom environment and children. You may even ask them to do a mini-lesson for your observation. It is advised that you ask them to send you their lesson plan ahead of their visit.

If you give them time to just join the classroom during playtime and make observations, you may ask them questions such as:

1. What did you notice about the teachers' tone of voice?
2. What materials did you see and what did you think of them?
3. How were the children interacting with the materials?
4. What did you notice about the management of routine?



You will be looking for how well they warm up and open up to the classroom environment and the children. How is their demeanor while in the room? Do they play with the children? Do they get down to the children's level?

You will also be looking to see how detail-oriented they are, and how keen they are to the classroom management and setup.

Of course, depending on whether or not you are hiring for a lead, assistant, or floater teacher, your expectations will differ.

If you wish to have them perform a mini-lesson, which may be useful for Lead Teacher hires, you will need to carve out time during the school day. This may only need 10 minutes, and will differ depending on the age group you are hiring for.

## Official Offer

Once you find a candidate you are confident in and wish to hire, you will need to send them an official offer letter. [Click here for an example of an official offer letter.](#)

# Onboarding

You will want to efficiently train and onboard your new staff before they begin their work in the school. This includes familiarizing them with your school and staff policies, health and safety policies, school culture, and the expectations and responsibilities of the role. You should also formally introduce them to the staffing team of the school.

You will have to hand them a faculty handbook with a code of conduct, which should include a page to sign for receipt. [Click here for an example.](#)

They may need to obtain particular trainings, such as: Mandated Reporter, Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Disease, Emergency Preparedness, Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reaction Prevention and Response, CPR & First Aid, or others that may be required by your local municipality.

Lastly, you could offer some form of curriculum or pedagogical training ahead of the new staff member's work with the children. The [We Skoolhouse Classroom Platform](#) offers extensive materials, such as guides, articles, and recorded webinars that can be useful for these purposes. We Skoolhouse also offers live (virtual or in-person) [Professional Development for teachers.](#)

## Staff Record Keeping

As you onboard your new staff, you will need to organize a file of all their credentials, background information, personal identification, fingerprinting, emergency contacts, ongoing professional trainings, and more. You may need to have a digital tracking system, as well as have hard copies of their files ready for inspections.

[Click here for a template of a digital staff record tracking system.](#)



Check with your local municipality for the required documents for each staff member.

# Human Resources

Staffing is an integral part of a successful school. Staff provide a warm, loving, and enriching environment and experience for the children. They bring with them the disposition of care and joy, they build the closest relationship with the children in their care. They are the heart of the operation.

Staffing also continues to be one of the biggest challenges within schools, particularly with staff turnover. To combat teacher turnover, it is helpful to have a designated person for managing staff, listening to their needs, and to organize their benefits. A human resources professional can be responsible for managing...

**Recruitment:** Finding, screening, and interviewing job applicants. The school director, education director, or owner will ultimately interview and decide on hiring the most qualified candidates, but the Human Resources professional recruits and screens the best candidates for the director or owner to meet with.

**Payroll and benefits:** The Human Resources professional will process payroll and administer benefits to the staff.

**Policy communication:** This may involve communicating and enforcing company policies, both upon onboarding as well as regularly throughout employment.

**Conflict resolution:** As conflicts or concerns may come up, the Human Resources professional is there to help work through and resolve such challenges with staff.

**Regulatory compliance:** Lastly, a Human Resources professional may help the school owner ensure that the school is within compliance with federal, state, and local regulations regarding staffing.



# Training Staff

To ensure quality care and implementation of Early Childhood education, it is important to regularly offer professional learning opportunities for your staff - teachers and administration alike.

Pedagogical training can begin right at the start of onboarding, and should be regularly scheduled throughout the year. Many municipalities or states will check that staff are continuously undergoing professional development, obtaining certificates as documentation, and building a portfolio throughout each school year.

Full-Day Professional Development should be scheduled into the school year at least 3 days out of the year. The school should be closed to children, and staff come in for a full-day of learning and work. Additionally, professional development can be scheduled in smaller chunks throughout the year, such as in the form of engaging in hour-long sessions on digital learning modules.

Additionally, administrators such as Education Directors or Curriculum Coordinators should observe the teachers in practice each week, and offer constructive feedback.



It is important for professional development to be instructional and insightful, to come with actionable takeaways for their practice, and also, to be empowering and encouraging for staff. Early Childhood Education and child care is a mental, physical, and emotional labor. This must be appreciated, and staff should be approached with respect for what they do, empathy, and encouragement.

**We Skoolhouse's classroom platform** is loaded with material for professional learning, in the form of pedagogical guides, insights on brain development, curriculum resources, and recorded live webinars. Additionally, We Skoolhouse offers **live professional development** that can be scheduled for individual schools and teaching teams, and **1x1 consultations with Early Childhood Experts**. In our 1x1 sessions, we cover a variety of pedagogical topics for staff, as well as organizational and leadership topics for school directors and owners. *Please always consider We Skoolhouse a resource to help empower your team!*

# Admissions and Enrollment



## The Admissions Process

As you market your school and gain interest, you should create a list of leads for enrollment, and create a process for enrollment. This process may look like:

- **Pre-Application:** The pre-application is a simple form, collecting general information about a family with interest. This can be a first-step that gets families onto the waitlist. When a seat is available for their child(ren), they can complete an Application Form.
- **Application Form:** The application form should collect information such as: parent(s) name(s), child name(s), child birthdate, home address, and potential start date.
- **Initial Interview (can be virtual):** In the initial interview, families will meet with school administration (Director and/or Owner). This is a time for the family to verbally share their interest, explain what they are looking for in childcare, and introduce themselves as a family. The school administration can introduce themselves and their team, the school mission and values, pedagogical approaches, and any other general information.
- **School Tour:** Families should be invited to tour the school. This serves as an in-person introduction to the administration, and to the school facility. Families can look into classrooms through the window, and see how the school space is set up. Daily schedules and general operations of the school can be shared. Health and safety operations, and school policies, may also be shared.

- **Home Visit:** This is a final meeting before the child's start. Some schools administrators will visit a family in their home for this meeting, to make the meeting more intimate, and to build upon the foundation of a positive and close relationship. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, many schools have moved the "home visit" to a virtual meeting, such as on Zoom. The intention of this meeting is to leave space for any remaining questions either party has, to restate any important information regarding policies and required documents before the child's start. The lead teacher of the classroom the child will enter may join this meeting, to introduce themselves and go over their class daily schedule. Administrators and the family may discuss a transition schedule for the child's start.
- **Offer Letter/Contract Letter:** The family should be given an official Offer Letter and Contract from the school, offering their child a spot in the school. This letter should be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian and returned to the school. [Click here for an example offer letter.](#)
- **Required Paperwork:** Once an offer has been given, and accepted by the family, they will need to complete required paperwork. The required list of documents is dependent on your local municipality, but it should include the child's recent health records (from within the last 12 months), family contact information, emergency backup contact information (in the event the parents or legal guardians cannot be reached), liability forms such as media releases and wellness waivers, family and child intake/information forms, and receipt of the family handbook. [Click here for templates of some various forms,](#) and [click here for an example of a family handbook.](#)
- **Welcome Letter:** The Welcome Letter is a more spirited letter welcoming the family into the school community. This should include the school's mission and values, an introduction to the school administration, an introduction to their child's teacher, the class daily schedule, and a school supplies list. The Welcome Letter may also restate highlights from previous meetings such as: highlights of health and safety policies, modes of contact and communication, and drop-off and pick-up routines. [Click here for a template.](#)
- **Transition into School:** Some children will transition into their new school environment easily, such as some younger infants (~3-8 months of age), and children who have been in childcare environments before. These children may not need much assistance transitioning and adjusting into their new school and can start right away with a full-time schedule. Other children will benefit from a transition schedule, where they spend their first two or few days part-time, maybe even gradually increasing their schedule by the hours. This will depend on the prior experiences and temperament of the child, and a transition plan can be discussed with the family. Some parents, too, benefit emotionally from a graduated transition schedule, if this is their time sending a child to school.

## Create a Waitlist

As your school fills up its enrollment space, you will need to create a waitlist, and have a system in place to help manage who to call next when spots open up. It may help to have an Admissions Director on your team if you find your waitlist and enrollment is too large for a school director or other administrator to stay on top of. Throughout time, a waitlist can require quite a bit of communication and tracking. Families may call to inquire where on the list they are, other families will enroll in other schools or other forms of childcare and need to be taken off the waitlist, new families will wish to join the waitlist, and you may choose to prioritize certain individuals such as siblings of already enrolled children. **Please checkout our [Waitlist spreadsheet](#) which may help you organize this list.**

## Family Engagement and Relationship Building

Before even enrolling families, and as you plan for your school year calendar, it is important to prioritize family engagement. Consider events and practices you may hold in order to involve families in their child's school experience, and to help build the relationship the school has with them.



As outlined in the admissions process, you should already be meeting with each family more than once prior to their child's start. Welcome them into the school to tour the facility, and meet the teacher. You may also offer a "Family Info Night" prior to the start of a new school year, for all families to attend.

After their child starts, this engagement should be ongoing.

Some suggestions may be...

**Regular families events:** Monthly events when families gather together. This can be in relation to the season or a holiday, such as a "Fall Walk/Picnic," "Family Tree Building" around Thanksgiving (US), holiday events relative to the families' cultures, an Earth Day Seed Planting, Spring Art Show.... the options are endless. We Skoolhouse offers some more ideas on our platform, but we encourage you to be creative and collaborative in coming up with your own. Always, we should be celebrating our community's diversity, so please welcome collaboration with families to celebrate the cultures and traditions they may be happy to share.



Families may also be invited to join the classroom. They can sign-up for a given Friday morning or afternoon, for example, to conduct a read aloud or a "share and tell," or join group circle time, in their child's classroom.



Lastly, you must schedule at least two or three Parent-Teacher Conferences throughout the school year. If your school year runs for 10 months, two meetings might suffice. If your school year runs for 12 months, then at least three meetings should be planned. This is an important time for families and teachers to catch up on the child's development and learning. They can discuss observations from the school day, as well as from at home. They can celebrate milestones, and strategize ways to support areas of growth.



**All forms of family engagement are vital to building relationships within your community.** More intimate meetings, such as parent-teacher conferences, are important for building a strong connection between the school and each individual family. Classroom visits are also important for individualized relationship building. Whole class and school events benefit the experience of each child and family, and enrich the bond of the greater school community, helping families form bonds with each other.

# Communication, Security, and Operations

An efficiently and safely run school has strong systems for communications, security, and school operations.

## Communication

There should be working phone lines running from the front desk and main office into each classroom, to ensure the administration and teachers can communicate quickly. Some schools may have phone lines connecting the classrooms, as well, so teachers can connect with their colleagues as needed.

Some schools with a larger facility and larger administrative teams may utilize walkie-talkies for immediate communication while they are on the go throughout the school. Other school systems rely on their phones for communication.

Immediate and efficient lines of communication are important for all purposes, big and small: checking if a movement space is available for use, asking for favor or a little help with any given situation, to notify teams of schedule changes, to notify administration of a sick child, etc.

Another important aspect to communications is your responsive reporting paperwork. This includes accident, illness, and behavior reports. These documents are generally stored and managed at the front desk or in the main office. Whenever a child becomes ill, gets sick, or has an incident, it should be recorded. This record can be shared with families, and kept in the child's file.

At the front desk, and in the main office, there should be an organized place to find all lists of contacts - family contact information, staff contact information, and emergency phone lines such as the nearest police department, poison control, exterminator, and more.

Your school should also have an organized line of demand. This outlines a ladder of leadership, and who reports to who. Many municipalities will look for this as part of permitting.

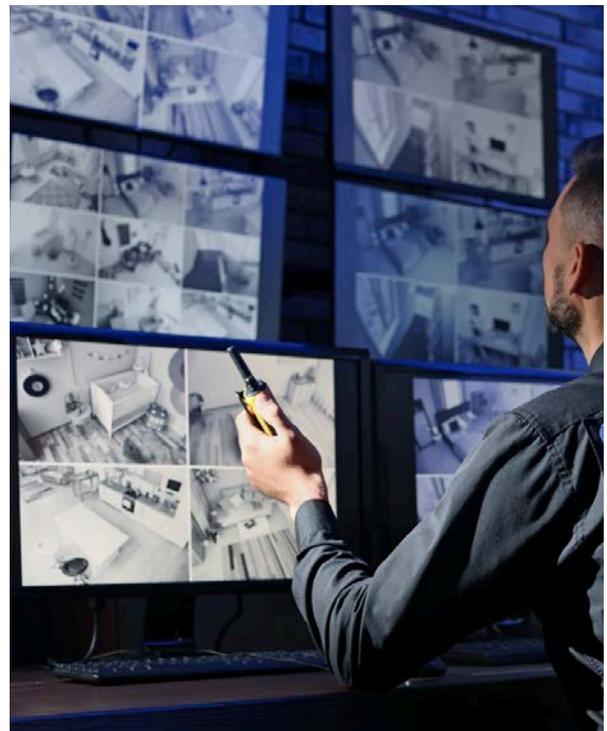


Sending your young child to school can be emotional for parents, and it helps to have some form of daily documentation of the child's care and experience. Families should be sent a daily report each day, listing items such as: the child's meals, naps, diaper changes or trips to the toilet, and daily experiences. These reports should include photographic proof of the child's engagement in play and social experiences. Ideally, they also outline the day's activities and developmental benefits. For preschoolers, some schools may opt to do a classwide weekly newsletter, as opposed to an individualized daily report. This newsletter should highlight learning activities and objectives for the week, and also include photographic documentation of the children's experience.



## Security

In each classroom, along the hallways, and outside the facility, live camera feeds should be set up and operating in real-time, feeding surveillance onto a monitor in the main office and/or to the front desk. Some schools may even offer parents access to the live feed into their child's classroom, but it is necessary to have this surveillance going to the school administration. This helps the school leadership keep tabs on everyone's safety (the children and the staff), and can also be useful in tracking the happenings of various situations (the footage should be saved for later reflection of events). A camera at the front door let's school administration know at all times who is entering and leaving the facility.





The front door of the school should always be locked, so no one can enter without permitted access. Schools may install an unlocking system operated by a button at the front desk, or, offer parents a key FOB upon their child's registration. On the inside of the door, there should be a panic bar for easy evacuation, so anyone can simply push the door open as needed.

Tacked at your front desk, there should be a sign-in system for all children, families, staff and visitors. This is important for tracking attendance, that classes are always within appropriate adult:child ratio, and for always knowing who is coming in and out of the school.

## Operations

Other forms of operations are going to include things such as customer invoicing, staff payroll, filing of staff and child records, keeping track of inventory, and regular services such as bi-weekly pest control, daily cleanings, and daily food catering.

Many schools use programs such as Quickbooks to manage invoicing and payroll. You may utilize a spreadsheet to track any of these other items, as well. More schools are adopting software that help track all operations – everything from communications, to tracking attendance, to managing invoicing and payroll. These programs are helpful in keeping your school operations organized and running smoothly.

An example of such software, and a **Preferred Partner of We Skoolhouse**, is Illumine.



**Illumine**, a technology partner for early childhood care and education providers, is the only **Childcare Management Software** designed with **AI at its core**, streamlining your center operations and empowering educators to focus on what matters most. *Inquire with We Skoolhouse for more information, and for a referral to get 10% off their services.*

# Designing your School Space

## Function

When designing your school space, let's first consider function. You should consider the needs of the community - will families benefit from stroller storage? Where may this stroller storage live? Will the classrooms be going on neighborhood walks, for which you will need large buggies or strollers? Where will those be stored? You will also need a space to store school supplies: rotating toys, art supplies, loose parts, even spare shelving and other furniture. Make sure there is adequate space for these supplies.

You will need to consider the layout of the rooms, as well. Where will your main office and front desk be located? Likely, close to the main entrance. There should be a space, possibly your main office, which offers the opportunity to hold private meetings, which will be necessary for staff and for your enrolled families.

The placement of the classrooms should also be intentional and thought-through. For example, you may not wish to place infants in a room with noisy streets just outside, as they may need to nap throughout the day.

Your child bathrooms should be in close proximity to preschool and potty-training classrooms. Of course, these bathrooms should also have appropriately sized toilets for children, and low sinks or step stools to access sinks. The child bathroom should offer some privacy, however, still line of sight for the adult caring for the children, and space for the adult to assist with toileting as needed.

# Aesthetics

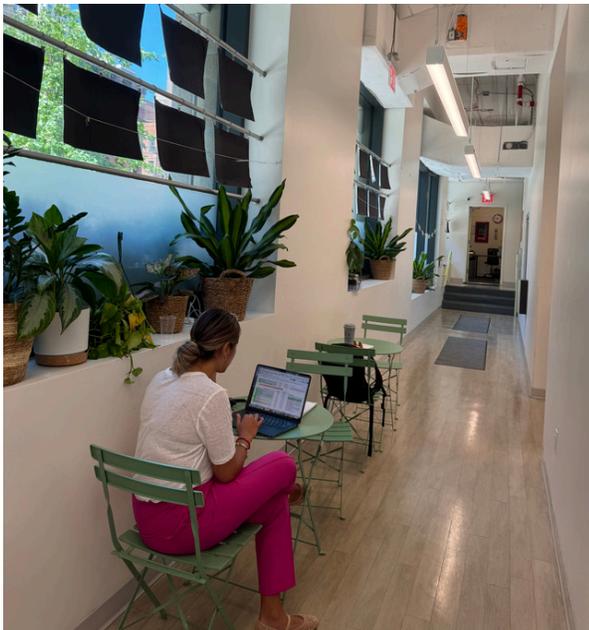
The overall aesthetics of your school can have a big impact on the experience of the staff, families, and children. It helps overall focus and well-being to have adequate natural light. Inspired by the Reggio-Emilia approach, we appreciate a feeling of *movement* in our school spaces. Large windows, even just leading between classrooms and the hallway, allow for a flow of light and open up space. The lighting we offer also can make a space more inviting and interesting. If you don't have a lot of sunlight coming into your space, this can be aided with the use of recessed lighting in your ceiling. Play around with brighter lights, as well as warmer lights to balance the mood. Warmer lights, placed lower below the ceiling, can offer a calming feel. This can be done with sconces or hung fairy lights. Keep safety in mind, as well, and be mindful when considering certain lamps like floor lamps.



Paint color and furniture should be overall neutral - beige, white, natural wood. This helps create a feeling of calm, but also allows for documentation and children's artwork to catch the eye when hung. Accent walls, and textured walls, can be nice! But overall you need your space to be more neutral.

# Community and Brand Reflection

It is nice to have your space somehow reflect your community. In the Reggio Emilia philosophy, community is prioritized, and one way we can embrace our community is by honoring it in our space. Hang photographs of local landmarks, hire local artists to assist with an accent wall in your main entrance, or perhaps lean into cultural textiles when decorating. You are a part of your community; decide what would be most special when reflecting the community in your space.



You can also reflect your brand, and pedagogical approach within your space. Utilize brand colors and concepts in your decor. If your pedagogical approach leans into Reggio Emilia or Waldorf, you may choose to use natural or upcycled materials to decorate, and aim to make your space feel cozy, homey, and inviting.

# Classroom Setup and Curriculum

## Furnishing and Layout

Each age group is going to require different furnishing needs, such as cribs, cots, and various sized shelving, tables, and chairs. Be sure to reference guidance on which pieces are required for each. For example, an infant room should have low shelving that infants can access on all fours, as they crawl around and explore the toys presented on them. Infant rooms should also have the opportunity for the babies to practice their crawling, scooting, and standing skills; low climbers and bars can be very supportive for the physical development of babies on the move.



In a preschool classroom, you will need to have the appropriate furniture to set up all areas of play and learning: play centers include a dramatic play area, library, blocks center, table toys, cozy corner, STEM, and art and writing. These centers will require things such as kitchen sets, sensory tables, drying racks, and an easel. In addition to the required furniture, you will need to consider possible layouts for these centers, which involve intentional use of space and consideration for the activities involved. You may be mindful not to place the cozy corner and library directly next to the loud blocks area, and it may be helpful to place art and writing near the sink.



There is a lot to consider in classroom design, and We Skoolhouse is here to walk you through it. Please refer to environment set up materials on our platform, and feel welcome to schedule a 1x1 where we can discuss your classroom space and needs.

You may also check out these helpful inventory lists:

**[Example furniture, toy, and book supply lists for infants, toddlers, preschool classrooms.](#)**

# Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach



As discussed earlier, there is a growing interest in embracing more progressive pedagogical approaches, as these approaches are shown to have better results in developmental outcomes for children. Most prominently, we are seeing schools adopt methods and inspiration from Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and Waldorf.

We Skoolhouse is inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, with appreciation for Montessori and Waldorf, as well. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, the child is seen as capable and confident in leading their learning journey. We value an emergent curriculum, which is responsive to the development, learning, and unfolding interest of the children. Learn more about progressive approaches, most extensively about the Reggio Emilia Approach, on our platform. We offer literature and guides on the progressive approaches, as well as recorded webinars.

Whichever approach you choose to follow, your practice and learning goals will need to be backed by pedagogical research and data. There are many resources available outlining child development. We Skoolhouse offers curriculum materials, guides on child brain development, the developmental domains, and assessment tools, all backed by the latest research in child development and learning needs.

# Sales, Marketing and Branding



As you plan to open your childcare center, you will need to make yourself known within the community. You can do this through on the ground canvassing, as well as online marketing and advertising.

## Canvassing and Making Connections



On the ground, you may turn to local businesses to help spread the word. Create marketing materials, such as a flier, sharing details such as the name of your school, a tagline or brief description of your mission, the ages you serve, and contact information. Connect with local businesses to share word of your school, and share your flier.

Real estate agencies could be a great resource. They are often a first line of connection with families moving into the neighborhood. They will likely be happy to share news of available quality childcare, as this also entices their clientele. You can try visiting real estate offices, and see if they will take printed flyers, or, email them a digital copy.

Other places you may look to connect with families, and expectant families, are local pediatric offices, ob-gyn offices, or prenatal yoga studios. See if any of these places will share news of your school.



You can also try reaching out to local government or municipality buildings. They may be able to help you spread word through a bulletin board or newsletter to the community.

If you reach out to the management office of any local residential buildings, they may be willing to send out email blasts to all residents about your new school, including your flier or advertisement.

Another way to market on the ground is by joining in community events. Does the neighborhood hold any farmer's markets or community fairs? Keep an eye out for such opportunities to participate as a vendor. You can set up a tent with materials showcasing your school, pedagogical philosophy and approach, and take the opportunity to introduce yourself and your team to the families of the neighborhood.



At the very least, you may be able to attend and hand out marketing materials, such as a flyer or brochure, and business cards.

## Host Tours and Events

If your facility is ready, you may invite families to visit for an information session and tour of the center. Use canvassing methods to advertise your event, and even set up a system for collecting RSVPs so you can gauge potential turnout.

If your facility is not ready to host an event, you can also ask to host a similar information event inside the lobby or event space at a local residential building, local church or other religious building, or a similar community space that has access to inviting local families to attend.

At the event, be prepared to showcase your center and educational approach with posters and slideshows. Have brochures and business cards for families to take home. This event is a great opportunity for families to meet with you, the school founder, and staff. It may be a nice touch to offer refreshments and snacks for those who attend.

Setting up child-friendly activities for children and families to engage with is not only fun and memorable, but gives families a tangible experience of what your approach to early childhood education looks like.

Lastly, be sure to use this event as an opportunity to collect emails and create a phone list (including the age & name of their child(ren)) for follow ups with leads.

# Website and Social Media

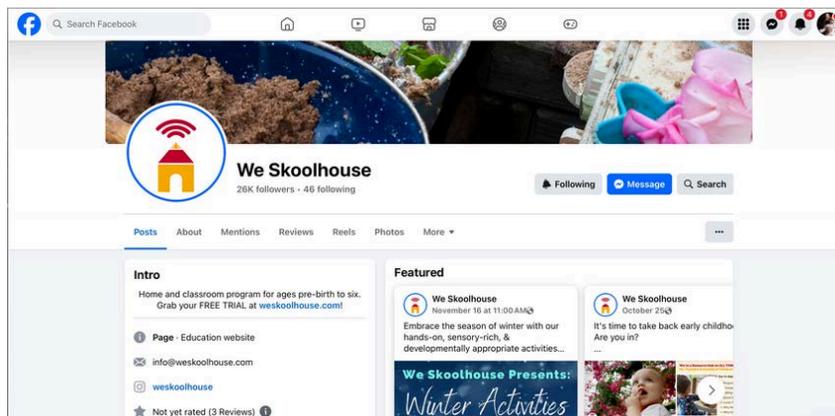
Be sure to set up an attractive, easy to navigate, and informative website for people to reference online. Options include hiring a designer to create your website, or, you can use templates, such as Wix, to create your own website.



Also create social media accounts, which are a great way to showcase your center. If you are still in the process of opening the center, you can create posts and reels showing the process and highlighting how excited you are to open your doors.

When families are looking for a center for their child, and come across a social media page, this page is an opportunity to show the school's happenings, personality, and to excite families' interest.

An Instagram account can be used to post both still images and reels (short videos), but reels have the most reach. Facebook is very helpful as many communities have neighborhood specific, and parent specific, facebook groups that you can join and post on.



# Paid Advertising

You can also purchase advertising, such as in local newspapers, on podcasts, and on radio stations. Social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, also offer advertising opportunities which can be targeted to your specific geographical area, and specific demographics such as adults 20-60 years old (potential parents).

# Financial + Legal Considerations

## Startup and Ongoing Costs

There will be various startup costs to opening your center. Start up costs include the cost of contractors, plumbing, electrical, etc, the costs of furnishing and materials, lease expenses or down payment for the purchase of the facility, permitting expenses, marketing and advertising, and of course, early hiring costs. Ongoing costs can include the salary and benefits for staff, payroll expenses (such as taxes or processing), rent or mortgage payments, catered food for the children, payroll expenses (taxes, processing etc), classroom and school furniture, safety and building equipment and maintenance, insurance & utilities expenses, school supplies inventory, on going professional development for staff, and routine professional services such as human resources, legal, CPA accountancy, pest control, and cleaning.



## Determining Your Pricing

As stated earlier in this guide, it is important first to understand the demand in your community for childcare, and also, to understand the financials of your demographic. What do average incomes look like for your area? You can also survey competition, and what their tuition models look like. This will give you a good idea of what is realistic to the area, and what will help your center thrive.

## Site Evaluation Model

We Skoolhouse has a financial model, our Site Evaluation Model, designed to help you estimate the startup costs required to launch your childcare center. Whether you're in the planning stages or fine-tuning your financial projections, this model provides a breakdown of key expenses. By inputting your specific data into the designated sections, the model will automatically calculate your total startup costs, project financial feasibility, and offer insights into areas where adjustments may be necessary.

[Click here to access our Site Evaluation Model for your use.](#)

## Legal Considerations

You should have an attorney on hand to help with various legal aspects to operating a business and childcare center. These matters will include: staff policies, school policies, family agreements such as waivers of liability for injury and illness and media release forms, landlord or bank agreements around lease or mortgage payments, and writing terms of use and privacy policies for your website.



Click here to view We Skoolhouse's [company privacy policy](#), and our [terms of use on our website](#).

## Templates and Example Documents

Below are links to templates and example documents, that we hope may help you with the various operations and organizing of required planning and documenting for your childcare facility. Please note that these documents cannot be edited. You can make a copy of the file, or, simply copy and paste the content into a new file on your personal drive or device.



- [Written Safety Plan](#)
- [Example Job Listings](#)
- [Official Staff Offer Letter](#)
- [Faculty/Staff Handbook](#)
- [Staff Record Tracking System](#)
- [Family Offer Letter](#)
- [Example Family Liability Waivers](#)
- [Family Handbook](#)
- [Family Welcome Letter](#)
- [Enrollment/Roster Template](#)
- [Waitlist Spreadsheet](#)
- [Incident Report Forms](#)
- [Classroom Furniture + Supplies Lists](#)
- [Site Evaluation Model \(Financial Model\)](#)
- [Recorded Webinar on Ultimate School Guide](#)



## **MADE FOR CHILDREN. DESIGNED FOR YOU.**

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