

Special Report | March 21, 2013

# GOOD PARENTING



**KIDSPEAK**  
Tot quotes

**BEHAVIOUR**  
The digital divide

**EDUCATION**  
School of choice



# Fat chance

Why diets aren't the answer in the war on child obesity

MARIA

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**By Veathika Jain**  
*Special to GN Focus*

Every parent's dream is to provide their child with world-class education. In the run-up to making the right choice, parents primarily look at curriculum, facilities, qualified teachers, fees and location as key factors. In Dubai, the concerns of parents take on a different nature — high school fees, long waiting lists, lack of information and non-refundable registration costs.

The first step in choosing the right nursery or school is to assess if, as parents, you are ready both psychologically and emotionally, says Lucia Sabatino, Head of Toddlers International Nursery, Dubai. "Secondly, parents need to do a thorough research and identify the type of programme that caters to the sensory needs of the child, where the children have choice and get a wholesome experience. Children from zero to six years are sensorial explorers and learners."

A recent survey done by comparison website Souqalmal.com saw 850 parents talking about their challenges of choosing the right education for their children. About 65 per cent of the parents from the survey had a waiting list concern, while 33 per cent found it tough to obtain relevant information.

For making a good decision, parents cannot just choose from lists, but need to visit the schools. Ambareen

# Opening doors

Experts share tips with parents to help their children gain admission to the institution of choice

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Musa, mum, founder and CEO of Souqalmal.com, says, "I think you can tell a lot by the school's attitude towards parents. I have been shocked by the rudeness at the reception desk of many of the schools and what worries me is the example my child will be exposed to."

The American School of Dubai recommends paying attention to key factors such as class size, where the teachers are from, the average length of teachers' stay in the school, and high-school profiles that can throw light on the colleges students from the institution gain admission to after school.

"For school tours, parents must check for the availability of a qualified and dedicated medical team to handle normal and emergency situations," says Ghazal Junejo, who has taught in schools in Pakistan and Riyadh.



**ON THE MONEY:** Higher school fees do not necessarily guarantee a higher quality of education

School fees is another major criteria in choosing the school of your choice. It's more important to go for the school that suits one's requirements, rather than looking for one as a status symbol, says Prachi Sankhla, a working mum. "I was initially all set to enrol my child in an IB (International Baccalaureate) school, but the disparity in fees made me think twice. I don't quite see what extra knowledge a Dh50,000-a-year school could impart to

a four-year-old as compared to a Dh30,000-a-year one."

Junejo says parents should also look out for schools that have a parents' council, which gives parents a chance to be involved.

While choosing a nursery is an easier process, parents must see to it that they choose an inclusive nursery that caters to particular special requirements that the child might need, says Sabatino. "The nursery should also be in the neighbourhood so travel time is minimised. It should have qualified teachers and a nurse on site. Lastly, if there's a bus service, make sure there are nursery attendants on the bus."

In Dubai, check the Knowledge and Human Development Authority ratings while deciding on a school. If parents do their homework and plan ahead, they are sure to make the right choice. ■

## Fee structure and ratings guide for select Dubai schools

	Curriculum	Authority rating	Average teacher to kids ratio	Grades	Registration opens	Location	Annual Fees (Dh)	Extracurricular activities
Dubai American Academy	American/IB	Outstanding	1:15	KG 1-12	9 months prior	Al Barsha, Dubai	15,740-69,186	Paid
GEMS Wellington Intl. School	British/IB	Outstanding	1:25	KG 1-13	12 months prior	Al Sufouh, Dubai	35,244-76,675	Partly paid
Dubai College	British	Outstanding	1:22	G7-13	12 months prior	Al Sufouh, Dubai	63,937-72,400	Paid
Dubai Modern High School	Indian	Outstanding	1:25	KG 1-12	7 months prior	Nad Al Sheba, Dubai	26,780-42,050	Partly paid
Kings Dubai	British	Outstanding	1:15	KG 1-7	36 months prior	Umm Suqeim, Dubai	33,441-53,695	Partly paid
GEMS Jumelrah Primary School	British	Outstanding	1:25	KG 1-6	12 months prior	Al Safa, Dubai	32,775-41,315	Partly paid
Delhi Private School Dubai	Indian	Good	1:30	KG 1-12	4 months prior	Jebel Ali, Dubai	8,460-11,850	Free
GEMS Wellington Academy	British	Good	1:25	KG 1-9	20 months prior	Dubai Silicon Oasis, Dubai	31,000-64,000	Partly paid
Our Own English High School	Indian	Good	1:28	KG 1-12	6 months prior	Oud Metha, Dubai	6,015-12,727	Free
Dubai British School	British	Good	1:25	KG 1-13	18 months prior	Emirates Hills, Dubai	36,993-55,490	Partly paid

Source: Souqalmal.com