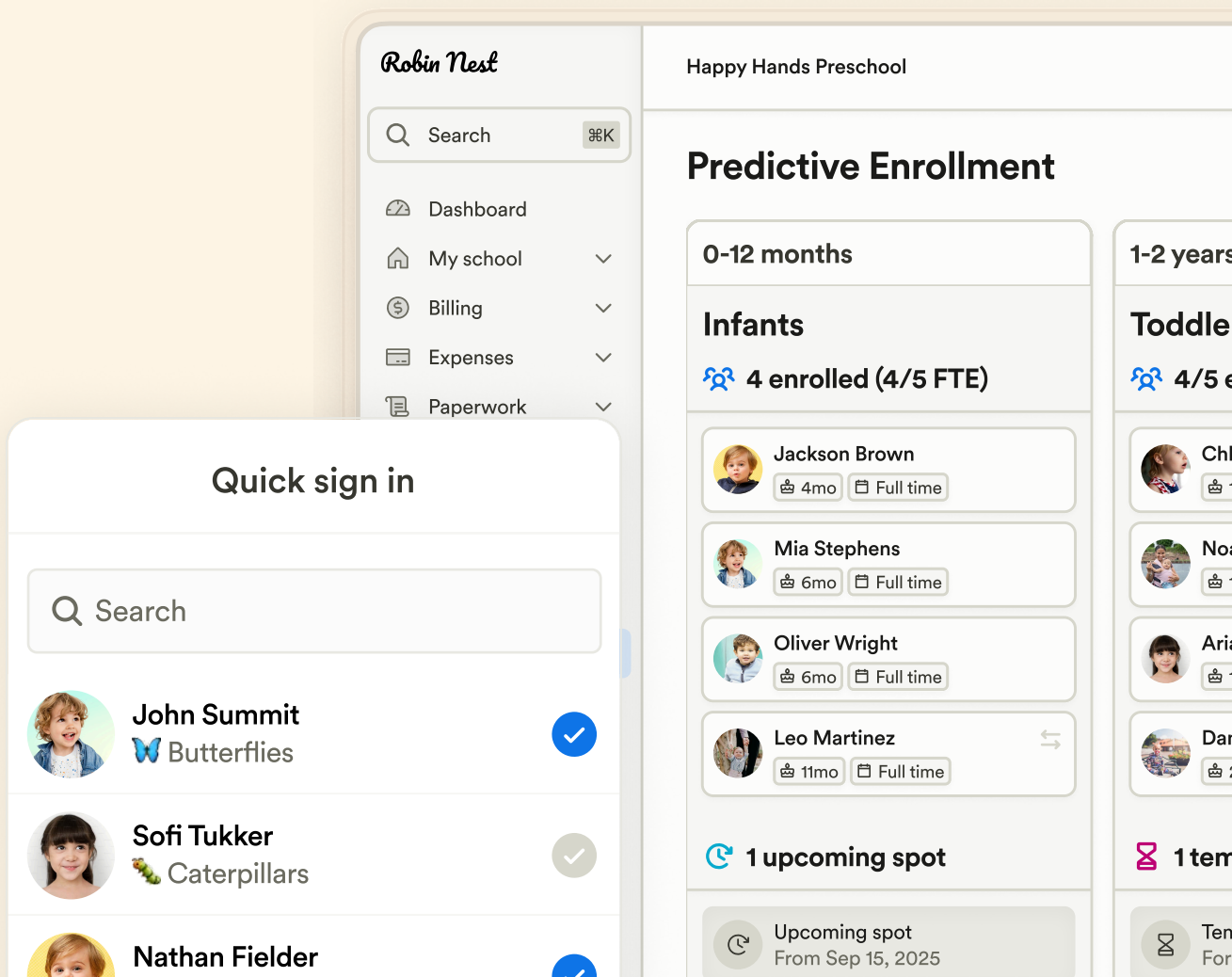


How to Choose the Right Child Care Software For You



1

Choosing a child care management system is a big decision. The wrong one costs you time, money, and the headache of starting over. **The right one gives you back hours every week and lets you run a tighter, less stressful operation.** We built this guide so you don't have to spend hours researching on your own and still end up unsure.

Inside you'll find:

- the criteria that matter most when evaluating whether a platform fits your program
- what to watch out for during the sales process
- how to do a real cost-benefit analysis, and a tear-out scorecard you can bring into any demo.

2

The 7 criteria that actually matter

Most software demos look impressive. The real question is whether the platform can handle the specific, messy, edge-case situations your program deals with every day. These are the eight areas where the right platform makes a genuine difference — and where the wrong one will cost you.

1.

Subsidy and Government Program Support:

If any portion of your enrollment is funded through CCDF vouchers, state subsidies, or CACFP, this is the first thing to pressure-test. A lot of platforms technically "support" subsidies but require you to manage most of it manually. What you want is a system that tracks subsidy attendance separately, helps you reconcile reimbursements, and generates the documentation your state agency actually needs.

The 7 criteria that actually matter

2.

Billing Automation:

Billing is where most platforms either earn their keep or quietly drain your time. The difference between basic invoicing and real billing automation is significant. You want autopay set up at enrollment, not as a separate step families have to complete later. You want the system to handle sibling discounts, rate exceptions, and mid-month changes without requiring manual intervention every time. And when families fall behind, there should be a clear collections workflow built in.

3.

Enrollment Workflow:

Enrollment season is already one of the most time-intensive stretches of the year. The platform should make it less so. A fully digital enrollment packet with e-signatures is the baseline. What separates good from adequate is whether the information families enter flows directly into the child's record, or whether someone on your staff has to re-enter it manually. Re-entry creates errors and takes time you don't have.

4.

Staff Adoption Ease:

A platform your staff won't use consistently is worse than no platform at all. The daily tasks — check-in, meal documentation, parent messaging — need to be simple enough that a teacher who isn't tech-savvy can do them without calling you over. Ask vendors for their average time-to-adoption metric for non-administrative staff. If they don't track that, it tells you something.

5.

Onboarding Support Quality:

What the sales process feels like and what the first 60 days feel like are often very different. Before you commit, get specific about what onboarding actually includes. Is there a dedicated person working with your program, or are you handed off to a help center and a series of tutorial videos? What happens if you get stuck three weeks in and the person you were assigned to isn't available? Ask for the average support response time post-onboarding, not just during it.

6.

Data Migration:

Ask every vendor the same three questions: what transfers, who does the work, and how long does it take. The answers will vary significantly. Some platforms migrate your full child and family records. Others migrate almost nothing, leaving you to start fresh or export and reformat everything manually. The more specific the vendor's answer, the more confidence you can have that they've done this before and have a real process.

7.

Parent-Facing Experience:

Families form opinions about your program partly based on how easy it is to interact with you digitally. A clunky parent app reflects on your center, even if it's not your fault. The baseline is digital check-in and real-time messaging. Beyond that, look for self-service features that reduce the volume of calls and texts you field — things like balance viewing, payment history, and document access. If your program serves families who speak languages other than English, ask specifically about translation support.

3

What your current program is actually costing you

The sticker price of a new platform is rarely what it actually costs you to switch. Before you decide a change isn't worth it financially, it helps to look at what you're currently spending — in time, lost revenue, and empty seats — on the system you already have.

**Are you paying more to stay
than you would to switch?**



**How many hours per week is your staff
spending on work a better platform would
handle automatically?**

**How much are you leaving on the table from
late payments, billing errors, and outstanding
balances?**

**How much tuition revenue are you losing by
not being able to fill your seats?**

Questions to Ask During Your Demo

Use this during or after each demo.

Staff adoption ease

1. Can you show me what a teacher's morning looks like in the app, start to finish?
2. What's your average time-to-adoption for non-administrative staff?
3. What training resources are available for staff, and are they self-serve or facilitated?

Billing automation

1. Walk me through what happens when a family enrolls. At what point does autopay get set up?
2. How does the platform handle a family with two children at different rates, where one ages up mid-month?
3. What does the late payment workflow look like? Does it automate follow-up, or is that on me?

Enrollment workflow

1. Can you show me a full enrollment packet from the family's perspective, including signatures?
2. Once a family completes enrollment, does that data populate the child's record automatically?
3. What happens if a family starts the packet but doesn't finish it?

Onboarding support quality

1. Walk me through exactly what the first 60 days look like. Who is my point of contact?
2. What's your average support response time after onboarding is complete?
3. Can you share what a typical onboarding timeline looks like for a program my size?

Evaluation Score Card

Subsidy and Government Program Support

1. Can you show me how a subsidy-funded child is set up and how their attendance is tracked differently from a privately paying family?
2. How does the platform handle CACFP meal documentation and reporting?
3. If a subsidy payment comes in short, how does the system help me reconcile that against what I billed?

Data migration

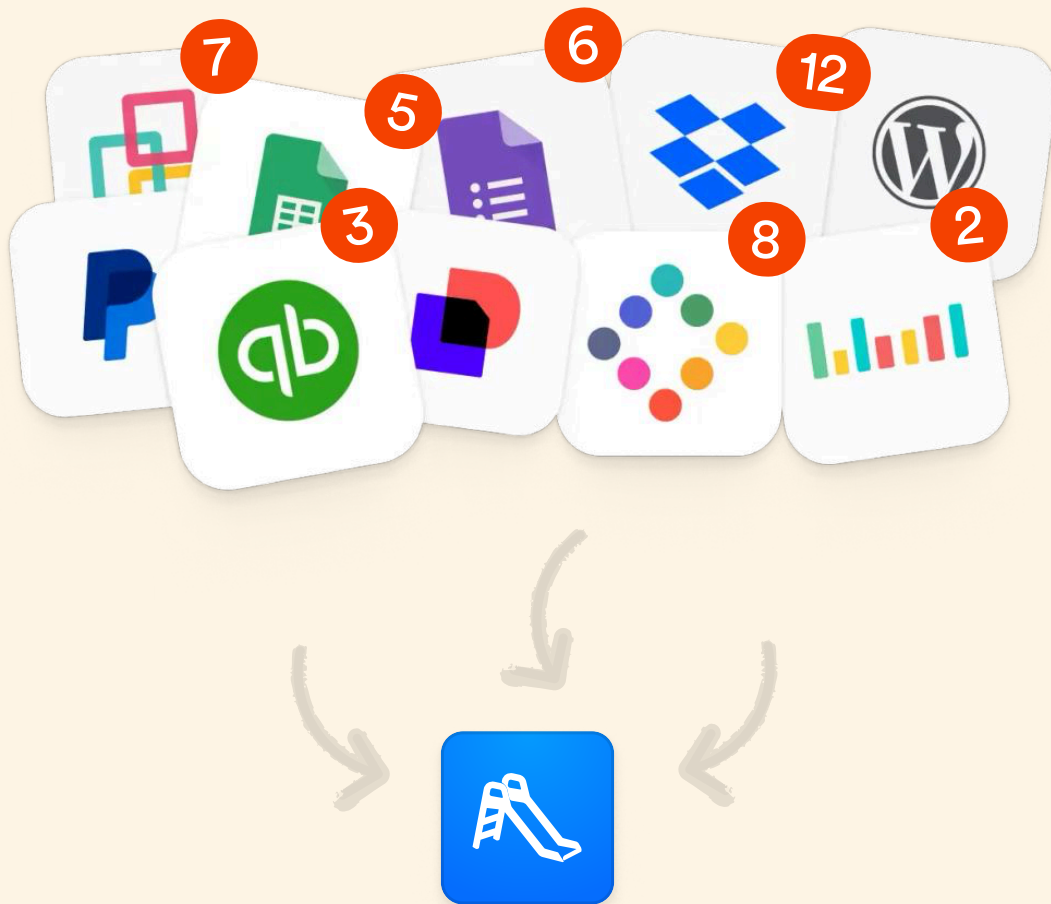
1. What data do you migrate, and what's outside the scope of migration?
2. Who does the migration work — your team, or mine?
3. What's the typical timeline from contract signing to being fully live?

Parent-facing experience

1. Can you show me the check-in and check-out flow from a family's perspective?
2. Can families view their balance and payment history without contacting the office?
3. Does the platform support families who primarily communicate in languages other than English?



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