



Types Of Early Childhood Program Philosophies**

Play Based Philosophy — Playing to Learn/Learning to Play

High quality early childhood programs teach children to think creatively so they may succeed in a complex and ever-changing world. Purposeful play is developmentally appropriate and a significant element of any early childhood program. The following emphasizes the importance of play in a child's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.

Play is a way of learning for children. During a typical preschool day there will be structured and unstructured periods, enabling children to learn through at their own rate. Values that support learning through play include:

- Children are viewed as thinkers, reflecting about their world
- Purposeful play is when children learn through the process of their efforts
- Children gain knowledge by building on a path of ever increasing knowledge
- Children are encouraged to make choices and practice individual decision-making

Learning environments support purposeful play by:

- Blocks of various sizes and materials
- Materials and time for dramatic, imaginative play
- Manipulative and table toys
- Art materials and tools to explore
- Sensory play materials, including sand and water
- A library area
- Music and movement activities
- Cooking experiences
- Computer exploration
- Outdoor and gross motor play
- A quiet area for the child who needs to be alone
- Ample and rich language and print
- Writing tools and materials

Adapted from the Evanston Early Childhood Directors' Council, *POSITION STATEMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY TO CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS...* "Playing to Learn/Learning to Play"



Montessori

Montessori is both a philosophy and a method of educating children created by Maria Montessori, the first female physician in Italy. It is based on the belief that children have a natural desire to learn and that, when they are placed in an enriched environment with specially designed materials and highly trained teachers, they learn quickly and easily through hands on experience. Maria Montessori began work in the slums of Rome and through careful observation of the children in her care she discovered how to help children learn about self-care, math, language, cultural studies and size, shape, colors, etc. Montessori traveled throughout the world introducing her systems to educators and parents everywhere. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize three times.

www.rosehallmontessori.org; www.chiaravalle.org

Waldorf

Chicago Waldorf School is an urban independent school offering early childhood through twelfth grade education rooted in the ideals, insights, and pedagogical methods of Rudolf Steiner, philosopher, social innovator and artist. The school provides a diverse student body with an education that supports the development of free thinking, self-directed young adults, ready to embark on the next phase of their education, and eager to contribute positively to our world and the global society of the 21st century. Many parents visiting a Chicago Waldorf School Early Childhood class feel an instant, intuitive connection with it — often saying, “I wish I had gone to a school like this.” The room is warm, colorful, cared-for and filled with nature’s beauty and variety — a place where children can let their imaginations roam while feeling reassured and protected.

Play is the heart of the Waldorf Early Childhood program. Children develop the capacity for creative thinking, problem-solving abilities and social skills through their free imaginative play. Simple, natural materials — pieces of wood, seashells, beeswax and handcrafted toys — encourages children to form their own games and stories.

www.chicagowaldorf.org

Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio Emilia Approach to education was started by the schools of Reggio Emilia, a city in Italy, after World War II and has become renowned as one of the best educational systems in the world. This approach places emphasis on the arts as children’s symbolic language and an engaging learning environment. The concept of equal collaboration is very important to the success of Reggio Emilia Schools. In these schools, teachers, parents, and children, along with the community are seen as co-constructors of knowledge. In Reggio Schools, parents are considered equal partners with teachers in their children’s education. They are respected and valued, and are expected to be involved with both the school and the classroom. Parents take part in discussions about school policy, child development concerns, and curriculum planning and evaluation. Because a majority of parents are employed, meetings are held in the evenings so that all parents can be there.

IL Parent Information Resource Center: <http://www2.colum.edu/ilpirc/informationforparents.php>



Cognitive Based Philosophy

In a program which is cognitive based, young children learn through active exploration in an environment which is rich in materials and opportunities to converse, socialize, work, play and negotiate with others. The classrooms are planned to encourage curiosity, exploration and problem solving in an atmosphere of warmth, affection and respect for each child. Teachers plan experiences based on children's interests and appropriate educational concepts.

Children may work individually or collaboratively, and may choose whether or not to participate in a project. Children are actively involved in experiences which include foundations of math, science, social studies, creative art, language arts, music, movement and dramatic play. All interrelated aspects of the child's growth and development are considered — intellectual, social, emotional, physical and creative. Activities, experiences and teacher-child interactions are constantly being measured and evaluated in terms of the following programs goals:

1. Development of a positive self-concept
2. Respect for the individuality and rights of others
3. Positive ways of interacting with peers and adults
4. Acceptance and expression of both positive and negative feelings
5. Growth of independence and self-sufficiency
6. Growth of creative thinking and problem solving
7. Cognitive growth and development
8. Emergent literacy development
9. Small and large muscle development

<http://goforward.harpercollege.edu>

****Please note that inclusion on this list does not imply any recommendation by CNE or its sponsors/supporters. Also, none of these program perspectives are exclusive — early learning can incorporate elements of different approaches to meet the needs of children and families.**