

## *My Philosophy of Education*

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It is my belief that children learn best when they are in a loving, nurturing environment where they feel secure and free to explore their own curiosities and interests. Children are intelligent, competent learners who should be listened to, respected, and considered active constructivists in their own learning.

I believe my role as the caregiver is to provide a safe, nurturing, and loving environment, to be attentive to each child's individual and group needs, actively participate in the child's learning as a collaborator with parents, staff, children, and the community. Offering cognitively challenging stimulation and addressing the needs of the whole child in order for the child to attain mastery of their skills, gaining confidence to move forward cognitively, emotionally, and socially are my priority.

I believe caregivers must be educated in all areas of child development in order to make accurate observations and assessments of the child and have a sense of competence in working with other teachers, staff, and parents. The caregiver must be a good communicator and problem solver as well as a collaborator with families, teachers, and staff whose goal is to encompass and meet the needs of the whole child.

The role of the environment is crucial to the learning, growth, and development of the whole child, secondary to the education and quality of care provided by the caregiver. The environment must be stimulating, warm, and inviting as well as ever-changing, according to the individual interests and needs of each child and the dynamic of the group at which it serves.

The interest areas should include: dramatic play / kitchen areas, a quiet book area, sensory and small manipulatives, blocks of various sizes, shapes, and textures, large motor equipment including boxes, climbers, balance beams, games, and balls. Small motor equipment should include puzzles, pegs, beads for stringing, and sensory

tactile manipulatives. It should have: spaces for individuals or one or two children to work together, individual and group spaces, child-sized furniture, and an art area for writing, bookmaking, exploring, and project making, and musical instruments and streamers for self-expression. The walls should have soft colors filled with family photographs, children's art, and age-appropriate posters to offer a sense of belonging.

The curriculum of both Montessori and Reggio Emilia most resembles my philosophy of education. Both of my own two children attended Montessori school from Pre-K to 6th and 8th grades. I have been active in their learning as I volunteered as a parent in both of their classrooms on Fridays for approximately ten years. I was privileged to work with their teachers, observe children using the materials, and gain competence in learning life and social skills as they thrived at school.

I believe in incorporating the Reggio philosophy and methods of learning into the curriculum. Understanding that children are the directors of their own learning and using documentation boards to document that learning guides us into further project directions as well as validates the learning process of the children. Working together with parents and families and outwards into the community enriches the whole child. Working with families as collaborators enriches the child, supports families and allows teachers to challenge themselves and constantly evolve professionally. This is my goal for myself.

The importance of having a schedule and daily routine allows predictability for children by giving them security in knowing what's going to come next and offering them a feeling of control in their daily lives.

Group learning fosters the social-emotional development of preschool children by giving them opportunities to practice self-regulation, emotional control, cooperation, turn-taking, listening, and self-confidence by the social interaction being modeled. Children gain self-esteem and confidence by being respected and respecting others as

well as a sense of their importance to the community. Group learning provides the opportunities necessary to function throughout childhood and skills necessary to function in society later in adulthood.

Individual learning is important. Children need time, materials, and space to internalize and process their own learning. As we respect the child they are better prepared to be respectful of others.

I believe through constant modeling of positive behavior expressing what I see happening, offering toddlers and children words they can say helps them to regulate their own impulses and emotions and gain self-discipline. Talking about feelings and setting limits helps children to learn trust and respect for others, and helps them feel empowered at problem solving.

I believe in the use of natural consequences rather than the use of rewards and punishment for undesirable behavior. I think redirection, the use of praise and encouragement, and offering support through being nurturing and caring allows children to internalize self-discipline and better skilled to solve their own problems.

Consistency in limit setting makes children feel safe, and gives them a sense of respect for others. They learn to trust boundaries, and can count on fairness and respect from others and fairness from their caregiver. Ongoing disruptive or serious behaviors must be addressed by both parents and caregiver for the safety and emotional well-being of the group.

I believe goals map out plans and helps the caregiver set a direction, by keeping the program current in meeting the needs of the constantly changing child. Goals in planning should be consistent with the developmental stages, and in addressing the needs of the whole child. Goals can be used as a way to document changes and evaluate program strategies.

I believe quality education is like a circle which as it continues going around it enriches the itself as it goes. Focusing on children to meet their total needs affects their readiness to learn in the future. Studies have proven that birth through age three are crucial years. What we do now as a society affects children their whole life through. By far, the earlier the child is exposed to a quality education, love and nurturing, the less dollars we need to spend on the aftermath of adults that have not received adequate support. There is no one right education program that fits all, but quality standards need to be placed in every program.

I believe children should be evaluated by the use of multiple methods. Observation, teacher's notes, work sampling, documentation, charting and partnerships with parents and other experts, in order to get an accurate record of a child. I also believe that standardized testing has no more weight than any other method because one method alone does not create a picture of the whole child. Each child is unique.

I believe parents and educators need to have a close working relationship for the children who they serve. Parents and educators both have an equal responsibility to maintain good communication through notes, newsletters, mini-meetings, and formal meetings. Teachers should go the extra mile in extending family involvement in their early childhood programs.

All children and families should be equally respected, listened to, and included and made welcome as assets to enriching the program. For example, by being a guest speaker, sharing a talent or story, or talking about their roots, families can enrich the learning of the group.

I believe that children with special needs have the same rights to a quality education and every effort should be made to include them into the childcare environment and to make adaptations according to their needs. This includes staff

training and specially built equipment. It is necessary for us as educators and caregivers to make our programs all-inclusive and to educate ourselves in all areas to better serve the families that come to our program.

I personally have worked with a few families who had children with speech and language delays, and children with social-emotional needs in my program. I have worked with a speech clinician who visited my program on an ongoing basis for two years serving a child in need of special services.

I have worked with children for more than twenty years. I have run my own family childcare home business since 1986. I have experience working in ECFE as a parent volunteer and was secretary of the parent board for two years. I have also volunteered at the Adam's Montessori / J.J. Hill Montessori Schools for about ten years. I was also a court-appointed supervisor for a noncustodial parent during visitation with their children. I continue to educate myself in early childhood issues and have been seeking a B.A. in child development since 1998.

My commitment working with childcare providers and the families I serve is a strong one. After receiving my CDA credential in 1994, I saw an urgent need to be an advocate for family childcare providers. This is when I worked as a CDA advisor helping other providers interested in obtaining their CDA credential and helping them through the CDA process.

In 1998 I decided to seek my B.A. degree for self-betterment, and to better serve the families who need care, and to promote professional growth in the childcare field. My professional goals are to maintain a quality childcare program in my home business as well as serve childcare providers in our area which I helped to establish in the West Seventh area. Another goal is to incorporate the principals of the Reggio Emilia approach to learning into my childcare home. I have joined the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and meet with other teachers monthly.

I promise to continue to promote professionalism in childcare by my commitment to families and the children I serve, as well as remain an advocate for other childcare professionals. It is my hope for the future that every childcare provider in Minnesota have their CDA credential in order to gain a license. It is my intention to be worthy and ethical in maintaining a quality childcare program and to uphold the National Association for the Education of Young Children's principles. I heard a saying once that I hold myself to and that is "if you are not busy growing than you are busy withering and dying". As for myself, I am busy growing!