

1 The Montessori Method

Focuses on maintaining the individuality of each child in the learning process. This method believes each child learns at their own pace and educational progress should not be rendered based upon comparing students to one another.

2 The Reggio Emilia Approach

This approach focuses on providing opportunities for problem solving through creative thinking and exploration.

3 The Waldorf Approach

This approach places an emphasis on imagination in learning, providing students with opportunities to explore their world through the senses, participation and analytical thought.

4 The Bank Street Approach

This approach places an emphasis on learning through multiple perspectives, both in the classroom setting and in the natural world.

5 The High/Scope Approach

This approach focuses on letting children be in charge of their own learning. Children are taught to make a plan for what they would like to do each day and participate in a review session to discuss the success of their plan and brainstorm ideas for the next day.

Outside of the formal educational philosophies, knowing the difference between other common early childhood terms will help you make informed decisions regarding your child's education. Below is a list of some common terms used to describe preschool settings. It should be noted that these terms may be used alone or in combination with one another (i.e. a "child-centered, faith-based" setting).

1 Child-centered

This term is often used to describe settings that take the children's interests into consideration when planning activities. For example: in a child-centered setting, the classroom activities are based on the interests of the students, not on pre-scheduled topics chosen by the teacher. These settings often offer increased opportunities for children to choose activities throughout the day depending on their interests.

2 Teacher-led

The opposite of a child-centered setting is a teacher-led setting. Teacher-led often means that curriculum and supplemental activities are implemented based on a set schedule developed by the teachers in the setting. This type of setting usually provides children with a structured learning environment.

3 Child-led

These settings believe children learn best when they are engaged and interested in learning. Child-led settings wait

for each child to initiate or ask for new activities and experiences, fostering individualized learning experiences rather than group experiences.

4 Faith-based

This term is used to describe preschool programs that are run through faith organizations such as churches or synagogues, according to their faith's philosophies.

5 Co-operative

These settings often ask parents and families to assist in the running of the preschool. Parents and family members may build community by signing up to volunteer during the week, or by assisting in the day-to-day management of the preschool as well as helping with advertising, upkeep and fundraising.

6 Developmentally Appropriate

This term means the preschool plans the curriculum and activities based on activities that are appropriate for the age of the children in the class.

7 Pre-kindergarten (pre-K)

Sometimes this term is used interchangeably with preschool. In general, a pre-K program is one that has children enrolled in the year before kindergarten, usually at age four. These settings are often more structured and academically focused than traditional preschool settings.