

# wikiHow to Develop a Child Care Philosophy

A child care philosophy is typically a written statement developed by a child care provider or educator regarding its organization's values, priorities, values and beliefs regarding a child's development, care, and education. Having a child care philosophy is important so that all who work together are unified with the same priorities. A child care philosophy also helps parents and care givers select the child care program that fits their families' own philosophies of child rearing.

## Method 1

### Considering Your Priorities

#### 1

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**Ask yourself about your child care beliefs.** As a care provider, how do you think about children's child care and development? It will help to define clearly what you believe about a child's developmental strengths and needs in order to develop a philosophy of child care.<sup>[1]</sup>

- If you are partnering with others to develop your child care philosophy, this will give you an opportunity to better articulate your individual experiences and to learn about the perspective of others.
- Considering the role that you believe play, art, dramatic and academic activities should have in a child's life will help you think about your beliefs.
- An example of a statement regarding a program's beliefs regarding child care might be: "We are committed to providing safe, affordable, high-quality service for children living in the South Lake community that is based in hands-on experiential learning."

#### 2

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**Consider partnering with parents and community.** Including parents, community members and care providers at the outset of developing your child care philosophy can help support your child care program. Think about the ways that the community may hold values that inform the child care philosophy you're developing.<sup>[2]</sup>

- Involving community partners in developing your child care philosophy may require language translators for non-English speakers.
- Children, families, and other child care professionals may all have a stake in the development of your child care philosophy.

### 3

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**Define the teacher's role.** Consider whether you value teacher-led activities, or student-led activities. Teachers can actively lead a child's learning, structure playtime, and present new information, or they can allow the child more independence to explore these areas for herself. When developing your philosophy of child care, decide what sort of role the teacher should play, and why you feel this way.<sup>[3]</sup>

- In a play-based program, the teacher's role is typically less dominant, while academic programs tend to be more teacher-led.
- Consider what you might want and expect for a child in your program. If you have certain academic goals that you will expect a child to meet, this will affect the role your teacher will be expected to play.
- An example of a child care statement regarding the role of a teacher might be: "We believe our teachers are responsible for the well-being, safety, and learning of every child. Teachers provide information not only through mentorship and role modeling, but through lectures, small group activities and hands-on learning activities."<sup>[4]</sup>

### 4

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**Talk about expectations for a child in your program.** How do you think a child learns best? You'll have to discuss your ideas about the range of activities included in your program that should lead to every child's benefit, regardless of learning style.<sup>[5]</sup>

- Remember that every child has a unique learning style, and all learners will need to be accommodated.
- Include a variety of structured learning activities and open-ended ideas, thinking about what you believe is the ideal ratio of both types in the classroom.

- An example of a statement reflecting expectations for a child in a child care program might be: "We believe that all children should have the opportunity to learn from peers of all abilities, and to serve as teachers for their peers."

## 5

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**Address issues of program diversity.** Considering how your program will serve a wide variety of children is an essential part of developing a childcare philosophy. Your students will come from a wide variety of cultural, economic and social backgrounds. They may have disabilities which require accommodation.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Include a statement regarding the value that diversity brings to your program.
- Be clear regarding what specific strategies and supports you plan to employ to help nurture children in your program who have special needs.
- An example of a statement reflecting child care philosophy of diversity might be: "We believe that every child has an equal value to our program, and actively work to support full inclusion of children with diverse abilities and disabilities, as well as those from all socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds."<sup>[7]</sup>

## 6

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**Think about how you can offer a positive environment.** When someone walks into your child care setting, what will they see? A classroom for children should include activities for appropriate child development, including sensory play, academic materials, activities for developing gross motor skills, and materials for dramatic play.<sup>[8]</sup>

- Remember that your child care environment should include activities outside as well as inside.
- Sensory play materials include sand play, water tables, bubbles, vibrating toys, colorful lights, and play dough. Anything that engages the child's sensory interests can be included in sensory play materials.
- Dramatic play includes materials for role playing, costumes, puppets, and more.

- Include a statement regarding your belief about a positive setting for child care. For example, "We support and encourage the development of creative and social skills through opportunities for sensory play through a wide variety of materials."<sup>[9]</sup>

## 7

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**Discuss curriculum priorities.** Do you want your child care to be play-based, or would you prioritize academic goals? While all child care approaches use a mixture of both play and academic learning, different philosophies emphasize one over the other.<sup>[10]</sup>

- If you're uncomfortable in unstructured settings, you're unlikely to be satisfied in an environment that prioritizes spontaneity. The curriculum priorities that you incorporate into your own philosophy of child care shouldn't conflict with your own priorities.
- Exploring a range of different child care philosophies may help you better understand the range of priorities that your own philosophy of child care may include.
- An example of a statement reflecting curriculum priorities might be: "We believe that children should be treated with respect and dignity, to feel safe and secure, to have opportunities for learning through play, decision-making, and social interaction with their peers."<sup>[11]</sup>

## Method 2

### Comparing Philosophies of Child Care

## 1

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**Learn about developmental child care.** Developmental child care emphasizes all areas of a child's development, including physical, cognitive, social, emotional. This is the most common form of child care philosophy currently practiced in the United States. In a developmental child care classroom, you may expect to find a combination of hands-on activities, child-directed and teacher-led activities.<sup>[12]</sup>

- Developmental child care is interactive, and has an informal sense.
- Learning through play is considered the central focus of the curriculum in a developmental child care program.

- The role of the teacher is to provide security, stimulation, support, limits, and affection.

## 2

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**Find out more about progressive preschools.** This child-centered philosophy follows the child's interest and social curiosity. Experiential learning is prioritized over teacher-led learning.<sup>[13]</sup>

- Progressive preschools are sometimes termed "Bank Street Approach" due to their initial development at the Bank Street College of Education.
- The teacher's role is to facilitate the child's interests and intellectual curiosity.

## 3

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**Try Montessori methods.** Montessori philosophies were developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in her study of child development. These methods emphasize the individual child's initiative and independence. Children move through different activities, called "work", at their own rate of speed. The self-correcting tasks teach the child directly, while observing other children completing a task allows children to learn from each other.<sup>[14]</sup>

- Montessori methods use "manipulatives" or small sensory items that the children use to complete a task. Colored blocks, for example, might be manipulatives matched to pictures of colored blocks in an activity.
- Montessori classrooms typically contain a range of ages, because each child is encouraged to learn at her own pace.
- Some parents choose Montessori methods because they feel it encourages their children to develop leadership skills.

## 4

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**Explore Reggio-Emilio pedagogy.** This child care philosophy uses a combination of developmental and Montessori approaches. It emphasizes creativity and artistic expression, but also collaboration. Reggio-Emilio learning employs group projects based in child-directed curiosity.<sup>[15]</sup>

- For example, if a child expresses interest in why a plant grows, a Reggio-Emilio response might be, "Let's learn more about that!" From this child-led curiosity, a collaborative interactive project including study of soil, plants, water, and sunlight might result.
- Reggio-Emilio is named after the area of Italy in which this pedagogical approach first developed.
- One of the goals of Reggio-Emilio is to use collaborative learning to help a child become a better citizen.

## 5

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**Learn more about Waldorf schools.** The Waldorf approach, developed by Rudolf Steiner, is a play-based approach. It's characterized by regular, structured routines. Certain days of the week, for instance, will always include the same activities. Creative activities, such as art, music, dance, singing and acting, are emphasized.<sup>[16]</sup>

- The programs are well-known for their refusal to incorporate any media, such as reading, computers, videos or electronics into their curriculum.
- There are no grades in a Waldorf program. There are no hand-outs, homework, or tests.
- The Waldorf approach emphasized the holistic nature of the child: body, spirit, and soul.

## 6

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**Try cooperative learning groups.** Parent-cooperative programs, known as co-ops, are formed by parents to offer a shared setting for their children. These programs are created by parents who desire a strong influence in their children's daily activities. The teachers, director and and helpers of the classes are chosen by the parents, and are parents of children in the program.<sup>[17]</sup>

- Cooperative learning tends to prioritize values of cooperation and resolving conflicts.
- One of the ways in which cooperative learning emphasizes education is that your child sees your participation in the classroom. This allows the child to know that education is a priority for you, and encourages the message that learning is important.