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Philosophy Paper

A child is just a small speck trying to discover and make sense of the world that surrounds them. They come into this world with little to nothing and are constantly learning new things about themselves and their environment. Every child is unique and different in their own way which means there is no one method to use when working with children because different children need different things and learn different ways. It takes time and dedication to get to know each child and what works best for them. Through child exploration, positive guidance, modeling, building relationships, and making sure a child’s basic needs are met will help them be fully engaged and ready to learn.

My strongest belief is that understanding a child’s behavior is key! Their behavior is communication! Every time a child acts out or does anything with their body they are trying to tell you something that they may be struggling to put into words. Our job as child care providers is to get to know and build a strong relationship with each child in order to decipher what their actions are trying to tell us. Are they hungry, are they tired, do they need space, etc? We then need to help them understand what they are feeling inside so that they can learn a more successful way of expressing their needs.

Building a rich and supportive relationship with each child is the best way to guide them to success. Every child needs to feel welcome, loved, and supported in their classroom. A teacher should strive to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome. The caregiver should also greet every child as they enter the classroom. To enhance these relationships trust must go both ways. Each child should feel they have a voice and are heard. Teachers should learn personal aspects about the child’s life showing interest and ask them open-ended questions to give them more of an opportunity to speak. I also believe that each child deserves one-on-one teacher time every day! Building relationships with children is important but it is also very important to build strong relationships with each child’s parents/families.

Maria Montessori is a huge inspiration of mine! I strongly believe in many of her philosophies. I believe in allowing children to do what they are able to do, and not doing it for them. I also believe in having labeled materials and shelves that are all accessible and at the child’s level to set them up for success. I feel children seek a lot of independence in these younger years and this is a great way to foster the child’s independence, encourage exploration, and push children’s ability one step further to their full potential.

A theorist that I also strongly agree with is Abraham Maslow. His theory is known as Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs. There are five different categories and, at the bottom, the child’s basic needs must be met before they can move on to the next level. The first needs that must be met are physiological needs (food, water, shelter, etc). If those needs are met the next most important thing is that the need for safety is being met. Following that, a sense of belonging is needed. Then, having self-esteem. And finally, having self-actualization. For example, if a child is in an unsafe environment such as having an abusive parent, they are unable to feel a sense of belonging or have self-esteem or self-actualization! That is why it is important to really try to get to know the children you are working with to make sure that those basic needs are being met so you can help them move up the scale.

Another theorist I agree with is Lev Vygotsky. He discovered the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is where a child best learns. A child does not best learn when the material is too easy and boring or when it is too hard and complex. The best way to get a child to ZPD is through scaffolding. We need to set slightly higher expectations of a child and then assist them to help them get there. We do not want to do the work for them, but instead guide them to find the right answer. I find it very important that children are pushed to higher standards because their abilities are amazing. They can accomplish so much with a supportive adult by their side, guiding them to succeed.

Even though there is some controversy about Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, I still agree with what he has to say. He believes that we all have multiple intelligences and that we all have a desire to learn a certain way. It has been a hot topic because some people believe everyone can be taught to learn one way. But I believe our desire to learn in our own way drives what we actually retain and learn. This is why I feel that teachers should either use a wide range of teaching styles and/or use an individualized approach to meet that child’s needs. Gardner’s eight intelligences include: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, natural, linguistic, and logical/ mathematical learners. Some children prefer to work in a group and some prefer to work alone. Some children need to see and feel something to understand it and others can just listen to understand it. Some children need to put what their learning to a song and others need actions associated with it in order to remember it. These are just a few examples of how children learn and no one way works for everyone. People can have many different intelligences for how they learn, but some are more desired than others.

I also believe that play is very important to a child’s development. Play is not just for “fun,” it enhances children's social and emotional development, along with their physical, cognitive, and language development. There are many different styles of play that focus on different types of learning and development. When a child builds a block tower they will learn cause and effect that their tower will eventually fall over. Once that happens they try to reevaluate the problem to solve and make a more sufficient plan and then try again. Or when a child engages in dramatic play of taking on and assigning roles of somebody or something else and acting it out. The children play and work together to bring their pretend play to life. As they are engaged and having fun they are really developing their social and emotional skills along with many others. Allowing children to play gives them a chance to develop naturally and stay engaged in their learning. A wide majority of children’s learning happens within their own minds. This is why play and other activities should be child led with only a couple teacher led activities in the day.

Sometimes it seems that teachers can get really caught up in the standards which can get in the way of a child’s ability to explore and develop in areas that don’t always have to be taught in a traditional manner. When children are given the ability to explore, the standards will come in the experience. When setting up a classroom, the environment plays a vital role. The environment should be used as the third teacher in a classroom. A well set up environment can enrich learning, prevent undesired behaviors, and set the child up for success. A well set up environment should also be welcoming to children so that they feel free and able to explore. Children are very curious beings and learn best through exploration.

When teaching in early childhood it is important to cover all areas of development but my main focus with young learners is their social and emotional development. They need to learn how to control their emotions through self-regulation and also learn about others' feelings. The way that best speaks to me is to incorporate self-regulation and understanding other’s feelings is through music and movement. Learning sound, rhythm, culture, and gross motor skills can be fun and engaging. Dance and music has always been my passion and has been very therapeutic in helping me through hard times in my life. Spreading your passion to the ones you teach will be more fun for everyone involved. Dance is just one way to ignite gross motor skills but it is also very important to have equal opportunities to practice fine motor skills.

Overall, children are full of wonder and excitement. They are naturally curious and need opportunities to explore their world. As a child care provider, I believe it is our job to allow children the opportunity to explore. I also believe that we cannot force children to learn something new or develop a new skill. With time, they will develop naturally when they are ready and that it is okay that all children develop at different times. Our youth is very important but we need to allow them to still be children. Social and emotional skills are the best thing to teach children at a young age. In a preschool setting, our job is to prepare them for kindergarten by teaching them how to treat their friends and how to handle their emotions. We do not need to prepare them for their after college careers. By keeping a happy and engaging environment, children will want to learn!