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## Daycare Center and Preschool Philosophies

May 13, 2010 [Carla Snuggs](#)

There are many philosophies within the field of early care education. When [selecting a daycare center](#) or preschool, parents must be aware of the program's approach and general philosophy.

### What is a Preschool Philosophy?

It is important that every business have a well defined, stated purpose and philosophy. Preschools must have a philosophy and an intentional approach to serve as a guide in decision-making, goal-setting, and establishing the tone of relationships within the center. These relationships include those between teachers and children, staff and parents, and among the children.

“Even when a preschool doesn't have a stated philosophy, they still operate on a set of values and principles that guide the program, but in an unconscious way and that can be confusing to parents and can be inconsistent in its application,” says Randi Wolfe, Director of Workforce Initiatives at Los Angeles Universal Preschool. Usually, this philosophy is included in the daycare center or preschool mission statement.

### Select a Daycare Center Based Upon Its Philosophy

Finding the preschool with a philosophy that best meets a child's and a parent's needs is imperative when looking for care. “It is important for parents to know what they are looking for in a child care center prior to beginning their search. For example, if you are looking for a program that allows self-directed learning for the children, a very structured program with little room for child-choice will not make you comfortable,” says Laura Olson, vice president of education for [Kiddie Academy](#). Every daycare center or preschool is different just as with any other level of schooling.

Children today need to be prepared for elementary school. Unfortunately, it is common for daycare to be stereotyped as being primarily play-based with a “learning component,” and potentially not preparing the child for elementary school. According to Nanci Canine, founder and director of [A School for the Mind and Body](#) in Michigan, it is important for parents who are researching preschools for their child to consider the following:

- What is the preschools mission statement?
- How do they determine a child's academic goals?
- How do they achieve their academic goals while giving the child a chance to explore and discover?
- What are their "processes" in evaluating the child?
- What other influences might the child encounter? (i.e., music, art, community involvement, physical activity and social experiences).

"Parents also need to consider the preschool as an extension of their family values and beliefs. In most situations this will be the child's first encounter with influences outside the home. For the sake of continuity it is significant for the preschool to be a reflection of the home," says Canine.

When [selecting a preschool](#), research the schools philosophies, values, and guiding principles. Read the mission statement and discuss the philosophy with the administrator or owner. Then, evaluate them to determine if they meet the child's most important needs.