

Types of Curricula

One way for parents to decide on a child care program would be to find out more about the program's approach to teaching, referred to as curriculum. There are some familiar curricula and some based on or inspired by these methods. Make sure the curriculum is based on current child development research, it is interesting to children, the lessons seem useful to do in the child care setting and teachers are supported and trained. Speak with the program director to find out what method of curriculum is used.

Montessori: This developmental approach is child-centered, allowing children to work on and master skills at their own pace. Learning is hands on and focuses on social and practical life skills. Classrooms often are multi-age, allowing children to work together cooperatively for different social skills.

Reggio Emilia: This approach is project-based and child-led based on their interests. Children work together to observe and ask questions about the world around them to develop skills surrounding exploration and discovery. This approach uses children's five senses to learn while the teacher facilitates.

Waldorf: This approach focuses on a child's spirit, soul and body. The care setting is meant to feel more home like and encourages hands-on, play-based learning. Teachers encourage an inner drive for learning and focus on bringing out a child's strengths and skills. It does not include media and also does not look like the traditional academic course seen in other programs.

HighScope: This curriculum uses hands-on experiences in a plan-do-review order. The focus is on learning based on child development research. Teachers support learning by building on already familiar concepts and walk children through their participation in learning.

Creative Curriculum (Teaching Strategies): This is a total curriculum program focused on planned aspects of instruction and routines in active learning while supporting development of the whole child. It is described as innovative, responsive, supportive, comprehensive and developmentally appropriate.

Emergent: This approach is based on planning activities and projects based on the particular children's interests, skills and needs. Programs also often use project work for small groups or the larger classroom and can be studied over a period of days or even weeks. Many programs also may use developmental assessment tools to assure school readiness.

Religious/Faith-Based: Programs that use faith-based curricula are rooted in developmentally appropriate practices and with a religious aspect to the lessons and activities. They focus on the teachings of the religion or culture in each part of the learning process.