The Importance of Children's First 1000 Days















ECEY 4005

WING YI, CHU



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(Source:Ausnutria Nutrition Institute,no date)

What is the first 1000 days? Why is it important?






The first 1000 days of a baby's life refer to the period from conception (when a woman becomes pregnant) to the child's second birthday. This time frame is widely recognized as a window of significant and rapid development, during which nutrition, healthcare, and supportive environmental factors play a crucial role in shaping and having a lasting impact on a child's future health and well-being (Mikhail et. al., 2020).

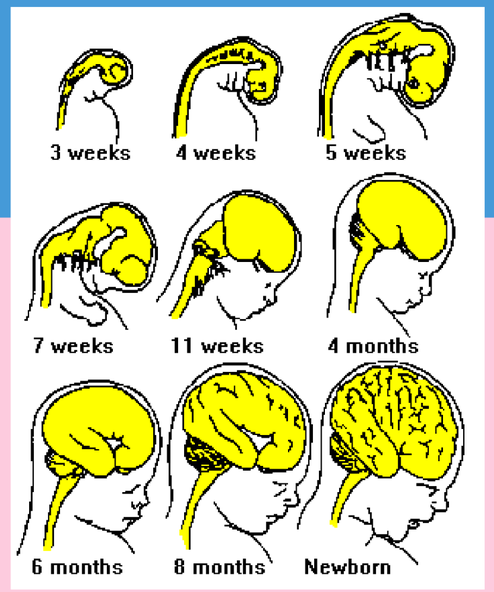
This discourse aims to delve into key facets of a baby's development during the first 1000 days and elucidate the critical importance attached to this phase:

Prenatal Period (Conception to Birth):

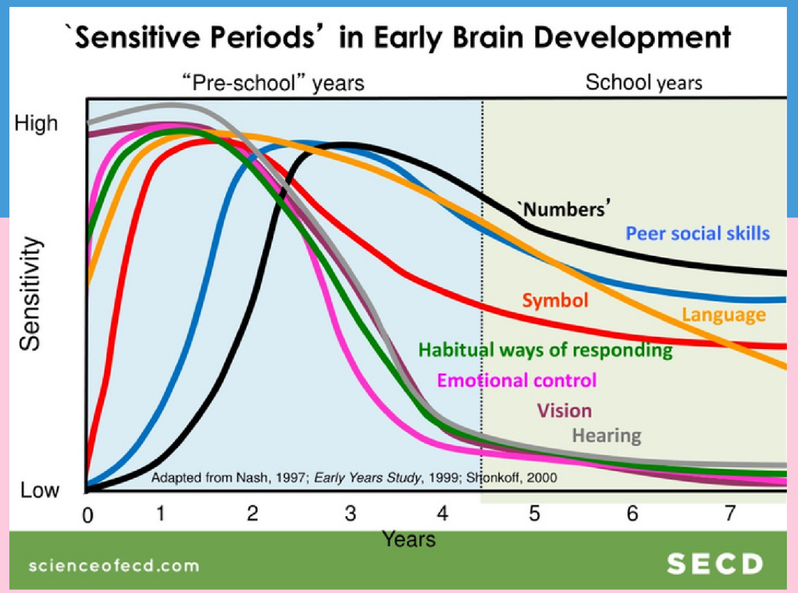
During pregnancy, maternal health and nutrition intricately influence fetal development. Essential prenatal care, proper nutrition, and avoidance of harmful substances are imperative. Inadequate nutrition during pregnancy, for instance, can lead to low birth weight and subsequent health risks (Brown et al., 2017).

Infancy (Birth to 2 Years):

The first two years of a child's life are marked by rapid growth and brain development. Proper nutrition, including breastfeeding or appropriate formula feeding, is crucial for the baby's growth and brain development during this time. Also, regular health check-ups and vaccinations are essential to prevent and manage potential health issues. Early experiences and exposures during the first 1000 days can influence the formation of lifelong habits. For instance, introducing a variety of nutritious foods during the transition to solid foods can shape the baby's taste preferences and dietary habits, promoting a healthy diet throughout life (Brown et al., 2017).



(Source: University of Washington, no date)



(Source: Karakoram International University,2018)

Rapid Brain Development:

The early years are a sensitive period for brain development. Proper stimulation, interaction, caregiving, and a nurturing environment contribute to healthy cognitive, emotional, and social development. The brain undergoes rapid and crucial development during the first 1000 days, laying the foundation for cognitive abilities and emotional well-being later in life (Black et al. 2017).

Foundational Nutrition:

Adequate and appropriate balanced nutrition is vital during pregnancy and infancy to support growth and development. Breastfeeding, when possible is recommended during the first six months which provides essential nutrients and antibodies, contributing to the baby's immune system development and protecting against infections and diseases. Appropriate formula feeding followed by the introduction of nutritious solid foods at the right time is also important. Adequate nutrition during this period is vital for the development of organs and tissues, influencing physical and mental health throughout life (Victora et al., 2010).

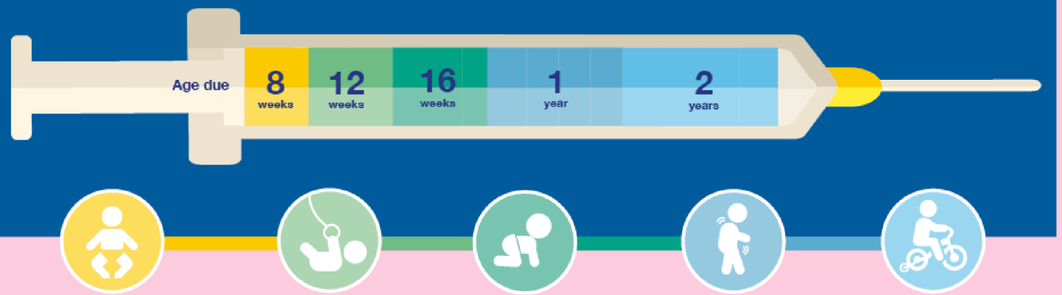


(Source:Parenting Blog, no date)

Immunization:

The immune system undergoes critical development during the early years. Vaccinations during infancy protect children from various infectious diseases and play a crucial role in preventing illness and promoting an overall healthy start to life. Proper nutrition and health interventions contribute (timely vaccination protection) to a robust immune system (Daelmans et al., 2017).

Importance of immunisation



Diseases protected against	Vaccine
1st dose of 5 in 1 Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)	DTaP/IPV/Hib
1st dose of Pneumococcal (13 serotypes)	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
1st dose of Meningococcal group B (MenB)	MENB
1st dose Rotavirus gastroenteritis	Rotavirus

Diseases protected against	Vaccine
2nd dose of 5 in 1 Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib	DTaP/IPV/Hib
Meningococcal group C (MenC)	MenC
2nd dose of Rotavirus	Rotavirus

Diseases protected against	Vaccine
3rd dose of 5 in 1 Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib	DTaP/IPV/Hib
2nd dose of MenB	MenB
2nd dose of Pneumococcal (13 serotypes)	PCV

Diseases protected against	Vaccine
Hib and MenC	Hib/MenC booster
Booster dose of Pneumococcal (13 serotypes)	PCV booster
1st dose of Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	MMR
Booster dose of MenB	MenB booster

Diseases protected against	Vaccine
Influenza (each year from September from age 2 to 6)	Live attenuated influenza vaccine LAIV unless contraindicated

(Source: Public Health England, 2016)



(Source: Caen Medical Centre, no date)



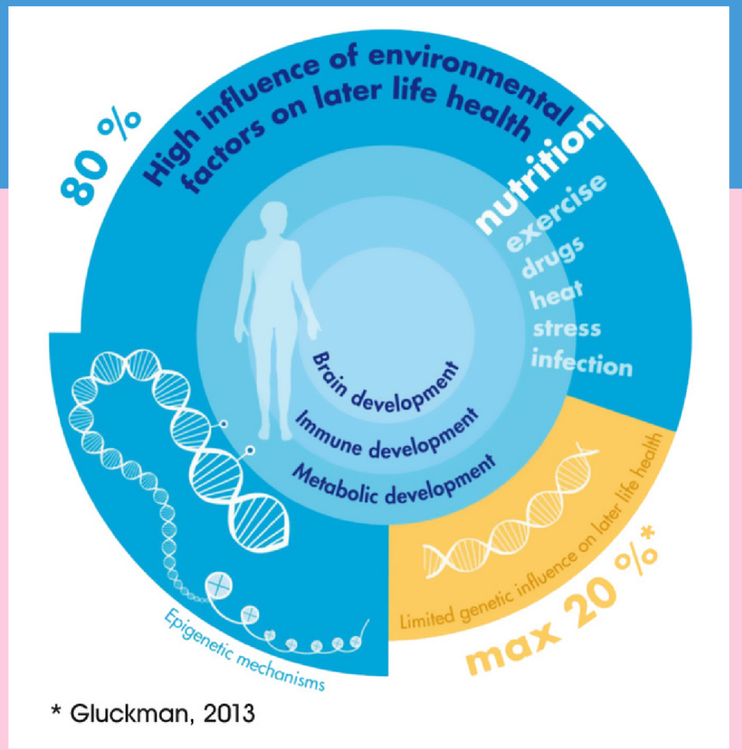
(Source: livi, no date)

Healthcare:

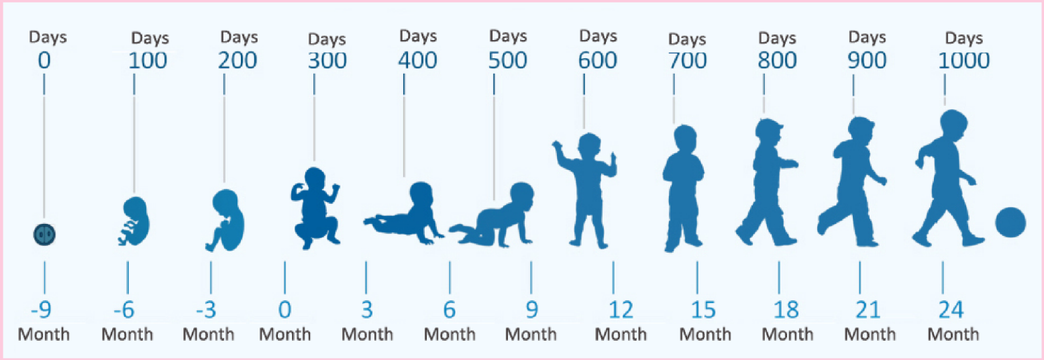
Regular health check-ups and monitoring of developmental milestones are important for identifying and addressing any health concerns early on. Exposures to malnutrition, infections, and other adverse conditions during the first 1000 days can increase the risk of chronic health conditions such as obesity, diabetes; and cardiovascular diseases later in life (Barker, 2007).

Environmental Factors:

A supportive and nurturing environment that supports and raises, including active parental participation, significantly affects the formation of lifelong habits related to diet, physical exercise, and overall well-being (World Health Organization, 2018). Within the initial 1,000 days, investing in children's health and well-being has greater social interests, which has led to a healthier population and improved economic results. Social and economic conditions in obtaining medical care can contribute to children's emotional and social development (Hoddinott et al., 2013).



(Source: Danone nutricia research, no date)



(Source: IDS Medical System, 2019)

All of these key aspects will provide essential support and resources during these formative years and have a lasting impact on children's growth and learning to support their future health and development. It highlights the need for strategic intervention and comprehensive care within the first 1000 days to ensure optimal outcomes and lay the foundation for a prosperous future (Mikhail et. al., 2020).

Definition of Exceptional Care for Early-Year Children:

Exceptional care for early-year children refers to a specialized and high-quality approach to meeting the unique needs of young children (usually from birth to five years of age). This type of care is characterized by a comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses all aspects of a child's well-being, including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development, through play activities and experiences, providing an atmosphere in which children can freely investigate, independently explore and understand the world. Care plans are customized to meet each child's specific needs, abilities, and preferences. Consider the holistic development of a child's well-being, including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Emphasis on early identification and resolution of potential challenges or development issues. It involves providing timely and appropriate support to help children overcome barriers in the early years to maximize positive outcomes. Follow the safeguarding policy in practice to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for children. Provide a safe and supportive atmosphere that promotes healthy physical and emotional growth. Provide age-appropriate educational activities, expose rich experiences, and encourage curiosity and creativity. It is designed to support children's cognitive development and love of learning. Families play a vital role in special care. Involving families in the care process promotes a collaborative relationship between caregivers and families to ensure a consistent and supportive approach to the child's well-being. Prioritize children's health through regular health check-ups, and vaccinations, and promote a balanced diet supporting physical growth and development, involving agency if needed. Understanding the pivotal role that early years play in shaping children’s futures is central to this approach (Rutanen et. al., 2013)



(Source: Exceptional Learning Academy, no date)

Importance of Exceptional Care for Early-Year Children:

Zigler et. al., 2005 explain that exceptional care helps children achieve optimal brain development during the critical early years and supports cognitive development, laying the foundation for future learning and setting the stage for success in all aspects of life. It shapes lifelong habits. Exceptional care promotes healthy behaviors including nutrition, physical activity, and positive social interactions. It plays a vital role in maintaining and promoting children's overall health and well-being and proactively addressing health issues.



(Source: Adam & Mila, no date)



A nurturing environment and responsive caregiving contribute to emotional support and a child’s sense of security, fostering healthy emotional well-being and positive mental health. Allows for the identification and early intervention in cases of developmental delays or health concerns issues, reducing the impact of potential challenges. The exceptional care received during childhood forms the foundation for future success, impacting educational attainment, social relationship skills, and emotional resilience (Arace et. al., 2021).

(Source: Christine Carter, no date)



Pikler Theory

The Pikler approach, developed by Dr. Emmi Pikler emphasizes a respectful and child-centered approach to caregiving, focusing on building a secure and enabling environment for infants and young children. This approach is often associated with early years setting to enhance children's well-being and development (Ari, 2022).



(Source: my baby nursery, no date)

Enabling Environment - Respect for Individual Pace
In a Pikler-inspired early-year care setting, caregivers might create a safe and comfortable space where children are allowed to explore and move freely. An example would be providing a low, padded area where babies can practice rolling and crawling at their own pace (Ari, 2022)



(Source: Care for kid, 2019)

Inclusive Practice - Individualised Attention
In an inclusive Pikler-inspired early year care setting, caregivers might adapt caregiving routines to meet the unique needs of each child. For instance, if a child has mobility challenges, partitioners could create a modified space to support the child's exploration and participation in activities alongside their peers (Ari, 2022).

Role of an early years practitioner in supporting children and families in first 1000 days

The role of Early Years Practitioners is crucial in supporting children and families during the first 1000 days, recognizing the significant impact this period has on a child’s development.

Build strong and positive relationships with children and their families. Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of secure relationships in early childhood (Bowlby, 1969). A 2004 study by the National Scientific Council on Child Development noted that practitioners provide individualized care to meet each child's unique needs and provide developmental support so that responsive interactions have a positive impact on child development. Practitioners create a stimulating environment that promotes cognitive and social development. High-quality early childhood education programs contribute to improved cognitive and social outcomes (Heckman, 2006). Monitoring children's health, promoting regular check-ups and promoting healthy habits, early health intervention, and preventive measures contribute to better long-term health outcomes (Committee on Integration Primary Care and Public Health, 2012). Support programs that provide guidance and support to families and recognize their role in child development are associated with positive child outcomes (Olds et al., 2014). Identify and address developmental delays through early intervention. These can significantly improve outcomes for children with developmental delays (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). Adequate nutrition in the first 1000 days is associated with better health outcomes, and practitioners can provide information and support for appropriate nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood (Victora et al., 2008).



(Source: Gov.UK, 2018)

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can be used to emphasize the importance of early practitioners working together effectively. The theory emphasizes the interconnections between different systems that influence child development, and effective collaboration is essential to ensure a holistic and supportive environment. While specific evidence and references related to this application may be limited, you can draw on the fundamentals of the theory and related research early in development (Sadownik, 2023).

The application of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory:

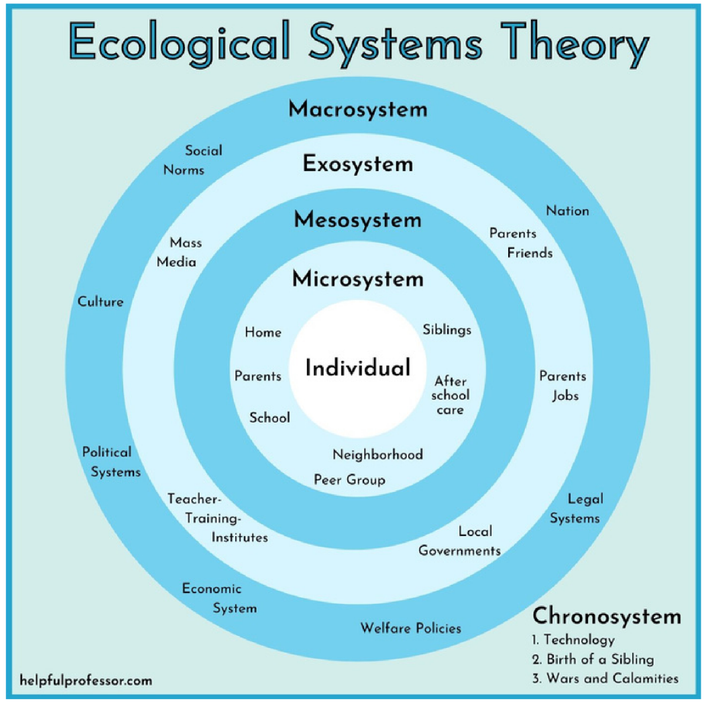
Microsystem: Effective partnership working (sharing information) with families to ensure a consistent and supportive environment for the child both at home and in early-year settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Mesosystem: Collaboration between different components of the mesosystem, such as between home and early-year settings, observing and supporting the children. Contributes to a seamless and positive experience for the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Exosystem: Effective partnership working (communicate with multi-agency) with external systems, like community resources or social services, enhances the overall support available for the child (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

Macrosystem: Recognition and respect for cultural diversity within the macrosystem contribute to creating inclusive and culturally competent early-year environments (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

The Importance of Effective Partnership Working



(Source: HelpfulProfessor.com, 2023)

Consistent Support: Consistent support across different environments reduces stress and promotes positive development for the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Holistic Understanding: Collaboration with families provides a more comprehensive understanding of a child's unique needs and challenges (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)

Maternal Factors Impacting Development and Support Strategies



(Source: kknews, 2017)

Maternal Mental Health:

A study by Grace et al., 2003 highlights the impact of maternal mental health on child development and the importance of early intervention and support. Maternal mental health significantly influences a child's emotional and cognitive development. Early years practitioners can provide resources and information on maternal mental health, offer emotional support, and collaborate with mental health professionals when needed.

Maternal Socioeconomic Status:

A longitudinal study by Duncan et. al., (2010) demonstrates the lasting impact of socioeconomic status on children's cognitive development. Socioeconomic factors can affect access to resources, education, and quality childcare, influencing a child's development. Early years practitioners can advocate for resources, provide information on available support programs and create an inclusive environment for children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Maternal Education and Parenting Practices:

Maternal education levels and parenting practices play a crucial role in a child's cognitive and social development. Early years practitioners can offer parenting workshops, share educational resources and create a supportive community where parents can exchange knowledge and experiences (Davis-Kean, 2005).

What are the challenges in providing high-quality care?

Providing high-quality early education care settings faces a variety of challenges that educators and policymakers need to address, particularly in the implementation of an enabling environment and inclusive practices. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes policy changes, increased investment in early education, ongoing professional development for educators, and a commitment to providing equitable, inclusive, and equitable learning experiences for all children. As the education landscape continues to evolve, addressing these challenges is critical to the well-being and development of young learners (Robertson et. al., 2014).

Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development

A study by Whitebook et. al., (2016) found that a well-education and trained workforce is critical for delivering high-quality early-year education. Insufficient qualifications and professional development opportunities for early years educators. Limited access to ongoing training and education for them. Insufficient knowledge about diverse learning needs and inclusive teaching strategies (UNESCO, 2017).

Funding and Resource Constraints

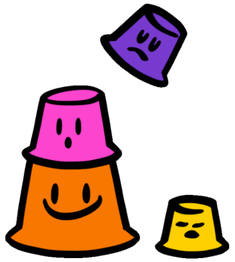
Limited funding and resources hinder the creation of enriching and stimulating learning environments for early years education settings. Insufficient funds to provide adequate learning materials, facilities, and qualified staff and insufficient access to developmentally appropriate materials and play spaces. (Bowne et. al., 2019).

Inequities in Access and Quality

Magnuson et. al., (2004) discuss the unequal distribution of high-quality early years education opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged communities—limited availability of quality programs in low-income neighbourhoods.

Support for Diverse Learning Needs

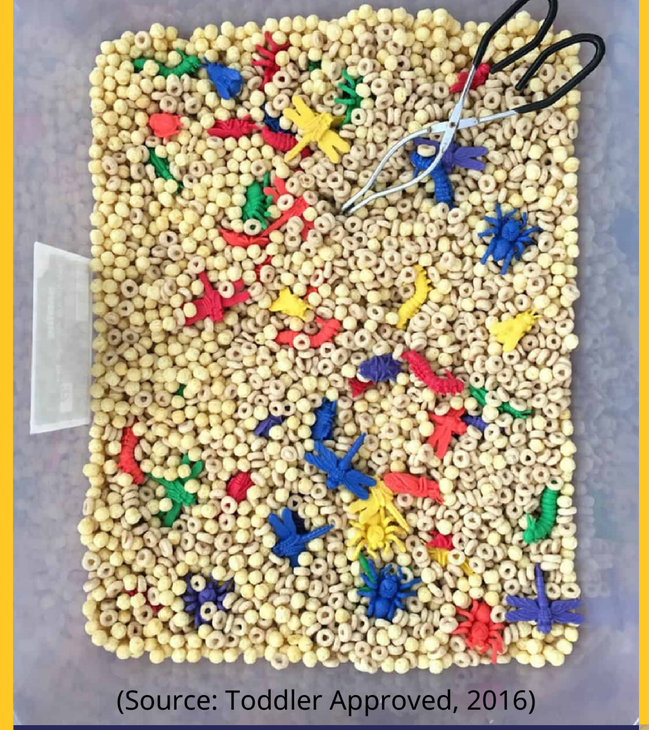
Barriers to implementing inclusive practices that cater to diverse abilities and backgrounds. Lack of resources and training to support children with special needs or multi-language learners (Buysse et. al., 2018).





(Source: Yummy Mummy Club, 2012)

Suitable for babies, reach out for the objects as co-ordination develops and develop like and dislike feelings, try a wider range of textures. Hand the objects from one hand to the other or drop them to support their physical development (Department for Education, 2020).



(Source: Toddler Approved, 2016)

SENSORY BIN

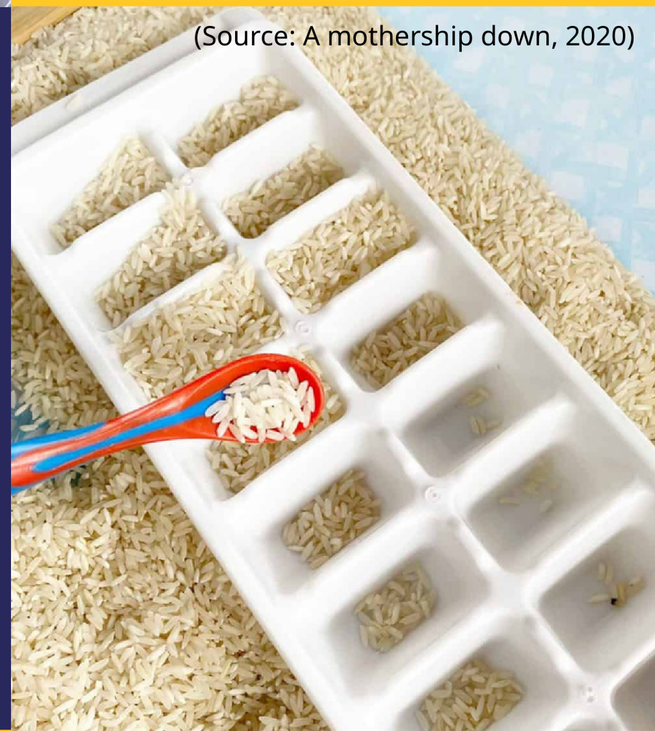
LOOSE PARTS ACTITIES

Sensory bins promote sensory integration, help children develop sensory processing skills, and improve fine motor skills through play (Case-Smit & Bryan, 1999).



(Source: Notmsl life MOM, 2019)

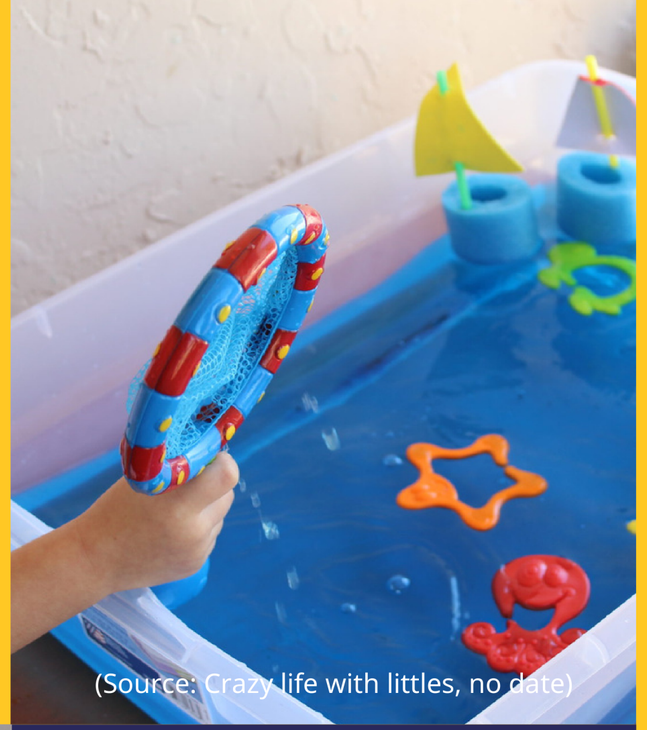
Fill bins with materials such as rice, beans, sand, or water. Add loose parts such as measuring cups, spoons, funnels, and small containers. To provide children with a valuable learning experience, let them scoop, pour, and explore different sensations(Case-Smit & Bryan, 1999).



(Source: A mothership down, 2020)

WATER PLAY

LOOSE PARTS ACTITIES



(Source: Crazy life with littles, no date)

Suitable for 1-2 years old children, play with one or more other children to extend elaborating play ideas and development friendships with other children (Department for Education, 2020).



(Source: The Children's Programs, no date)



(Source: Simply sweet days, no date)

Set up a water table or basin. Include loose parts like sponges, funnels, and water-safe toys. Might mix some safe printing colors to make an attractive water play experience for children. Children can explore water dynamics and experiment with floating and sinking. Improve their communication skills and emotional development by playing with peers and enhance their problem-solving skills and abilities (Dunn,2001).



(Source: Kyuubs, 2015)

Water play promotes sensory exploration, develops hand-eye coordination, and enhances cognitive skills (Vygotsky, 1978).



(Source: ANI, 2017)



(Source: Soheresmylife, 2014)



(Source: Adventures in storytime, no date)

STORY TELLING

LOOSE PARTS ACTITIES

Use loose parts like finger puppets, blocks, or wooden cars to represent characters or elements in a story. To Encourage children to understand the story or the concept using the loose parts as props. Making different voice tones to concentrate their interest. Storytelling promotes language development and emotional development with careers (Weitzman et. al., 2002).

For children from birth to 3 years old, turn to familiar sounds. Pinpoint the source of a familiar person's voice. Mimic facial expressions and movements make longer eye contact (Department for Education,2020).

Imaginative play and storytelling support language development, cognitive skills, and social competence (Lillard et al., 2013).

Meaningful play under SAFE

It's important to adapt activities based on individual children's needs and preferences, and supervision is crucial to ensure a safe and positive play experience. Loose parts are materials that can be moved, combined, and manipulated in various ways which might cause a choking hazard. Remember to always consider safety when providing loose parts for sensory play, especially for younger children who may put items in their mouths. Additionally, supervision and age-appropriate materials are essential for a safe and enjoyable sensory play experience (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019).



(Source: Jenna, 2021)

What is the theory of the Montessori method?

The Montessori method was developed by an Italian physician and educator - Maria Montessori more than a century ago. This is an educational approach that emphasizes child-centered and allows each child to choose activities suited to their interests, needs, and developmental level through that to get a holistic learning experience. Key principles include a prepared environment, self-directed learning, multi-age classrooms, trust in children's innate ability to learn, and teaching based on observation. A Montessori classroom allows for movement and collaboration using unique learning materials that are easy for children to access. Montessori education values development focused on fostering a child's natural curiosity and love for learning (Issaacs, 2013).



(Source: AIUTAMI A FARE DA ME, no date)



(Source: Trillium Montessori , 2018)

How does Montessori education benefit early-year children?

Montessori education is known for its holistic approach to child development, fostering independence, self-discipline, and a love for learning. While each approach has unique characteristics, the common goal is to support children's development. Educators may choose an approach based on the child's philosophies, the cultural context, and the specific needs of the child and their community. A comprehensive understanding of each approach can contribute to creating enriching educational environments for early-year children (Issaacs, 2013).

Support Holistic Development

Social and Emotional Development



Independence and Self-Discipline

Child-Centered Learning

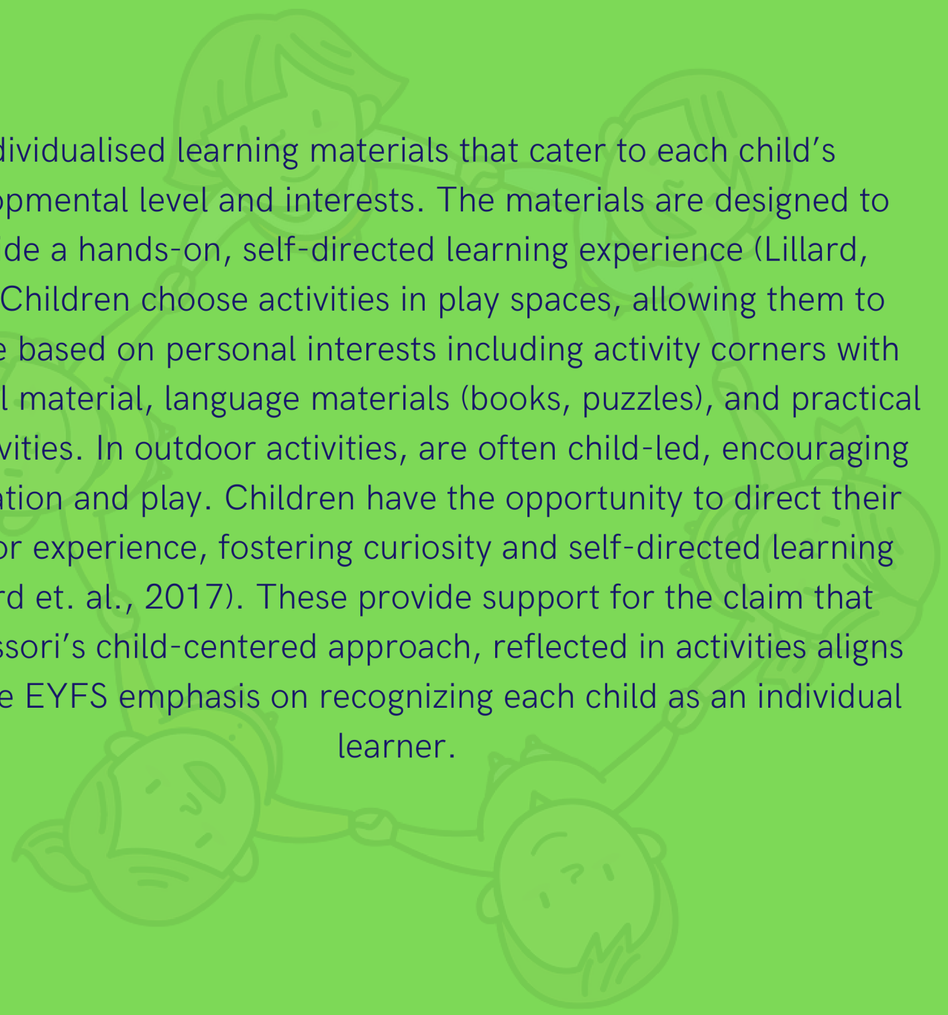
Support Holistic Development

Montessori materials especially sensorial activities like textured fabrics, are designed to enhance tactile experiences. These spaces are organized to stimulate exploration and engage children in activities that enhance their overall development (Lillard et. al., 2017). Educators designed well-play spaces that incorporate various learning materials to stimulate sensory and motor development for children (Lillard et. al., 2006). Outdoor play areas are designed for exploration, physical activity, and connection with nature. Incorporate nature walks, gardening activities, and outdoor play equipment. Children engage in activities that promote both physical and emotional well-being (Dohrmann et. al., 2007a). These activities provide support for the claim that Montessori activities contribute to the holistic development of children, aligning with the EYFS focus on physical, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects.



Child-Centered Learning

Individualised learning materials that cater to each child's developmental level and interests. The materials are designed to provide a hands-on, self-directed learning experience (Lillard, 2012)Children choose activities in play spaces, allowing them to explore based on personal interests including activity corners with sensorial material, language materials (books, puzzles), and practical life activities. In outdoor activities, are often child-led, encouraging exploration and play. Children have the opportunity to direct their outdoor experience, fostering curiosity and self-directed learning (Lillard et. al., 2017). These provide support for the claim that Montessori's child-centered approach, reflected in activities aligns with the EYFS emphasis on recognizing each child as an individual learner.



Independence and Self-Discipline

Practical life materials such as pouring activities that promote independence and fine motor skills. These activities allow children to engage in purposeful tasks, fostering a sense of accomplishment (Rathunde et. al., 2005) Structured play areas allow children to independently choose activities and engage in self-directed play (Lillard et. al., 2006). Children can take responsibility for their outdoor activities, fostering a sense of autonomy. Montessori promotes independence and self-discipline, contributing to the development of managing feelings and behavior (Rathunde et. al., 2005), aligning with the EYFS goals.



Social and Emotional Development

Montessori materials are chosen and presented in a way that encourages empathy and cooperation. For example, sharing activities where children work together with limited resources or take turns together (Lillard et. al., 2017). Mult-age classrooms and group play areas provide opportunities for children to engage in activities together and learn from observation with other children (Lillard, 2012). Group games and collaborative projects, provide opportunities for teamwork and communication. Children engage in activities that require coordination and mutual understanding(Rathunde et. al., 2005). These all align with the EYFS goals in personal, social, and emotional development.

Montessori vs Waldorf

Montessori vs. Waldorf is often a comparison we often see regarding alternative educational approaches. Both are proven educational methods that have been around for decades. They focus on respecting child development, stimulating curiosity, and engaging in hands-on learning. Both educational philosophies center on the overall development of the child. The types of early education and learning materials they use are key similarities and differences (Montessori, 2014) (Steiner, 1997).



SIMILARITIES

- Holistic
- Hands-on Learning
- Natural materials
- Limited Technology
- Respect for the child
- Love of Learn

(Montessori, 2014) (Steiner, 1997)

DIFFERENCES

Montessori	Waldorf
Follow the child	Head, Heart, and Hand
Child-centered with teaching a guide	Play-based
Focus on independence, self-sufficiency, and freedom within limits	Focus on creativity and integration of the art
Self-directed and self-paced learning	Students create their learning material
Realistic images and books	Emphasis on storytelling and fantasy
Minimum 3 years gap	Same age group

(Montessori, 2014) (Steiner, 1997)

Compared with Other International Approaches



philosophical approach

Montessori (Montessori, 2014)		
Philosophy: Child-centered approach, emphasizing individualized learning and self-directed activities.	Characteristics: The prepared environment, hands-on materials, multi-age classrooms.	Advantage: Fosters independence and a love for learning.

Waldorf (Nicol et. al., 2012)		
Philosophy: Holistic development, artistic expression, and nurturing imagination.	Characteristics: Focus on arts, storytelling, and play-based learning.	Advantage: Encourages creativity and a connection to nature.

Froebel (Smedley et. al., 2020)		
Philosophy: Play-based learning, with an emphasis on the interconnectedness of all knowledge.	Characteristic: Use of gifts and occupations to promote creativity and understanding.	Advantage: Inclusive of the child's personality and the overall education context.

Te Whāriki(New Zealand) (Griffiths, 2014)		
Philosophy: Socio-cultural approach, recognizing the importance of relationship and cultural context.	Characteristics: Holistic development, focus on family and community involvement.	Advantage: Emphasizes cultural diversity collaboration and responsive caregiving.

learning environment

Montessori	Waldorf	Frobel	Te Whāriki(New Zealand)
Structured, orderly, and prepared indoor environments with specific, hands-on learning materials for individualsed exploration. That promotes concentration, order, and self-directed learning. (Lillard, 2008)	Emphasis on warm, homely classrooms with natural materials. Materials are open-ended, natural materials for imaginative play. These fosters creativity, imagination, and a sense of beauty. (Wilson, 2013)	The interconnectedness of play, creativity, and structured learning experiences to foster the holistic development of children. That provides a nurturing and stimulating space where children can learn through active exploration and play. (Smedley et. al., 2020)	Emphasis on culturally responsive inclusive indoor and outdoor spaces. Varied materials reflect cultural diversity and inclusivity that supports cultural identity, belonging, and holistic development. (Griffiths, 2014)

(Source: Endeavor montessori school, no date)





(Source: ANN, 2016)

(Source: Wardle, 2021)





(Source: Nazia's blog,no date)

education methods

Montessori	Waldorf	Frobel	Te Whāriki(New Zealand)
Individualised, self-paced learning, with a focus on practical life skills. Teacher guides an observes, facilitating rather than directing. Cand develops in independence, concentration and a sense of responsibility. (Montessori, 2014)	Emphasis on artistic activities, storytelling and play. Teacher guides imaginative play, nurturing and storytelling to encourages creativity, social skills and emotional well-being. (Nicol et. al., 2012)	Play-based learning, gifts, and occupations to encourage creativity and understanding. Teacher supports with facilitator of play and exploration. (Smedley et. al., 2020)	Socio-cultural learning, collaborative and responsive teaching. Teacher support with facilitator, collanorator and responsive caregiver role to supports cultural competence, collaboration and holistic development. (Carr et. al., 2012)



(Source: Montessori Academy of Carollwood, no date)

(Source:Real Red Riding Hoods, 2020)





(Source:María, 2022)

(Source: Eduplay Childcare, 2022)



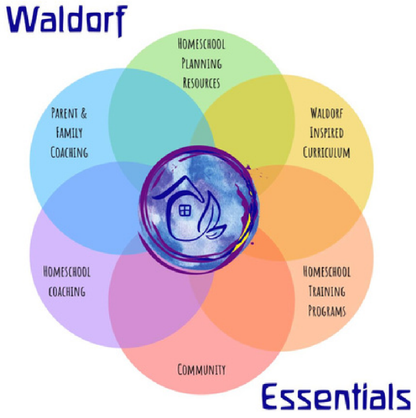
target results

Montessori	Waldorf	Frobel	Te Whāriki(New Zealand)
Independent, self-motivated learners with strong foundational skills which focuses on academic and practical skills, independence and social development. (Dohrmann et.al., 2007b)	Creatively engaged, socially harmonious individuals with a love for learning. (Wilson, 2013)	Well-rounded individuals with a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of knowledge. (Brehony et. al., 2001)	Culturally competent, socially aware individuals who value collaboration and diversity. (Griffiths, 2014)



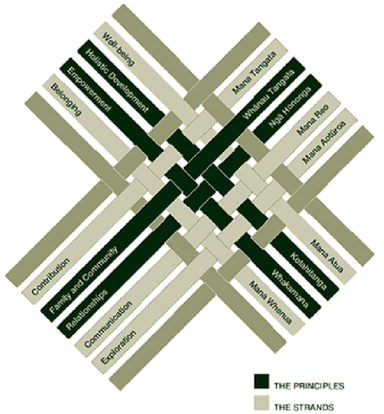
(Source: Kids Play Ltd., no date)

(Source: Waldorf Essentials,no date)



(Source: Frobel Play School,no date)





(Source: Nazia's blog,no date)

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