A Brief Overview of 4 Preschool Philosophies

Montessori. Waldorf. Reggio Emilio. Cooperative

Montessori

**Philosophy**  
This approach, developed by Maria Montessori in Rome in the early 1900s, is child-centered, with teachers serving as guides. In the Montessori school, play is a child’s work. While there is a focus on academics, the distinguishing feature is that children learn at their own pace. There are special Montessori toys called manipulatives that are self-corrective; this means that a child knows if they assembled a puzzle correctly, for example, based on the toy fitting together, not because someone showed the child how to do it. “In Montessori programs it’s really the teacher’s job to help the kids find their way into the materials, a lot of which look like puzzles that engage the child at this level,” Pianta says. “Kids work at whatever level they are working at. You don’t organize the room according to a specific age.”

That focus on letting children learn at their own pace also affects how classrooms are arranged, with children ages three, four and five all being in the same room. This allows the older children to serve as role models for the younger ones, and also exposes children to different ages. Children generally have the same teacher for those three years, allowing close teacher-student relationships to develop. The mixed-age aspect also encourages older children to help the younger children, which helps build their self-esteem.

Video about Montessori Schools! <https://youtu.be/rHypRWKvdZQ>

### Waldorf

**Philosophy**  
If you find a Waldorf school, you can trust that it is true to the Waldorf philosophy, since each school and all of its teachers must be Waldorf certified. This play-based approach is characterized by a predictable structure, providing children with a dependable routine, such as certain days of the week for set activities like baking or gardening, as well as mixed-age classrooms with the same teacher for multiple years. “There is an emphasis on creative learning, reading, singing, acting … It’s great for kids who want that predictability, but there is creativity there. It’s a blend,” says Karissa Sparks, vice president of marketing for GreatSchools. There is also an emphasis on cooperation, and the setting generally appears like a home—warm and friendly, with wooden toys and natural materials.

What stands out about Waldorf is its stance against traditional grading systems and exclusion of media in the curriculum. Waldorf does not include media (computers, videos or electronics of any kind) and also does not involve academics, which means no homework, tests, handouts or even desks. Children are introduced to formal reading skills in the first grade. The programs are “all-weather” and children spend a lot of time outdoors.

Video about Waldorf Schools! <https://youtu.be/mpSDgT7r9n4>

### Reggio Emilia

**Philosophy**  
Although you may not come across many Reggio Emilia schools, there are many Reggio Emilia-inspired schools based on the approach developed in the 1940s in the town of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. After World War II, the community, along with schoolteacher Loris Malaguzzi, came together to develop schools that would help children become better citizens. “The overall philosophy is that kids are really encouraged to explore. The teachers are there to help them explore.

Reggio Emilia schools are known for a project-based approach, which many preschool programs have borrowed. In a project-based curriculum, lessons are based on the interest of the students. If children playing outside encounter a flower and start to ask the teacher questions about how it grows, instead of directly answering the questions, the teacher encourages the group to “find out together.” The class may then build a garden and learn all that entails, while acquiring other important pre-math, pre-reading concepts. Projects become “child-originated and teacher-framed.”

Reggio Emilia programs are also known for documenting what children do, taking photos, making videos, writing observations. Then children and teachers can review what they’ve done throughout the year.

Video about Reggio Emilia Schools! <https://youtu.be/cvwpLarbUD8>

### Cooperative

**Philosophy**  
Parents who want to be the most involved and have a say in their child’s preschool education often choose to take part in a co-op. A co-op preschool may subscribe to one or more philosophies, but there is generally an emphasis on cooperation and resolving conflicts. Parents help run the school and help out in the classroom, working closely with the teachers. They are able to see their children in the learning environment and can develop partnerships with the teachers.

“The benefits of the co-op is that your child sees you there,” says Sparks, whose child goes to a co-op preschool. “Studies show that just the act of being there sends a very strong message that education is important. We know that it’s very important that a parent show up at school and the child see them.” Co-ops may be tricky for parents who work full-time or have other children in the home, but parents love being more involved in their child’s learning on a daily basis.

Video about Cooperative Preschool: <https://youtu.be/HgM1kJxdPNw>

Writing Activity worth 50 pts

Pick TWO of the different preschool styles of learning. Compare and contrast these styles in 1 page. Additionally, identify and explain some positive characteristics for all FOUR styles of learning in 1 page.

Write in paragraph style. Use correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and English. This is an essay that you are turning in.