

The Middle Earth Philosophy

**The following original philosophy of Middle Earth was written in 1971.
Only the headings have been added for this presentation.**

From: Langenbach, M. & Neskora, T. (1977) , Day Care Curriculum Considerations. Columbus, OH.: Charles Merrill Publishing.

☐ ***Happy, Safe & Comfortable - Away from Home***

Children need a happy, comfortable place to spend their time away from home. The children who attend a day care center look to the staff for the same affection, love, support, guidance, and discipline that they receive at home. The staff becomes substitute family members to the children during the day, but parents remain the most important people in a young child's life. Staff members strive to supplement the family and encourage family involvement in the program, so the child can feel a close bond between home and center. The physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the children are considered the first priority of the program. The children's needs always come first and are considered before the needs or conveniences of the parents or the staff.

☐ ***Respected for Individual Differences & Unique Qualities***

Each child is unique, and all children are respected for their differences. The same performance or behavior is not expected from any two children. All children are encouraged to develop their own personality; to hold their own thoughts, opinions, and ambitions; and to express these ideas comfortably and freely. The integrity of the individual child is always respected; this means expecting and accepting differences. If we want children to maintain their uniqueness and their differences, then we must provide an environment that will assist them to this end. Every child, regardless of sex, race, or religion will have the same advantages and opportunities as every other child. If children are to maintain pride in who and what they are and what they want to become, then they must never be faced with stereotyped sex, race, or religious roles or attitudes that will inhibit their choices.

☐ ***Maximizing Social, Emotional & Intellectual Abilities***

Children have the rights to develop to their maximum social, emotional and intellectual abilities. It is the adult's responsibility to provide opportunities for this development to occur. Each child is allowed to progress at his or her own pace according to his or her own needs. All children have the right to grow with good self-image—a good feeling of personal worth. It is the responsibility of the staff and the parents to assist children to think well of themselves and to provide experiences that foster feelings of confidence, success, value and pride. Children should never have to prove themselves to gain acceptance or attention from adults. All adults working with children have the responsibility to create an atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation among children rather than a climate of competition.

❑ ***Respecting the Rights & Feelings of Others***

All children need opportunities to interact socially with their peers and are guided in respecting the rights and feelings of others. An atmosphere of gentleness, respect, and humanitarianism is a prerequisite for children to learn to care and be concerned for others and to settle differences in a peaceful way. Children are allowed to disagree with other children and adults, but they are not allowed to hurt one another or to be destructive. Likewise, all children need opportunities to be alone and are guided in becoming independent, self-sufficient individuals. To foster independence, children are given as much responsibility for their own lives as they can comfortably handle. The amount and kind of responsibility given to any particular child is determined by his or her ability to assume responsibility. One of the major areas of responsibility that the children are encouraged to develop is an attitude of construction and cooperation where their environment is concerned. An appreciation for life, nature, and man's creative efforts is encouraged.

❑ ***Encouraged to Make Independent Choices***

Independence is encouraged by giving the children freedom to make choices and decisions for their activities during the day. Children have a propensity to make sense out of the world. They actively seek answers or some degree of resolution of the problems they perceive. When given an interesting, challenging environment, children will make wise choices for their learning activities and will learn those things they are interested in and capable of learning. This is not to say that children in need of assistance in a particular area of development shall not receive encouragement to participate in activities that will strengthen their deficiencies.

❑ ***Guided by Thoughtful, Consciously Positive Professionals***

It is the responsibility of the staff to thoughtfully and consciously plan activities and experiences that meet the developmental needs of all the children. A program with many planned options available has more potential for children than a program that forces all children to do the same thing at the same time or a program that allows children to encounter activities and experiences randomly or fortuitously. Children are not forced to participate in activities, nor are they punished for not participating. It is recognized that in the best situations with the most thoughtfully planned program, all children are not going to behave in an acceptable manner all of the time. However, physical punishment of children for misbehavior is unacceptable. Children are never physically, verbally, or mentally abused, and food is never withheld as punishment nor offered as a reward. Children need to be assisted in understanding why their behavior is not acceptable and their actions should be redirected in a positive way. We are critical of a child's behavior, but we are never critical of a child. Children are loved and accepted at all times regardless of their behavior.

This program can be offered simultaneously with good physical care of children that includes a safe and sanitary physical plant, a nutritious food program and careful supervision. With sufficient parental involvement and support, high-quality child care can be offered at a reasonable cost to families.

***The integrity and depth of this original philosophy has guided
the thinking and the teachings
at Middle Earth Child Development Center for over
three decades –
and affected the lives of three generations of families in
Central Oklahoma.***

***These nationally acclaimed approaches have long since
become the respected benchmark for effective and positive early
childhood development.***

***To invest in Middle Earth – is to affect
the generations of our future.***
