





**The Uniqueness of Infancy:
How Infants & Toddlers Develop &
How Development is Best Facilitated**

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The Uniqueness of the Infancy Period


- Genetically programmed learning
- 3 Major Stages of Development
- Creation of First Sense of Self
- Holistic Approach To Learning



“For someone to hand you their child,
to put their child in your care, is
probably one of the biggest acts of
trust imaginable”

Lily Wong Fillmore





The answer to the question...

**“How is learning and development
best facilitated by adults?”**

...is always influenced by the answer to
the question:

“How do infants learn and develop?”



Meta Theories of Child Rearing

- The Blank Slate
- The Unfolding Flower
- The Constantly Tempted
- The Savage
- The Unknowing/Unfeeling
- The Late/Early Bloomer
- The Predestined



Image of Child: Competence

- Curious, motivated, self starting learner
- Imitator, interpreter, integrator,
- Explorer, inventor
- Communication initiator
- Meaning seeker
- Relationship builder

“Right from birth a healthy child is an active participant in growth, exploring the environment, learning to communicate, and, in relatively short order, beginning to construct ideas and theories about how things work.”

National Academy of Science
“Eager To Learn” p.1

The Scientist and The Infant

- Both are making sense of things as yet unknown.
- Both investigate, with focused attention, the world around them.
- Both rely on a supportive place to study and work.
- Both use their senses to understand their world.

Each child is unique and the protagonist of his or her own growth. Children desire to acquire knowledge, have much capacity for curiosity and amazement, and yearn to create relationships with others and to communicate. Children are open to exchange and reciprocity. From early in life they negotiate with the social and physical worlds - with everything the culture brings them.

Loris Malaguzzi
Founder of the Reggio Emilia Schools

Image of Child: Vulnerability

The young child is dependent on adults for:

- Physical survival
- Emotional security
- Safe base for learning
- Regulating, modeling and mentoring social behavior
- Information and exchange about the workings of the world and rules for living.

Infant Needs

- Nurturance
- Support
- Security
- Predictability
- Focus
- Encouragement
- Expansion

Infant Learning

- Difficult to segregate learning domains
- Learning originates in relationships
- Child's interest is key

If you watch infants closely, you will see that they clearly do not differentiate between work and play, and amusement and learning. In almost every waking moment they are occupied with thoughts and actions of discovery and accomplishment. They seem to have an agenda. They are busy in what some might call play, others work, others amusement, and others learning. In fact they are busy with all of these things at once.



The Context for Quality

Care provided in safe, interesting, and intimate settings where children have the time and opportunity to establish and sustain secure and trusting relationships with other children and with knowledgeable caregivers who are responsive to their needs and interests.

INFANTS HAVE THEIR OWN CURRICULUM

Infant Cognition - 101

- How things move and fit in space
- How objects, people and ideas are used as tools
- How to cause things to happen
- How to keep things in memory and understand the permanence of objects
- How to develop schemes of thought and action

Social Development 101

- The search for trusting and secure relationships
- The creation of a safe base for learning and development
- Incorporation of perceived appropriate behaviors
- Imitation of actions of others
- Imitation of speech and communication patterns of others
- Imitation of emotional and social behavior of others

Infant Care Teacher

- Teaching and caring occur together right from the beginning of life.
- Every moment in which an adult provides care to a young infant is a moment rich with learning.
- Above all, young infants learn about how people respond to their communication and behavior.

Infant Care Teacher

- We use the term “infant care teacher” to emphasize the comprehensive nature of providing care and facilitating learning and development.

PITC Philosophy Statement

Infant care teachers do not focus on teaching specific lessons. Rather, the focus is on facilitating natural interests and urges to learn.

Infant Care Teacher

- Infant care teachers treat caregiving routines as learning opportunities, and set the stage by providing developmentally appropriate, safe, inclusive, and engaging environments.
- They also introduce materials, make comments, offer suggestions, and pose questions to children based on observation and study of the children’s learning and development.

PITC Approach to Teaching and Caring

Gives simultaneous attention to the vulnerable and competent sides of the young child. It encompasses the new “three Rs” of childrearing:

Responsiveness
Relationship
Respect

How to Facilitate Development I

- Focus on helping the infants learn their curriculum
- Plan learning opportunities rather than develop lessons
- Plan environments to maximize opportunities to learn through discovery
- Select, place, and rotate materials based on observation of children

How to Facilitate Development II

- Watch child's cues for signs of interest
- Ask what the child wants
- Adapt your behavior to child's signals
- Look for ways to expand rather than interrupt spontaneous learning
- Bathe child in language
- Concern yourself with identity messages

Teacher as Researcher

- Observe document, reflect, and plan
- Listen to children's ideas
- Create learning encounters that build on the children's interests & your observations.
- Engage in daily exchanges with children, teachers, supervisors, families and others.

Expectations for Children

- Amazement
- Marvel
- Excitement
- Invention
- Transformation
- Disorientation
- Reflection
- Imitation
- Surprise
- Observation
- Hypothesizing
- Communication
- Contemplation
- Connection

Preferred Policies for Care

- Primary Care
- Small Groups
- Continuity of Care
- Personalized Care
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Attention to Special Needs