

# Early childhood education compare

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As early childhood educators we all have our own philosophies and approaches to education. There are several types of early childhood programs. Each program has its own philosophies, methods, and program goals. Every early childhood educator is unique making each early childhood program experience special. Consistently, early childhood programs offer educational foundations that prepare young students for their educational futures. In this paper I will focus on comparing and contrasting two programs that stood out to me, Ridgeline Montessori and the Whitaker Head Start.

When examining early childhood programs there are many similarities and differences across the board. After observing both programs, I noticed that both schools have benefited from tailoring the services and programs provided to their communities. It helps early childhood programs become more effective at reaching their students. These two programs focus on providing services to two different communities of families, however, they both have the same goals in preparing students for formal schooling. The environment of each of these two programs differs in many ways.

Due to the different methods, curriculum, level of family involvement, resources, funding, and teacher's available programs can differ in structure. Some programs are built on models based upon psychological theories and principals, while others are more focused on students' interests and individual needs. Ridgeline Montessori school is a free public charter school that is offered to any students in the community, through a lottery system. Students who don't initially get in are placed on a wait list in the order in which they applied.

Even though Ridgeline is a public charter school, many low-income families may not be aware of the opportunity or have the resources to send their children there. Head Start on the other hand is a national federally funded program, in which enrollment is based on family income. Head Start also has a wait list and there are many families who have to wait to get into the program. The difference in program eligibility creates a difference in the types of families and children that enter these programs.

Most students enrolled at Ridgeline come from middle class families, where they do not have to worry about their basic needs being met. This allows these students families to be more involved helping channel their energy and attention towards learning. Head Start children, on the other hand, usually come from low-income families, in which meeting their basic needs can be an everyday challenge. The differences in these two home environments play an intricate role in the set up and implementation of each program.

The Head Start program focuses not only on educating young children, but also making sure that they're socially, emotionally, and physically healthy. Head Start programs provide families with services that ensure students are receiving adequate nutrition, proper care, and that their basic needs are being met. Ridgeline Montessori offered free and reduced lunches at one time, however, due to the lack of need for this service, the program was cut. Students' at Ridgeline seem to have less of a need for services and therefore, more focus is put forth on education and learning.

Ridgeline Montessori uses the Montessori method, which was developed by Maria Montessori. The Montessori method views children as being unique  
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individuals in which each child has their own interests and learning potential. The classroom and materials are prepared in advance, with manipulatives set up all around the classroom. At first glance the classroom looked similar to the classrooms I previously observed, however, with further examination I noticed many differences. One of the most noticeable differences I detected upon walking into the Montessori classroom was the noise level.

The classroom seemed rather quiet considering the number of students. The layout of the classroom is much different. Instead of having several different designated centers the whole classroom is a center for exploration and learning. Materials and manipulatives are spread along the outside walls of the classroom and children are free to choose which type of materials they would like to work with during independent work time. You do not notice any individual desks and chairs set up in the classroom, rather a few tables and chairs grouped together.

The furniture is all child size and you do not see any adult sized furniture throughout the classroom. Students spend most of their time working on the floor where they have their own individual carpets. They put them down to outline their personal workspace. Instead of there being various toys and games spread through out the classroom, there are specific sensory materials and manipulatives that are self correcting and purposeful to student's learning. On the walls students' work fill spaces throughout the classroom, similar to the walls of a Head Start classroom.

Montessori classrooms are made up of mixed grades and ages, something that is not typical of traditional classrooms. The Head Start program I visited uses a more traditional comprehensive method. Students are all close to the <https://assignbuster.com/early-childhood-education-compare/>

same age. Since the program is federally funded there is much emphasis put on performance standards and teaching objectives. The classrooms at Head Start are a center based classroom with different areas for pretend play, math manipulatives, language/ reading/ writing area/ art exploration, blocks and large motor, water play, sand table etc.

There is a group area for circle time activities and line time. The classroom time normally starts out with calendar work or story time. Children then tell the teacher what center or " key experience" they will start on and they choose work. Students are free to move from center to center as they choose as long as they stay somewhat involved in something and are not bothering others. Students don't have to go to any center they are not interested in although a teacher may suggest an interesting activity to a child who has stuck to the blocks for a few days.

Classrooms tend to be lively with a hum of activity. Materials are often brightly colored and made to imitate real life materials. There are specific skills and concepts that each center is aimed to teach students. Throughout the classroom there are individual desks and chairs for students to sit at or large cooperative tables to work at. Students also have a specific spot on the large rug where story time and group time takes place. In the Head Start classroom the teacher's role is well defined, the teacher is responsible for implementing and directing the classroom activities.

Head Start teachers are required to have at least a two-year degree and must complete a certain amount of educational training hours. Teachers' are also expected to complete home visits, where they visit their student's homes. Teachers direct the classroom activities and dictate what materials

will be covered throughout the day; however, students do have periods of time where they get to decide what they want to work on. Student's interests shape the Montessori teachers' role in the classroom.

Teachers are expected to allow the individual interests of the students to shape the activities of the day. The teacher is responsible for preparing the classroom environment that is educationally interesting and safe. The teacher acts as a guide, initially introducing a new concept to a student. Then the teacher will observe and analyze as the student works with the new concept, until mastering it. Montessori teachers go through special training to become a certified Montessori teacher. Teachers are required to maintain regular communications with the parents and guardians of students.

Teachers are also expected to keep good documentation of the students' growth and progress. Both Head Start and Ridgeline strive to develop a high level of family and community involvement. Head Start requires home visits and parenting classes for some families. The program is set up, to not only help the child get on track and ready for formal schooling, but also help the parents and guardians be prepared for the process as well. Ridgeline requires that parents and guardians volunteer or help out in the classroom at least 40 hours a year.

Both programs put great emphasis on family involvement. Since Ridgeline is a Montessori school the curriculum is already set up. It is shaped by a sequence of three broad phases. These phases include: exercises for practical life, sensory education and language activities. The rate at which the students move through the areas of curriculum is directly related to the student's mastery of each sequenced level. There is also a great importance

put on learning through the senses and all materials and manipulatives are meant to be aesthetically appealing.

The Montessori method uses five basic principles as the foundation for the program: respect for the child, auto-corrections, prepared environments, sensitive periods, and absorbent mind. These five principles are the guides for all Montessori programs. The Head Start curriculum is quite different from the Montessori curriculum. Head Start uses a traditional high/scope curriculum which is emergent, meaning it is not planned in advance. In the same way that student's interests shape the Montessori curriculum, students' help to determine the curriculum in a Head Start program.

Plan-do-review is the teaching-learning cycle that is implemented throughout Head Start programs. In the Plan-do-review teachers and students plan out what they are going to do, do it, and then review the outcome with the classroom community. Since Head Start is federally funded the curriculum must meet national and state standards. The Whitaker Head Start I observed used routine and structure to help guide students throughout the curriculum and the day. The predictability of the day's routine help student's to know what is next in the day.

Montessori schools work off a philosophy of respect for student's abilities and interests. The main idea is to allow children to explore, grow and develop at their own pace. Head Start works off of a philosophy which promotes equality in social and emotional growth. The main idea is to provide students and families with the tools and resources to help prepare young children for formal schooling. Both programs are critical and beneficial to the students and families they serve.

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