



Berlin

Senatsverwaltung für Bildung,  
Wissenschaft und Forschung

A Brief Overview of the  
**Berlin Educational  
Program**

For the Education and Care of Children in  
Pre-School Prior to Starting Elementary School



## Dear parents,

Pre-schools are educational institutions. What children learn in their early years plays an important role in their future. The “Educational Program

for Berlin’s Pre-Schools” serves as a framework for the work with children in Berlin’s pre-schools before their school years begin.

The program is intended to help educators to enhance your children’s skills as much as possible. You, the parents, are important and indispensable partners in this process. I am therefore very pleased to be able to present this little brochure to you. It gives a brief overview of the goals and the content of the Educational Program and some advice on how you as parents can assist with its implementation. A book version containing the entire program for pre-school teachers is also available in bookstores, if you are interested.

I would be happy if you were to engage in a dialogue on the program’s objectives and ideas and their implementation with your

children’s educators and also with other parents.

The publications on the Berlin Educational Program were made possible by the support of IBM Deutschland. By equipping more than 10 percent of Berlin’s pre-schools with multimedia learning stations, IBM Deutschland is also helping to pave your children’s way to participating in the knowledge-based society, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to IBM.

I wish you and your child an enjoyable and inspiring time in these pre-school years and hope that you will find this brochure interesting reading.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Zöllner".

Prof. Dr. E. Jürgen Zöllner  
Berlin Senator for Education, Science, and Research

## Why do we need an educational program in pre-schools?

Every child has the right to education from the very start. Human beings learn more and at a faster pace in the first few years of their lives than at any time after that. As a parent, you have supported and followed the learning processes of your child from birth. Since your child started pre-school, the teachers have also fostered your child's development. In doing so, they build on your child's existing abilities and knowledge. Both you as a parent and the child's teachers want to encourage your child's development in the best way possible so that his or her education gets off to a good start.

The Berlin educational program is designed to support pre-school teachers in this effort. The program offers binding, scientifically founded and objectively tested, guidelines for the work done at all Berlin pre-schools. It describes which basic abilities all children need to be successful in life, which knowledge they need and how they can be encouraged in line with their individual developmental levels and aptitudes.

As a parent, you should feel sure that your child can develop his or her abilities as well as possible in pre-school regardless of the type of school and the methods used at this school.

# The cornerstones of the educational program:

## How is children's development fostered?

### Active learning

From the time they are born, children learn with a lot of energy and concentration. They conquer the world of their own free will through movement and utilization of all of their senses. They are constantly learning and educating themselves, they can't help it.

The educational program describes how curiosity and the desire for knowledge can be enhanced in children and how children can be supported in facing new tasks with perseverance and the excitement of discovery. All preschool children should experience that:

- other people, be it adults or children, share their interest in something
- they are encouraged to pursue things that interest them and can associate with their previous experiences
- they are confronted with subjects that extend beyond their current scope of experience

### Active learning and achievement

Children strive to acquire skills that promise them greater independence and more opportunities for exploring their environment. They are prepared to go to great lengths to attain these skills. Anyone who lives with children knows how proud they are when they reach their goals. This pride serves as the foundation for their future willingness to achieve even if it means overcoming difficulties and opposition.

The educational program describes how children can be supported in increasing the amount of room they have for action and making decisions. All preschool children should experience that:

- they can rely on their own strengths
- they can rely on key adult figures for support when testing out their strengths
- adults appreciate their achievements
- adults are willing to place their trust in them and ask something of them

## Active learning and democracy

Just like all other human beings, children live in social communities. They are dependent upon relationships and willing to work to maintain these relationships. In doing so, they increasingly develop a sense of community and come to terms with what is right and wrong, what the community benefits from and what harms it.

The educational program describes how children can be stimulated to perceive themselves as individuals as well as part of a group, to negotiate within this group and adopt standards and values that are important for both adults and children. In this way, pre-school can be seen as a place to cultivate democratic values in children. All preschool children should experience that:

- they are important and feel that they belong
- they can make a contribution to the community with their knowledge and abilities
- they can incorporate their ideas and desires into shaping the daily processes in the pre-school
- the rules of coexistence at the pre-school are not laws set in stone but rather nego-

tiated together with the pre-school teachers and the other children



# In which areas is children's development fostered?

Children need targeted stimuli in all areas that play a role in their development. The educational program is broken down into seven areas of education and describes how pre-school teachers can support children in these areas to understand the world in which they live. How information is processed in pre-schools should stimulate their desire for knowledge. It should also teach children how they can explore and learn about new things.

## The seven areas of education:

### Body, movement and health

Children's learning is linked to how they experience something physically through bodily movement. Important prerequisites for a child's learning processes are physical, mental and social well-being.

### Social and cultural environment

Learning is inconceivable without social relationships. The social experience in a culturally diverse community requires that basic values which ensure the rights of individuals and the preservation of the community be analyzed on an ongoing basis. This is the case in pre-school as well as in the rest of the world. Even the youngest children deal with questions of perception and meaning that need answers. These are questions about good and evil, life and death and ideas about this life and the afterlife.

### Communication: Languages, early literacy and media

Language, whether spoken or written, is the predominant medium that we use to communicate with one another in our society. It is also the medium that we use to exchange and give order to information. Those who want to orient themselves in our information

society depend on communication and have to acquire the ability to communicate. The first word a child says, the first picture a child draws, are important milestones along this path. The access children have to books and artwork, to media as a whole, their exposure to other languages, enrich language development and promote a sense of how different cultures coexist.

### Artistic activities

Because children are still at the beginning of their language development, aesthetic perception and artistic expression are a good way, especially for the youngest children, for them to come to terms with reality. Painting, drawing, making shapes with clay, these types of creative activities help children process what they experience on a day-to-day basis and develop their imagination.

### Music

Every human being is musical, every child even more so. Music, with its melodies, rhythms and tones, affects the emotions,

offers enjoyment and relaxation and makes it possible to communicate beyond language barriers.

### Basic mathematical activities

Math helps children to orient themselves in the world, to impose order on it and produce predictable figures: numbers, the clock, the seven days of the week, the circle, the line...

### Basic scientific and technical activities

Scientific observations and learning to operate technical devices and media provide stimulation for experimentation and generate questions. In attempting to answer these questions, children establish a relationship with the world and discover logical correlations: why does a bird fly? where does light come from? what is electricity?

All children have the right to be exposed to knowledge from each different educational area during pre-school.



# Which abilities should be fostered in children?

People who learn simultaneously acquire the ability to act successfully. The educational program describes which skills pre-school teachers should foster in day-to-day activities at pre-school so that children can be successful in their lives and actions both today and in the future.

These are broken down into four different areas:

## Personal skills

### For example:

- developing trust in one's own strengths,
- respecting one's self,
- being curious and open to new experiences, developing ideas and taking initiative...

## Social skills

### For example:

- listening to others, being able to empathize, negotiating and complying with rules and standards of coexistence, communicating about different expectations, dealing with conflict and making compromises...

## Functional skills

### For example:

- understanding spoken words and being able to express one's own thoughts accurately and correctly from a grammatical point of view,
- being able to formulate generalizations and concepts, being able to use tools properly...

## Learning skills

### For example:

- expanding one's own strengths and wanting to make progress,
- cooperating and working together with others,
- realizing that effort leads to success,
- acknowledging that learning enhances one's own ability to take action and make decisions...



## How do pre-school teachers view themselves? What are their responsibilities?

Progress would not be possible if the current generation only learned what the former generation already knew. Consequently, learning requires an active discussion between generations. Adults make their experiences, knowledge, skills and abilities available to their children. They are curious to see what their children will do with them. They realize that children are capable of creating something new out of something old during this process.

Pre-schools are places of invention. Pre-school teachers are there in the dual-role of teachers and learners. Children and adults set out on an exciting educational journey in pre-school from which everyone involved benefits.

- One prerequisite is that pre-school teachers create opportunities to give children access to a variety of different experiences. They encourage children to ask questions and search for answers. They support each child in his or her attempt to arrive at sound explanations for those answers.
- It is also a prerequisite that children exchange information among themselves about what is important to them and what they want to know and experience. Pre-school teachers thus ensure that children exchange experiences and create the opportunity for them to cooperate with each other in their day-to-day activities, in games and in projects.
- The final prerequisite is that pre-school teachers make their skills and experiences available. They must therefore analyze which knowledge and experiences children need to be able to deal effectively with current and future situations that occur in their lives. They themselves must be willing to learn new things.

The educational program breaks down the responsibilities of pre-school teachers into five different categories:

**Daily organization:** teachers structure day-to-day life in the pre-school in such a way that children have lots of different kinds of opportunities for learning on a day-to-day basis.

**Examples:** • during breakfast or lunch, start a discussion about the different foods: how does it taste? what preferences do individual children have? find out where the food comes from and how it is processed before being eaten • develop rituals for saying hello and goodbye: learn different languages and gestures for these rituals • participate in day-to-day chores: what type of system makes sense? create and label containers for different materials, learn how to use different cleaning materials and tools effectively and test them out • for breakfast, a celebration or go shopping together: write a shopping list, consider: how much do we need of what? compare prices and special offers, take into account sell by dates, learn to recognize special offers aimed at children, practice handling money...

**Games:** teachers initiate games that involve all of the senses and challenge the children's imagination. They provide the materials necessary for these games.

**Examples:** • incorporate name games, games involving the sense of touch, word games or songs, nonsense verses, counting rhymes • role plays and theater or circus games that challenge physical, emotional and mental abilities (costume material, props, makeup, build a stage, incorporate other ideas for games...) • suitable board and table games, dolls, toy animals and other game materials, • initiate games involving physical activity (make room for these games both inside and outside, make material available) • rediscover forgotten games, ask parents and grandparents • incorporate games from other cultures thus bringing traditions and other cultures to life in the pre-school...

**Projects:** teachers plan and deal with important topics with the children in long-term projects.

**Examples:** • "My body" (how do I look? what do I like about myself, what don't I like?) • "Every family is different" • "Where

*does our water come from" • "Why do planes fly?" • "I have to go to the hospital" • "Me and the other children" (get to know oneself and the other children better and recognize similarities and differences) • "Where do we live?" (find out about the place you live and learn how history changes this place)...*

**Floor plan:** teachers set up rooms in such a way that children are encouraged to undertake activities and learn independently.

**Examples:** • *create different types of possibilities for physical activity both inside and outside • set up rooms with opportunities both for privacy and group activities • provide interesting devices and tools, for example, optical aids such as magnifying glasses, kaleidoscopes, colored transparencies • have different materials available for making shapes • provide experimental tables and workbenches with the respective materials • set up corners for writing, a library...*

**Observation and documentation:** one of the ongoing responsibilities of teachers is to closely observe children's development and

document these observations. In the educational program, it is recommended that teachers talk to the parents of each child about what they have observed in their child's development on a regular basis. In this way, teachers and parents can think together strategically about how each child can best be supported in his or her development and coordinate their activities.

**These responsibilities include:** • *regular observation of individual children or groups of children, documentation of these observations and evaluation with the children • regular discussions with parents about the developmental progress of their children; possible use of different types of media such as video or photo after parental consent • agreement with parents about how documentation is to be handled*

# EIN PLATZ FÜR ELTERN



## What can parents do to support the implementation of the new educational program in pre-schools?

You, as parents, are the most important partners of the pre-school when it comes to your child's education.

You know your child and his or her development since birth. You know your child's likes and dislikes, what he or she likes to do, the strengths and problems.

Tell your child's teachers about the things your child is really interested in at home and what he or she likes to do. It is particularly important when your child starts pre-school that you help teachers understand your child and support his or her learning processes.

Children are happy when they sense that their parents and teachers get along. This helps them feel comfortable in pre-school and develop well.

Your opinion, your suggestions and your desires are important to the teachers. Don't be afraid to express the expectations you have of the pre-school. Don't hesitate to say

what you're not satisfied with, ask questions about what you want to know. A lot of questions can be clarified and problems solved when they are discussed. And, if there is something you like, don't keep it to yourself because it shows teachers that they are on the right path.

Of course you have a lot to do. But now and again, it might be possible to schedule a little time when you pick up your child from pre-school. See for yourself what your child has been doing all day. You might even find an opportunity for a quick chat with the teacher. You can also learn what your child likes to do in the pre-school and who he or she likes to play with. Perhaps you could also consider together what interests your child can pursue at home and what kind of support he or she would need.

The teachers will invite you to talk about the learning and developmental progress your child has made at regular intervals. They will report their own observations to you and ask

you what changes you have noticed in your child and what your assessment of his or her development is.

These discussions are important for your child because they give teachers the informations they need on how best to encourage it. And you also get a good overview of what your child can already do.

A lot of parents are particularly concerned the year before their child enters elementary school. They are worried about how their child will fare in school and whether he or she is adequately prepared. Talk about this with the teachers. The school is capable of changing and adjusting to different needs.

The teachers will certainly be appreciative if you are interested in having more contact with the pre-school.

Maybe you work in a field that is interesting for the children? Maybe you lived overseas and can share your experiences? Perhaps you remember songs and games that no one else does? Perhaps you play an instrument that you would like to teach the children? Everything that enriches children and that can

expand their scope of experience is welcome. Talk to the teachers about whether what you have to offer can benefit the children and, if so, how.

We hope that this overview has aroused your curiosity about the Berlin educational program and everything that your child experiences in his or her day-to-day life at the pre-school.

A complete version of the program is available at your pre-school and can also be purchased in bookstores.

We wish you and your child lots of fun learning. As you know, you never stop learning...



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## Berlin Educational Program

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# KidSmart

early learning program



## Quality in pre-school learning

IBM supports the Berlin educational program and has equipped 10 percent of Berlin pre-schools with multimedia learning stations

The IBM KidSmart program launched in Berlin in 2003 will be further expanded. IBM and Berlin Senate's Department of Education, Science, and Research implemented this key program for pre-school media education in a public private partnership initiative. As part of this program, IBM has given 200 multimedia learning stations with learning software to Berlin pre-schools and also equipped them with color printers and digital cameras. The Berlin qualification program called "Learning, Information, Technology and Service for Working with Young People in Berlin" is assuming responsibility for the media education and advanced training for pre-school teachers and the exchange of experiences as part of the regional program "jugendnetz-berlin.de".

### Goals of this IBM program:

- improve media education in pre-schools
- promote learning processes through hands-on learning as early as pre-school, particular attention is to be paid to basic IT education
- involve children, teachers and parents
- set up an Internet forum for exchange and information
- contribute to ongoing progress in the implementation of the overall educational program
- define active learning as a social process

You can find more information on the IBM KidSmart program at:

[www.kidsmartearlylearning.org](http://www.kidsmartearlylearning.org)

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