

Eight reasons why early childhood education matters ^[1]

Experts explain why the early years are so important for children's later development

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EXCERPTS

The pitter patter of little feet in many of the UAE's neighbourhood nurseries or pre-schools isn't just about keeping the little ones happy and occupied.

Sure, they have fun, interact with other children and get a lot of love from their favourite teacher, but what is your child actually getting beyond the interactive sessions? Here are a few ways that your child can benefit from quality early learning.

Brain development

High-impact early education improves children's brain development, says Shamail Siddiqi, Co-founder and CEO of Masterminds Education. Giving your child a balanced day filled with fun and interactive sessions not only captures their attention, but also encourages them to think, be inquisitive and creative, building lifelong foundations for "learning, achievement, emotional resilience and wellbeing".

Future-proofing kids

We are living in a world that is in contact flux. How do you make sure your child is ready for the challenges of the future? "High impact early education is critical to prepare our children for a future with unprecedented changes and disruption," says Siddiqi. "The behavioural traits that will be required for our children to cope with this rapidly evolving environment and careers that do not currently exist can be hardwired in early childhood. These key behavioural traits include resilience, adaptability, curiosity, and empathy," says Siddiqi.

"Collaboration will be key for the future. However, technology has changed the nature of collaboration and human relationships. Most children are over-exposed to technology which could potentially diminish their ability to empathize with other people. It is therefore more crucial than ever that we are deliberate in our approach to teach children human values." - Shamail Siddiqi, Co-founder and CEO of Masterminds Education

Holistic growth

Put your children in an environment that enables them to reach their full potential. "In the early years, a child's main way of learning and developing is through play. Pre-schools provide them an opportunity to explore, observe, experiment, solve problems and learn from mistakes," says Roshi Tandon, Managing Director of Chubby Cheeks Nursery.

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Social skills development

Children learn to engage better with other children and adults and become strong and independent through positive relationships, says Tandon. "The pre-school environment allows children to acquire vital skills that allow them to listen to others and express their own ideas, make friends, share, cooperate, and become accountable for their actions," Tandon says.

Early literacy

Literacy and numeracy skills form a foundation for education, but it's more than just reading, writing and counting. "Children learn literacy skills by listening to stories, talking about pictures and drawing shapes on paper," says Tandon, "They learn numeracy skills by singing and playing music, or pouring sand into containers of different sizes."

Physical development

Early education enhances children's physical development in ways that may not be possible at home, says Dr. Vandana Gandhi, Founder and CEO of British Orchard Nursery.

"A good nursery promotes activities designed to help develop a child's motor skills, such as running, throwing and play other active sports."

- Dr. Vandana Gandhi, Founder and CEO of British Orchard Nursery

Support multi-lingualism

Early childhood education is a great platform to introduce children to various languages because toddlers and young children have a great ability to absorb, understand and process new words better than adults, says Gandhi. “At British Orchard Nursery we focus on teaching children various languages including Arabic, French and Mandarin,” she adds.

Enhancing parenting effectiveness

Raising toddlers, particularly for first-time parents, can be quite a challenge without any support group and guidance. This is where early childhood education assists parents to partner with educators towards a holistic growth of their child, says Gandhi. “Preschools arm the parents with tools to maximise child development that they can use at home, and keep them abreast with their child’s progress with focus on areas that may need attention,” she adds.

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