EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

IDEAL LEARNING IN COLORADO

LEGISLATIVE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL FINANCE

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GET TO KNOW YOUR PRESENTER

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The science of early learning is clear and compelling

- Children learn and grow naturally from birth - they can’t help it!
- Strong, stable relationships with families and caregivers are the foundation of brain development
- Racism, poverty and trauma are harmful to children
- Nurturing environments are protective
- Play leads learning
EDUCATORS AGREE EARLY CHILDHOOD IS A UNIQUE DEVELOPMENTAL PERIOD THAT REQUIRES EXPERT, SENSITIVE TEACHING

- Children learn best through exploration and interaction
- Play is how children learn, not an add-on
- Children’s identities develop early - and we can support every child
WHAT IS IDEAL LEARNING?

- A term developed by ECE researchers and experts across different learning approaches to create a common language to describe equity-centered learning that focuses on all aspects of a young child’s development

- Also referred to as whole child or student-centered learning
Decision-making reflects a commitment to **equity**

Instruction is **personalized** to acknowledge each child’s unique development

**Play** is an essential element of young children’s learning

The **teacher is a guide,** nurturing presence, and co-creator of knowledge

**Children construct knowledge** from diverse experiences to make meaning of the world.

**Shared Principles of Ideal Learning**

Young children and adults learn through **relationships**

The **environment** is intentionally designed to facilitate children’s independence, exploration, and interaction

Continuous learning environments support **adult development**

The time of **childhood is valued**
Pressure to increase test scores has led to more teacher-directed, rote instruction with children as young as four years old.

Opportunity to increase impact of universal preschool if more children are enrolled in high-quality programs.
ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

BARRIERS TO GROWTH

Ideal Learning

INTERNAL DEBATE

GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM
- Low per-student funding
- Limited family choice
- Restricted teacher autonomy
- High number of districts
- Systems not aligned with student needs
- Gaps in alignment between pre-K and K-3

PERCEPTION / AWARENESS
- Varied and limited awareness
- Gaps in educator training
- Policymakers want “proof”
- Beliefs about traditional approaches

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS
- Narrow measures for student success
- Emphasis on standardization
- Limited early childhood accountability
- Training not recognized for state licensure

EARLY MILESTONES
IDEAL LEARNING MODELS IN COLORADO

- EL Education (formerly Expeditionary Learning)
- HighScope
- Montessori
- Reggio Emilia-inspired
- Tools of the Mind
WE KNOW THAT FAMILIES OF ALL BACKGROUNDS WANT EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS THAT SUPPORT WHOLE-CHILD DEVELOPMENT

YES, PARENTS CARE ABOUT READING AND MATH, BUT THEY ALSO WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO BE WELL-ROUNDED, JOYFUL, AND CAPABLE
THANK YOU

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