

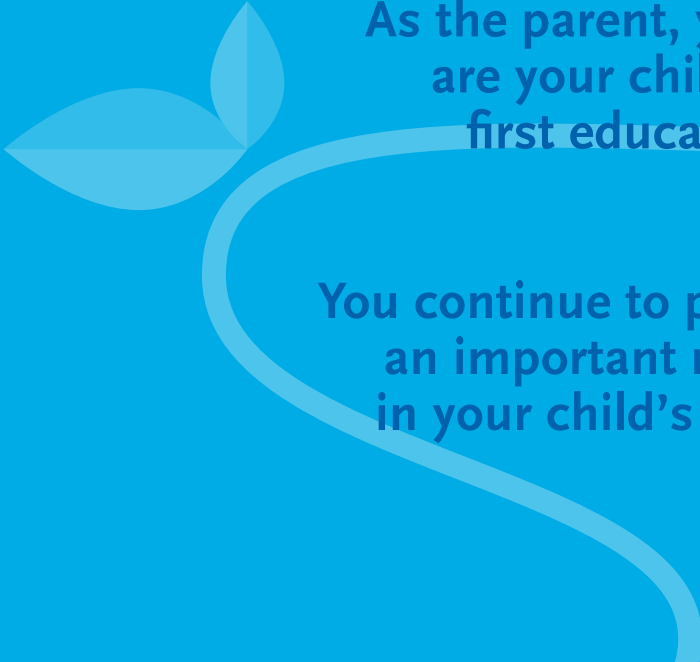


Give your child the best start:

Laying the foundation
for quality learning



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION



As the parent, you are your child's first educator.

From the moment your child is born, you and your family members are teaching your child, helping her/him grow, develop and learn. You are critical for your child's early learning.

You continue to play an important role in your child's life

throughout her/his childhood. Your child's early experiences with her/his family, community and teachers set the foundation for her/his personality, emotions, habits and learning patterns. These in turn shape the child's future growth and development.

Play is essential to your child's development.

Children learn and grow through play. In fact, play is a child's work. You play a decisive role in ensuring that your child receives plenty of opportunities for free play and confidence building activities.



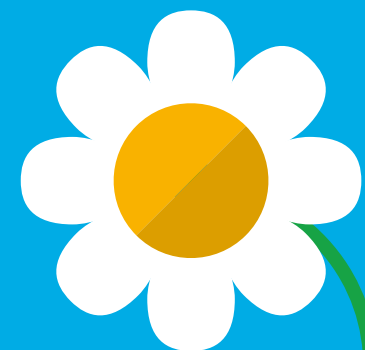

As your child moves

from home to an early education facility, building a relationship with the educators becomes important for your child's wellbeing.



Identifying a high quality facility

with capable educators is vital. Skilled professionals can not only most effectively build on the foundation set by you, but facilitate the best development of your child's abilities, skills and wellbeing.



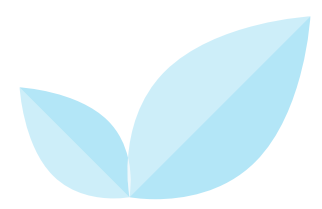


AS A PARENT, YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST EDUCATOR!

Express enjoyment of your child; tell your child how much you love and care for her/him.

Never compare your child with other children.

Children will make mistakes and can easily become frustrated. It is important to build their self-confidence by encouraging them to persist.



When you notice progress in your child's learning and development, share it with her/his educators. This could be invaluable feedback that could help the educator further refine her/his learning plan for the child.

Provide opportunities for your child to apply her/his newly acquired knowledge and skills in normal daily activities.


Listen to your child and respect what she/he has to say; show your child that her/his opinion is valuable.

Help your child explore, experiment, be creative and solve problems – help build autonomy, initiative and responsibility. Don't do for her/him things that she/he can do.

Show appreciation for the work of your child's educators and their efforts to improve their practice, and be willing to discuss further ideas.

Ask your child what she/he has learned and done at (pre)school. Ask her/him if she/he is happy being there.


Play with your child as much as you can, whenever you can. Make toys together. Give your child opportunities to initiate and lead play activities with you.



Show respect for those with a background or opinions different from yours, and thereby model respect for diversity to your children.

Create an environment where your child will feel loved, accepted and free to make mistakes while learning from them.

Be proactive and get involved in the work of your child's kindergarten or school. Do not wait to be invited, instead express your interest and offer your help.



IDENTIFY QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION FOR YOUR CHILD!

As your child readies to transition from home to an early childhood service, you will be keen to find a good facility. However, doing so can be a challenge as it may not be easy to identify one. ISSA, a network of early education professionals, offers support to parents in identifying a quality early childhood environment, through a set of principles. The educator has the strongest influence on a child's learning; hence, identifying quality practices is of utmost importance. You can use the ISSA principles to engage educators in discussing and strengthening the quality of practices and advocating for it.

1 Interactions

A quality educator would:

- greet every child by his/her name, with joy, love and respect
- respect what children know and are interested in, and actively listen to them
- encourage children to freely interact with each other, enabling them to learn from each other
- talk about feelings with children and teach them how to express their feelings without hurting others

Warm and loving relationships between young children and adults generate a sense of self and belonging in children.



2 Family and Community

A quality educator is:

- respectful of you and your opinion and open to listening, regardless of your gender, age, education and/or social status
- interested in understanding your vision for your child and expectations for her/his learning
- willing to explore how you would like to be engaged, instead of telling you what to do

A child's performance and emotional wellbeing is better when she/he feels that her/his parents, family and community are respected and taken into account.



3 Inclusion, Diversity and Democratic Values

A quality educator would:

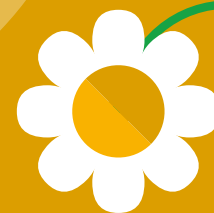
- show respect for your ideas and values, as well as those of other families
- encourage children to treat other children with respect, regardless of their background, social status, ability and level of knowledge
- take care to avoid labelling and bullying of any children
- encourage boys and girls to play together and with a variety of toys

Children are more sensitive to the needs of others and accept differences when they are respected, regardless of their culture, socio-economic status or abilities.





4 Planning and Assessment



A quality educator would:

- make learning meaningful by connecting it with your child's everyday experiences
- use assessment strategies that help your child succeed
- systematically document your child's progress and use it for planning next steps
- solicit your participation in the process of planning and assessment

Planning should be based on the child's realities and must incorporate diverse activities so as to encourage confidence in each child. Assessments need to be integrated with the teaching process, allowing for real time monitoring of learning and progress.

5 Teaching Strategies

A quality educator would:

- build on what the child knows, rather than on what it may not know
- connect new learning with the child's previous knowledge and experiences
- make learning concrete by linking with everyday life
- provide opportunities for play at incremental levels of difficulty in accordance with the child's evolving abilities, e.g. play with increasingly complex toys, higher levels of problem solving in everyday activities, asking questions requiring different possible answers.

Play is the most effective strategy for enabling children to learn and develop. Children learn best when they are interested, happy, and have a high sense of wellbeing.



6 Learning Environment

A quality educator creates an environment that:

- is warm, welcoming, personalized and homelike
- provides enough variety of toys and materials to motivate children at all stages of ability to play, explore, create and learn
- meets the children's need for mobility, safety and emotional security
- provides opportunities to develop warm and caring relationships with educators and each other

The environment should be safe, welcoming and respectful. It must be stimulating and generate a sense of belonging and community.



7 Professional Development

A quality educator would:

- engage in continuous professional self-development
- incorporate new knowledge and skills into her/his daily practice
- share with parents and children an enthusiasm for lifelong learning, as well as personal and professional development
- consult parents for ideas on professional development and share new knowledge and information with them

Children learn more when educators bring a range of strategies and skills to respond to the diverse needs of the children, through ongoing professional development and broadening of skills.



ADVOCATE FOR QUALITY!

Inspired by the above principles and together with your child's educators, advocate within your circles of influence for quality – quality practices, quality services, and quality personnel. You will directly help to shape a mutually reinforcing and enriching environment that maximises your and other children's development.



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To access the ISSA Quality Principles in English, French, Russian and Spanish, visit www.issa.nl.

To find out how the Principles are promoted in different countries across Europe and Central Asia, contact ISSA's member organizations. Contact details are available on ISSA's website.