

Ägerikrippe

Educational Concept November 2020



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1. Ägerikrippe's educational principles

- We allow the children to explore the world, following their own path at their own pace.
- We make sure that each child is given the same opportunities and possibilities to develop in a healthy way.
- We pay attention to the children's needs, aiming to providing them with enough time and space to experience and realize these needs.
- We support the children in developing a sense of self-esteem.
- We treat children of all ages with respect and appreciation.
- We provide the children with a safe setting in which they can explore, sense and overcome their own boundaries.
- We foster and encourage the children's independence.
- We support the children in developing their social and technical skills, self-competence and autonomy.

2. Putting our educational principles into practice

Independence

- To enable the children to develop their independence, we give them enough time and confidence in their day-to-day activities.
- We exercise empathy and patience when taking care of the children.

Participation

- Participation means allowing the children to have a say, participate and share in the day-to-day activities at the nursery, so that the children feel perceived and taken seriously as individual personalities.
- The children have an active influence on what happens at the nursery every day.

Closeness / Distance

- Each child indicates to us when he or she needs closeness or distance.
- We respect the children's need for closeness and distance.

Physical activity

- To be alive means to be in motion, because without it there is no life.
- To be physically active is one of the basic human needs.
- In order to do justice to a child's natural urge to move, we offer plenty of room for physical activity and carefully select suitable playground equipment. Also, we take the kids to the gym on a regular basis.

Communication

- We keep our communication open, transparent and honest. Both nonverbal and verbal communication are very, and equally, important to us.
- We are careful to always use decent language and to pay attention to the manner in which we communicate, being aware of our position as role models.
- We pay attention to what the children say, allowing them to talk freely, and making them feel taken seriously.

Boundaries

Personal boundaries

In order to be able to deal with both success and failure, children must be given the opportunity to reach and experience their boundaries. These experiences help them strengthen their self-confidence and personality.

Boundaries beyond their control

Each child becomes aware of other people's individual boundaries and learns to accept them. While accepting the kids' boundaries, we would like the kids to accept ours as well. We enter into compromises in order to find solutions that are satisfactory both to us and the children.

Rules

Rules provide clarity and security. Rules make living together easier, simpler. But they have to be to the point and thought through.

We consciously and purposefully establish rules, and we fully accept the responsibility for them. The rules should be meaningful and comprehensible.

To the extent possible, we allow the children to have their say when we establish the rules.

In return, we expect the kids to adhere to our agreements and rules.

Conflicts

Children need conflicts, to experience boundaries, to be aware of what they do, and to express themselves.

Conflicts and arguments among children, as well as among adults, need to be allowed to happen.

Through shared rules, conscious communication and mutual appreciation, we can better deal with the conflicts as they arise. Only by experiencing conflicts can children learn to resolve them and deal with opinions that are not their own.

Observations

We observe in a more resource-driven manner.

By carefully observing the kids, we aim to identify what needs each child and the group may have.

Only through subtle, unbiased and thorough observation can we guide and support each child well in his or her development.

Rest and sleep

In order to process what he or she experiences throughout the day, every child needs periods of sleep and rest.

Sleeping and withdrawal are basic human needs. Each child indicates when he or she is in need of a sleep or rest period.

We allow all children to relax and “recharge their batteries” by including rest periods when planning each day’s activities.

We design our rooms in a way that allows us to properly respond to the individual needs of each child:

- Book corner
- Snuggle-up corner
- Nap room

Nutrition

We place a great deal of importance on a healthy and balanced diet. A positive and pleasant atmosphere during meals is conducive to a healthy appetite and to a sense of community. At the table is where talk happens, where experiences are exchanged and where stories are told.

- We allow the children to help us prepare our meals.
- The kids are given the opportunity to make their own selection from among the dishes we offer them.
- We respect each child’s feeling of satiety. No child has to eat what he or she doesn’t like.
- We maintain table rituals and a lively exchange during our meals.
- We also pay attention to good table manners.
- We treat our food with respect.

Nature and the environment

We want to experience nature through all our senses and to learn to take good care of it.

Nature offers us a cornucopia of sensory impressions. By going through the year's changing seasons, for example, the kids can experience how it is to be part of a greater whole, year after year. By teaching the children to be careful with our environment, we show that we take our position as role models in these matters seriously.

- We offer the kids the opportunity to meet nature and the environment in a great variety of manners.
- We regularly take the kids on outings in the woods.
- We offer the kids the opportunity to become acquainted with a variety of natural materials and to experiment with them.
- We treat nature, animals and plants with care and respect.

Rituals

Rituals provide support and security.

Rituals are recurring, give children a sense of security, serve as guideposts and provide support in difficult situations. They can be helpful in integrating a child into a community.

Culture and traditions

Different cultures make our own life richer.

Diversity happens when people representing a wide range of lifestyles and values as well as abilities come together and leave a lasting positive impact on the community. We take care of children with many different cultural backgrounds and treat them with openness and respect.

- We maintain a positive relationship with the most diverse cultures and religions and understand that all people are different.
- Traditions within a community are culturally driven habits which take place periodically.

Self-competence, technical skills and social skills

Self-competence describes the ability and willingness to develop on one's own, to realize one's talent, motivation and willingness to learn. Independence, the ability to take criticism, self-confidence, reliability, responsibility and a sense of duty, etc. are key skills when dealing with oneself.

Social skills are an important component of living together.

- We consciously choose the group as our preferred form of community.
- We provide the kids with community experiences.

Technical skills describes the ability to acquire and pass on knowledge, to discover, realize and utilize language, and to make and have experiences.

- We provide the kids with a great variety of play possibilities them to further develop their cognitive skills.
- We provide the kids with the setting in which to explore and experiment on their own.

Room layout

Rooms should be designed to adapt to the children's interests and should be furnished to make them feel at ease.

- Our rooms have a pleasant atmosphere that invites the kids to play.
- The rooms are furnished so as to offer a variety of possibilities.
- There are various age-appropriate play zones adapted to the child group.

Play

To handle and tackle stimulating materials in a creative way is an important part of child's play.

- Our selection of play materials is age-appropriate and invites the kids to play.
- The kids also learn to handle the toys with care.

3. Cooperation

Solid cooperation based on mutual trust and respect is beneficial to all children. That's why the parents' involvement is important and of great concern to us. We want cooperation to take place in a spirit of partnership and trust. Working together fruitfully requires openness, tolerance, honesty, the willingness to cooperate and respect – on both sides.

We have talks and meetings with the parents to discuss the following:

- First day/settling in/last day
- Drop-off and pick-up times
- Parent-teacher talks
- Parent-child events

4. Team

- We work in a target-oriented manner, employing the resources and potentials of each of our team members.

- Good team culture is a prerequisite to properly looking after the children in our care.

- We keep up our team culture by treating each other with openness, tolerance, honesty and trust.

- We maintain an open, constructive way of communicating.

- Shared views and values give us security. To educate children in a conscious manner means to be clear about one's own views and to regularly question and review such opinions.

We respect different opinions and maintain a constructive feedback culture, listening to what each of us has to say. We are aware of our position as role models with regard to the children in our care.

5. Open rooms/spaces

The child does not become human, it already is human. / Janus Korczak

What does “open work at the nursery” mean?

The term “open work at the nursery” describes a situational, participatory approach aimed at fostering the kids’ innate curiosity.

Every child has his or her own, clearly defined, will to learn that the child can realize by freely and individually developing his or her personality.

In practice this means:

- Intergroup work
- Transforming group rooms into functional spaces
- The nursery’s outdoor and indoor spaces are considered equal.

What is the goal of open work?

The goal is a kind of participatory concept openly put into practice.

It is the children themselves that are the forces driving their development, and they know exactly where their own interests lie, and what knowledge they wish to learn, strengthen and discover and when.

The educators’ challenges

- One of the main challenges professional educators are faced with is that they, as has already been mentioned, have to let go of well-established work procedures.
- What they need is solid communication among each other.
- Binding agreements between educational professionals are the key to success in open work.
- Only if all pull together, one after the other instead of all at the same time, everyone involved can benefit from the new situation.
- The concept of group responsibility has to be “re-imagined” as the responsibility for a functional space.
- Team members have to talk everything through and reach agreements.
- Team members have to be willing to listen to all kids.
- Educational ideas have to be prioritized.

Rooms in an open nursery

When applying open-work concepts, our nursery’s rooms are assigned a very special role.

The group room principle is dropped. Instead, the existing rooms are transformed into functional spaces.

In other words, each room becomes home to a specific function in the nursery’s daily events or is assigned to a specific area of activity. A room could thus, for example, become an exercise room, a lunch room, an exploration room, a construction room, a dolls’ corner, a workshop, a sensory experiences room, etc.

Pros:

- The kids are free to develop at their own pace, following their own interests.
- Everyone knows everyone.
- Social groups with identical interests form/find one another more easily.
- The individual personality of each child is paid attention to.

How Ägerikrippe Day Care Nursery translates this concept into practice

We have decided to adopt a partially open concept. This means that the children in our care still belong to the group that they have originally been placed in and which continues to be supervised by its original educators. The group's work, however, is suspended/interrupted for specific periods throughout the day, during which the nursery in its entirety can be used freely by everyone.

We start off with our kids at the experience board. Here, the kids can choose their preferred room themselves and decide where they want to be active.

One of our team members maintains and organizes the experience board. The other team members are assigned to the various open rooms. Depending on the situation, monthly themes, educational themes, and/or activities are inserted into the experience board.

The kids' interests, needs and curiosity are and will remain our number-one priority.

6. Conclusion

This educational concept is binding and serves as a template/guideline for all members of our team of carers.

It also serves as a reflection instrument for our educational work.