

'It is about emotional intelligence'

Judy Julin, founder, CosmiKids, which recently made its India debut at Santa Cruz, explains how the educational process has evolved and become much more child-friendly

Aarti Seksaria



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The educational process that has brought us up to today is focused on academics and on the end product, achievement. However, what we are finding is that we also need to honour the process of getting to the product, the inner world of emotions and connectedness and kind heartedness. It's about emotional intelligence, creativity and play. These attributes lead to more creativity, which leads to innovation and that's important because we cannot solve today's problems thinking in the same way. This is why we are offering the children of today, the leaders of tomorrow innovative new ways of being in the world. And it's all through play. They do not even know what's going on. They are just having fun. What we have done is very specifically trained the educators to not educate too much. We believe that children have much to share with us regarding wisdom, a fresh innocent eye. So we want the teachers to listen and many times be lead by the children.

Learning through doing, that's the ideal educational format. Through activity, through nature, through gardening, through play they will actually learn math by doing math. Not by memorizing but by actually multisensory activities they will incorporate math at a much more fundamental level. So learning math through the heart is the most lasting way because you don't forget what has gone in your heart. You may forget what you memorize in your mind but when you learn about the heart and how you can feel the numbers, that's going to be most lasting and most integrated into a life of balance and harmony.

First of all you offer the subject matter, you explain the subject matter and then you are highly attentive as to which children relate to it in different ways. We have a resonant learning approach and it's that, which resonates within the child. They might be learning numbers through their hands, they might resonate learning numbers through nature in the garden. It is the facilitator's mandate to be highly attentive and see what resonates with that child's learning approach. So, there isn't an across the board structure. It evolves to meet the need of whatever child it is dealing with. So one child might learn numbers through dance, some may learn through colours.

The infrastructure essentials that should be verified before opting for a pre-school, on a fundamental level, are clean, safe, sensory rich, open air and nature. That's just on the outside. Now, we get to the most important and that is the central director and facilitators. Do they look into your eyes when they are talking? Do you feel warm and comfortable? We invite parents when they are looking for new centres and ask them, 'how does this centre feel to you?' Don't go so much by your mind. You want to listen to your mind when you first see the centre but then you put your mind aside and ask your inner wisdom, does it feel good, and that's the deciding factor as to how does it feel to you and do you intuitively feel that it's the right place where you should send your child.

Of course you want the qualifications of the teachers, you want to sit down with the director and teachers and talk to them. How you feel with them, are they smiling, are they light hearted? Because pre-school is not a serious business, it's where you have fun. We call it Plork, a combination of play and work.

As told to Aarti Seksaria

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