

# Ideal Learning in Colorado

The first five years are a time of rapid brain development and lay the foundation for all future learning. Pressure to increase third grade math and literacy test scores has led to more teacher-directed, rote instruction with children as young as four years old. The Principles of Ideal Learning, which are grounded in child development research, offer guidance for effective, developmentally appropriate education. Implementing these principles can improve the overall quality of early learning, leading to reductions in special education placement and grade retention, as well as other positive long-term outcomes that advance equity and close opportunity gaps.



## What is Ideal Learning?

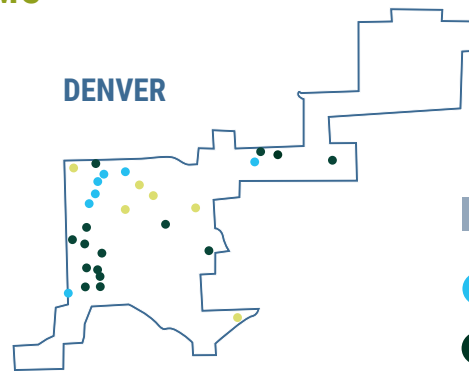
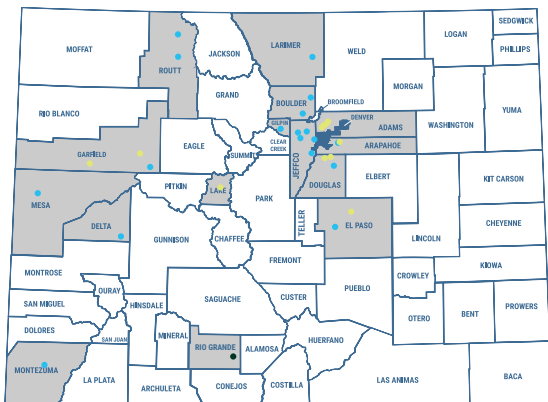
**Ideal Learning** is a learning approach that focuses on all aspects of a young child's development, including physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth from pre-kindergarten through third grade.

Educators may be familiar with the philosophy of Ideal Learning, but by a different name. **Whole child learning** and **student-centered learning** are commonly used phrases for these approaches.

Some Ideal Learning models that are active in Colorado public kindergarten or pre-K classroom include:

- EL Education
- HighScope\*
- Montessori
- Reggio Emilia\*
- Tools of the Mind

### PUBLIC IDEAL LEARNING PROGRAMS



- At least one program present in county
- Montessori
- Tools of the Mind
- EL Education

# Principles of Ideal Learning

The Principles of Ideal Learning outline core concepts that form a foundation for high-quality early childhood education. These principles allow for and embrace multiple approaches and traditions, while considering the unique environments in which children learn.

Decision-making reflects a commitment to **equity**.

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

**Play** is an essential element of young children's learning.

Instruction is **personalized** to acknowledge each child's development and abilities.

The time of **childhood is valued**.

Young children and adults learn through **relationships**.

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

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

Continuous learning environments support **adult development**.

## INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUUM

Academics, social interactions, and play should not be at odds with each other. When combined, they offer the best chances for children to reach their full potential. Ideal Learning supports whole child development and offers a more balanced approach with opportunities for children to explore through play and engage in social interactions as educators guide learning with rich, experiential activities.

