

Learning from the very start

Information for parents about the education and development programme
for children in Hesse from 0 to 10 years old



Parents

Information for



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Dear Parents,

Every child in Hesse should be nurtured as early as possible in the most optimal manner if a lasting effect is to be achieved. We want to achieve this goal together with everyone involved in early education. Scientific evidence has shown that children are more receptive and willing to learn in the first ten years than in any other phase of their lives. This realisation may hardly surprise you as you accompany your child through the stages of development. You will undoubtedly often have observed **your child** and the patience with which it tirelessly conquers its new world bit by bit. The patience, fervour and meticulousness with which children advance often leaves us adults in astonishment. For children, learning is a necessity. Interesting impressions and experiences are a source of spontaneous joy.

The realisation that there are extraordinary opportunities for development in early childhood education is currently gaining increasing recognition. It's no wonder: experts in developmental psychology and neuroscientific research are remarkably consistent in their assessment that the first ten years are the most learning-intensive years of a person's life. Learning, therefore, does not begin with one's entry into nursery or primary school, but much earlier - at the time of birth. New approaches in research have also shown that a partnership



*Jürgen Banzer
Hessian Minister for Labour,
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Foreword

in the education and development of children plays a particularly important role in the formation of transitions: the transition to nursery school and from nursery school to primary school.

One of the fundamental ideas of our education and development programme for children from 0 to 10 years of age is, therefore, to establish a basis for intensive **cooperation** with your child's place of learning in order to provide the best possible stimulation for the first ten years of your child's life. This brochure is intended to give you a deeper insight into the various possibilities for meeting this goal. In the education and development programme, we have developed a functional basis for all education and learning locations for children in Hesse during these specific ten years. It has been demonstrated that the work done in nurseries, primary schools, community education centres and day care facilities is made all the more effective by better liaison between the staff, teachers, educators and childminders. The collaboration between you, the parents, and the teachers is therefore of increasing importance.





In recent years, much emphasis has been given to learning processes in the early stages of development in nursery schools and primary schools in Hesse. The Federal State Government, together with the nursery schools, has financed and supported numerous measures which, for example, support the linguistic development and advancement of your child or contribute to a sufficient number of local placements. The education and development programme is a central building block for our efforts to provide children with an **optimal education**. It provides the pedagogical frame of reference for the **early, lasting, individualised and intensive development** of your child.

Many people who are involved in the education and fostering of children have collaborated very intensively and productively in order to launch the education and fostering program. Extensive pedagogical experience and theoretical knowledge lies behind it.

Through our education and development programme for children in Hesse from 0 to 10 years of age, we would like children to experience the best possible advancement and support in all locations and from the very start. The aims are to provide a frame of reference and foundation for the education and development of children and to intensify the collaboration between all educational and learning establishments for children.

The planned pre-school year will also be based on the education and development programme. The introduction of the pre-school year will further advance the goal of the Federal State Government of Hesse to promote early and lasting development. It should focus, in particular, on the 5 - 6 year-old children in nursery schools and promote the **strengthening of their skills** in various ways. If a child from Hesse starts primary school after nursery school and a pre-school year, the cornerstones which can be built on later will have already been put in place.

We hope you gain a great deal of interest and new insight while reading this brochure, particularly in regard to accompanying your child on its way along the path of learning and education.



Handwritten signature of Jürgen Banzer in black ink.

Jürgen Banzer
Hessian Minister for Labour,
Social Affairs and Health

Handwritten signature of Dorothea Henzler in black ink.

Dorothea Henzler
Hessian Minister of Culture



*Prof. Dr. Dr. Dr. Wassilios
Fthenakis*

Dear Parents,

Children are curious. They learn easily and willingly. In the past, however, this fact was underutilised. Results from developmental psychology and neuroscientific and educational research emphatically document that the **learning and development potential** of younger children has been considerably underestimated. Small children already have astounding cognitive capabilities and strive to investigate their environment and interact with it from the time of birth.

The education and development programme from 0 to 10 years in Hesse represents an understanding of education according to which **playing and learning** are not treated as opposites, rather as two sides of the same coin. In the process, it is not a matter of simply "conveying" information; it involves following up on children's questions, formulating common hypotheses with them, introducing various viewpoints, trying out different things and finding common answers. In doing so, learning takes place through **common experience** and **practice**.

Through collaboration and communication, children enrich their understanding of lesson content and explore the significance of things in a **collective learning experience**. As a result, children are able to develop both an awareness of what they are learning and of the fact that the acquired knowledge can also be transferred to other situations.

Education and development are defined as the common task of participants. Education, therefore, is understood as a social process in which everyone takes an active role: in addition to the teachers and educators, particularly you the parent and ultimately the child itself. In the process, there is no one the child learns from as willingly as you. Education and development begin in the family. Crèche, nursery school and primary school, and perhaps even day care centres come later. The Hessian education and development programme offers a **common frame of reference** for all learning centres in which education and development take place in the first ten years.

The individual educational centres are called upon to apply the same principles and fundamentals when it comes to the education and development of children. This leads to the best possible harmonisation and cooperation of the individual education centres with one another. The more detailed and trusting the exchange and the collaboration between you, the parents, and the teachers and educators is, and the more your child is actively included, the more it will benefit from the learning opportunities and be strengthened in its development.

And this is the goal: to help each child to develop in the best possible manner on an individual basis and to optimise the learning benefit.



Prof. Dr. Dr. Dr. Wassilios E. Fthenakis



Social

Change

Social change

The need to formulate an education and development programme arises from the changing conditions in which children live and in which education and development take place.

Today's children are born into a society which is shaped by **continuous change** affecting all areas of life. The working world is becoming increasingly **mechanised** and **digitised**. This trend also extends into private life. Our society is changing through different cultural influences. Family life and structures are becoming more diversified and the number of families with one child, single-parent families or so-called "patchwork families" is on the rise.

Children are being given an increasing share in decision-making and more say than their parents and grandparents had. New **learning possibilities** arise from all these new expectations, and hence also new **educational opportunities**.



It is a challenge for children to deal with these developments and changes. As a result, the workload is greater in terms of education and development in the family and in all other educational and learning centres.



Early childhood education has gained increasing interest in society in recent years. The background for the new significance which has - rightly - been attached to it can be found in developmental psychology and neuroscientific and educational research. They consistently substantiate that children's **experiences** and **learning processes** during their **early years** have a considerable influence over all later development. This is the cornerstone for **lifelong learning** - that is to say, not just for learning in school, but for learning in all areas. **The first ten years of a child's life are the years in which the most learning and development takes place.**





Common Challenges

for all Institutions

Specifics of the education and development programme for children in Hesse aged from 0 to 10 years

Education and development begin in the **family**. Even when later institutions like day nursery, day care centres, nursery school and primary school come along, the family remains the primary source of education and development for a child and the one which has the most influence for the longest time.

Learning takes place everywhere: at home, while playing with friends as well as in nursery school or school, the nursery, the day care centre, in family education centres or other areas. It is therefore advantageous if all education and development locations are coordinated with one another and the institutions work together.

In the education and development programme for children in Hesse from 0 to 10 years of age, a basic principle is formulated for **all** learning locations in the first ten years. The education and development programme is thus a cross-institutional plan. The basic ideas of the programme are explained in this brochure.

The goal in the implementation of the programme is to establish smooth transitions from one institution to the next - such as the transition from nursery school to primary school. Education and development in the institutions are regarded holistically and understood as **common challenges for all those involved**.

In the centre of all considerations is your child and its best possible **education from the very start**.



The goal of all those involved is to have children's individual **development processes** in mind, to realise their **strengths** and to observe and accompany their development.

In the Hessian education and development programme, education and development are understood as the outcome of a commonly formulated (co-constructive), active process. It is a process in which learning takes place through cooperation and new content is commonly gathered, ideas are developed and questions and problems are solved together. The children pool their knowledge and skills together with adults and other children, develop them further and acquire new skills and knowledge. Thus their understanding of the world is deepened. In doing so, their **mental**, **linguistic** and **social** development are holistically strengthened. In their first ten years,

children undergo countless changes and transitions: from the family to the day care centre or nursery school, from the nursery school to the primary school and then to next level of education. Changes in the family often add to this, such as professional changes, the birth of an additional child, the divorce of the parents, etc.

If children manage to deal with these transitions successfully, they gain important experience and acquire **fundamental skills** for their future life and learning. The most important foundation for the development of a child is established in the first years of life. The stronger the support during this time, the better the child's **educational career**.



Many of a child's everyday situations and activities require not only your observation and support, but also that of the teachers. Children should not be left alone with their questions and problems, their interests and options. It is important for both parents and teachers to strengthen childhood development and to bear in mind that the demands on children should not be too low or too high. In addition, it is necessary to observe, to know and to take account of your child's **strengths**.

The teachers and educators should meet and discuss common observations or procedures with you, the parents. In this way, children can be permanently supported in their development.





Children Learn

From the Very Start

Children have skills

Children connect with their environment through **dialogue** with their parents, other adults and children. They explore objects, circumstances and practice through their interaction with other people. In the process, they become increasingly familiar with their own capabilities and are able to expand on them.

Children have capabilities and skills from the time of birth. They investigate their environment and interact with it from the very beginning. They reach for everything and begin exploring their surroundings. They are curious, interested and want to know everything. They enhance their view of the world through interaction with other children, siblings and parents. They learn to appreciate their strengths and become increasingly aware of their capabilities. They also develop more skills in relation to their share in responsibility for the social environment and in their understanding of what they can learn and why they learn.



These form the foundation for **physical and mental health, well-being and quality of life**. They are prerequisites for the development of a **responsible and active member of the community**.

Teachers and educators have the task of accompanying and supporting these processes.



How a child's skills are strengthened

Already as infants, babies seek (eye) contact with their attachment figure and are pleased when they succeed. From the beginning, children explore a very small segment of the world and find their challenges therein. They gain experience mainly through play and learn in the process, for example when they reach for the rattle, when they take their first steps or when they play with building blocks or sort buttons. They enjoy learning and have fun discovering or figuring things out.

As they get older, children interact with their environment with increasing intensity. Whatever they do, each of their activities is meaningful for them. **Playing is also learning.** Every observation, every decision, every problem solved is a step forward for the child.

In the process, children need **support** and **encouragement** from their social environment. From the very beginning this will be their parents or older siblings. Later on this will also include teachers or peers.

The child clarifies this for itself by telling about its experiences and exchanging with others. It can assess its actions increasingly better and expands its **capacity for action and expression**.

Your child has questions or ideas about all everyday activities, like cooking, gardening or taking a stroll in the forest or near the water.

It is important that you, the parents, get involved with your child's questions and pursue them with the child.



After all, your child learns best by trying things out on its own or experiencing them first hand. You can encourage your child to reflect, support its activities and thus enhance its learning processes.

The more children gain **their own experiences** and the more insight they gain into the experiences of others, the more precisely they will be able to realise, assess and respect their own perceptions and actions, as well as those of others.

It is important for parents, day care personnel, as well as for teachers in nursery school facilities, family education centres and primary schools to observe the learning and developmental process of the child - and the changing **learning requirements** associated with it - and to adjust to the stages of development.



The education and development programme describes particular areas in which children's development and skills can be strengthened

The education and development programme includes particular areas which are important for the education and development processes of children and the strengthening of childhood development and skills. In the education and development programme for children in Hesse from 0 to 10 years of age, **goals** are therefore formulated for each of these areas as a guide for teachers and educators and as pointers to assist their communication with the learning and developing child.



Strengthening the child's strengths

The familiar interaction with stressful situations and conflicts makes an impression on the development of a child's social and emotional capacities. This development is closely linked with the development of linguistic and mental capabilities, because only a child who can properly express its **feelings** and formulate its **desires** for others has the chance to be heard and understood.

You, the parents, and the teachers and educators as well as other children contribute to the strengthening of your child in its **personality development** and allowing it to feel accepted as a person.



Interacting with others and dealing with language and media

As a result, it learns to deal with its own **strengths** and **weaknesses** and also learns to respect the strengths and weaknesses in others. Your child additionally learns to reflect on its own feelings and capabilities.

Developing a sense of its own body is also very important. It strengthens self-confidence and is a prerequisite for **responsible, health-conscious behaviour**. You support your child by providing healthy food, sufficient physical activity and regular health care.

The abilities to express oneself linguistically and to be able to communicate with others are a fundamental requirement for the social and mental development of your child.

The **linguistic climate** in the family has a great influence on linguistic development. Your child's linguistic learning and development advance best when you constantly interact with it, discussing themes that are important to your child. It is of particular importance that parents have frequent, stimulating conversations with their children in the language that they commonly use.

Children often express their needs in the family and can actively participate in **everyday family life**.

Your child comes into daily contact with, and makes use of, a variety of **media**. You, the parents, should talk with your child about its experiences with media and discuss with your child how to deal with media in an appropriate manner.



Being curious, learning, exploring and discovering

Your child is curious from the very start and eager to discover its environment. You should pick up on these tendencies and encourage them. Later on, your child will be supported by teachers and educators in its independent acquisition of information in order to answer questions. It will be encouraged to expand its knowledge.

Natural science, mathematics and **technological experience** are a part of everyday life and learning for all children. They come into contact with technical devices, experience everyday mathematical factors and encounter phenomena of natural science. In the process, questions which they want to pursue and resolve will emerge. They should have the opportunity to do so.



Through experimentation, discovery and construction, your child acquires skills that help it to comprehend and discover the world.

Being creative and imaginative

Encountering **art** strengthens the sensory perception and ability of a child to experience. **Creation** and **representation** help your child process impressions and experiences. Your child gains access to artistic activities. Your child discovers various forms of art and expression and experiences joy and relaxation.



Assuming responsibility, learning values

Children always have a lot of questions and want to know how the world works. They are little philosophers and reflect on life, the meaning and value of the individual and about God. These questions should be taken seriously and you should resolve them together with your child.

Children grow up as social creatures, shaped by their family structures and their experiences. The family is the first place, and therefore a very appropriate one, in which children learn what it means to be there for one another and to assume responsibility. As they get older, they experience more and more what it means to be a member of different groups. Co-existence is only possible through **understanding** and **consideration** for others, while understanding one's own needs at the same time. Children need **guidance** through **values** and **social rules** in order to be able to interact with their environment and their habitat.



Your child's **active participation** in the family and institutions helps it to gather experiences in these areas and strengthen its **social** and **democratic skills**.



Defining Goals

Working Together

How educational establishments and institutions strengthen your child

Each institution has its task, becomes involved in the **individual stage of development** of your child and **initiates learning processes** which are appropriate for the child's age and level of development.

The education and development programme provides a guideline for all of the places of learning (the family, day care centre, nursery school, primary school, family education centre, organisations, etc.) which a child visits from the time of its birth to the end of its time in primary school.

The goal is for day care centres and primary schools to base their future concepts and school programmes on the fundamentals and principles of the education and development programme. In the

future, **educational standards** will apply for classroom instruction in addition to the education and development programme. They describe the skills in the individual subjects which a child is expected to have at the end of its time in primary school.





Helping, Encouraging
and Supporting

What can you do as parents?

Your child learns from the very beginning in a familiar environment with your support, your encouragement and your help. It has already gained numerous **educational experiences** which it can tie together with nursery school and school.

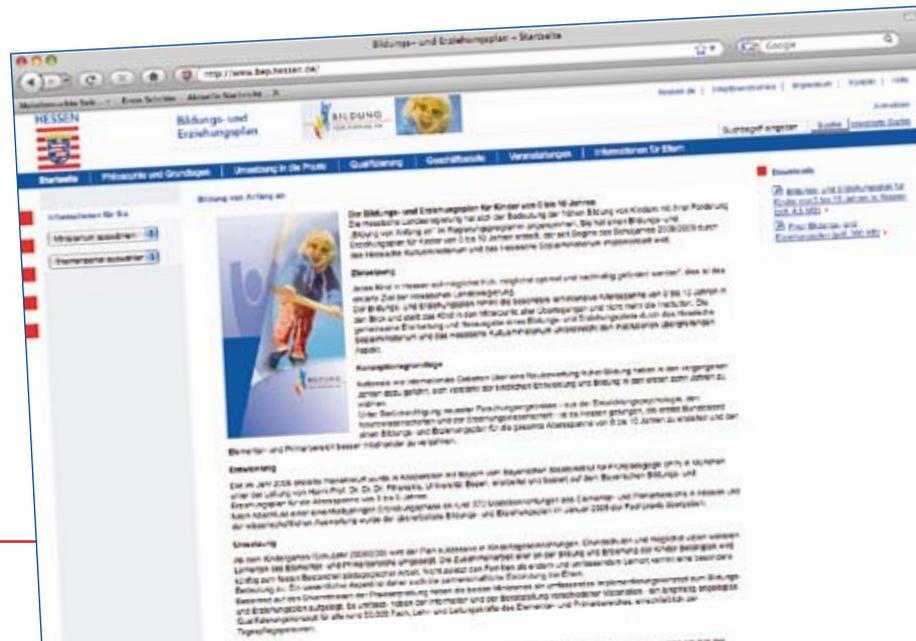
You can support your child by collaborating with the educational institutions and **utilising the opportunity for exchange with the pedagogical specialists**. This allows you to gain a good insight into what your child is capable of and can provide information about the strengths and potential problems your child may have. In the process, you support your child at its places of learning and you will show your child that you take its development very seriously and that you will be there to accompany your child along the way.

The education and development programme emphasises how important and indispensable it is that parents and all the relevant professionals become involved in an **education and fostering partnership**.

The requirement for a successful education process is the close **cooperation** of all those involved.

If you want to learn more about the education and fostering plan, you can read more on the internet at www.bep.hessen.de.

It is also available from your nursery school contact, your day care centre or your school.



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Weltwissen der Siebenjährigen -

Wie Kinder die Welt entdecken können

Elschenbroich, Donata: Weltwissen der Siebenjährigen -

Wie Kinder die Welt entdecken können,

München 2002: Goldmann Verlag

Deutscher Bildungsserver

www.bildungsserver.de

HESSEN



Imprint

Published by:

**Hessisches Ministerium für Arbeit,
Familie und Gesundheit**
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Publisher:

Universum Verlag GmbH, Wiesbaden

Design:

Muhr Design und Werbung, Wiesbaden

Translation:

As Co International, Dortmund

Editorial office:

Übersetzungsbüro Engin GmbH

Picture credits:

Bildunion (6), Banana Stock (3), Fotolia (1), Franco Baroni (3),
Gerhard Bayer (2), Ingram Publishing (5), Photodisc (5)

Printing:

Variograph Druck- und Vertriebs GmbH, Bad Liebenwerda

Edition:

2nd edition 2009

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