



Why is teaching people about early childhood education so important to me? The general public does not really understand what early education is about. Even the parents we serve do not fully understand. Our elementary counterparts do not really understand either. It is like any other profession we get it, but the education establishment is infamous for not educating others in what we do or why.

I started my career as a First Grade teacher and loved it. Two years later I went to get my Masters' degree. I was shocked when I had to set aside my Elementary learning to get Early Childhood. I knew that as an undergraduate the difference was 90 semester hours but I did not really know the two fields are so diametrically different that it is amazing they share the same field.

#### Curriculum

**Elementary Education** is teacher and curriculum lead.

**Early Education** is designed around the needs of the children and where they are on the developmental scale.

#### Lesson Development

**Elementary Education** is based on instruction created by teachers in the form of formal lesson plans. In **Early Education** teachers use educational materials, the classroom environment, and open ended questions to help children learn concepts.

#### Teaching Methods

**Elementary Education** uses a variety of paper and pencil exercises to test children's understanding of the curriculum: class work, homework, re-teaching, and tests.

**Early Education** uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to get a baseline and then uses observations, the open-ended questions, portfolios, and developmental checklists to determine how children are growing and learning.

### Children's Learning

**Elementary Education** is concentrated on a specific set of subjects that have particular criteria reading, math, science etc. The goal is to get children to master these criteria.

**Early Education** concentrates on the four domains of development physical/motor, social/emotional, language, and intellectual, and getting children to master these at their age and developmental level.

### Teaching Materials

**Elementary Education** uses paper and pencil standardized testing to take a snapshot of how children are learning the information they are being taught.

**Early Education** uses teacher questionnaires, children's ability to do certain developmental activities, parent questionnaires, and observations to get a snapshot of how children are developing and learning.

### Classroom Engagement

**Elementary Education** expects children to sit, pay attention, raise their hands, ask questions, and use books, pencils, and paper to learn.

**Early Education** children are expected to engage in "play" or explore children think out loud, use materials to think through observations, plan activities, and explore the world through their classrooms.

These six areas are only examples of how Elementary and Early Education are different. We really need to help folks to understand. The two forms of education are both needed and need to be understood because Early Education is the foundation of Elementary Education. When Early Education is sacrificed for the seeming importance of what is learned in Elementary Education then a child is building on a faulty foundation.