JOIN THE IDEAL LEARNING HEAD START NETWORK:
A community of champions for inclusive play-based learning environments in Head Start

What are the Principles of Ideal Learning?

The nine principles of ideal learning are drawn from early learning traditions, including Montessori, Reggio Emilia, High Scope, Tools of the Mind, among others. These principles emphasize equitable decision-making, play-based learning, whole-child development, and the role of educators and parents as guides who can support children’s self-directed discovery and growth.

“The Ideal Learning Head Start Network is a community of people breaking myths of what’s not possible in Head Start. Learning from each other on how to innovate and push boundaries.”

– Leo Lundholm, Director of Education, Child-Parent Centers

Are you...

A Head Start leader (education director, coach, administrator) or advocate looking for opportunities to ensure children from every community are receiving innovative, holistic, and high-quality early learning experiences in an equitable, relational, play-based, and interactive (ideal learning) environment?

Are you curious about how to engage children’s natural desire to explore and test their world?

Are you committed to high-quality pedagogy based on science for all children in your program?

Do you bring expertise or ideas about how to help children learn through play and relationships?

If so, please join the Ideal Learning Head Start Network (ILHSN)

ILHSN is a group of Head Start leaders and advocates who come together in a community of practice to learn and share resources, guidance, and expertise. We also help other programs around the country to adopt equitable, play-based pedagogical approaches, and we come together to advocate for policy and regulatory changes to make ideal learning environments possible for all young children and families in Head Start. Our goal is to build the capacity of programs to effectively integrate the principles of ideal learning into Head Start. Our programs create equitable learning environments and experiences that are culturally affirming and accessible to all children, families, and educators.
Benefits of Joining

Membership in the ILHSN is free! Our members actively contribute to the growth of ideal learning in their own programs and beyond through:

- Monthly virtual network meetings—to learn and discuss successes, opportunities, and challenges in implementing ideal learning approaches within the Head Start structure
- Innovation Grant opportunities—to enhance and expand ideal learning approaches within a Head Start classroom or program
- Leadership coaching—to build capacity and expertise in creating effective and high-quality ideal learning environments
- Annual convening—to connect in person with other ideal learning and Head Start programs from across the country
- Opportunities to amplify your work—to showcase what programs are doing by hosting webinars, presenting at conferences, and engaging with the media
- Resource bank—to provide documents, reports, and other resources to help early learning providers implement ideal learning approaches within Head Start
- Leadership opportunities within the network—to serve on subcommittees, share learning and best practices at network meetings, and engage in advocacy, media outreach, and storytelling.

“We would not be where we are today without the ideal learning Head Start Network”

– Dana Hilbert, Curriculum and Inclusion Coordinator, Tulsa Educare

Join the Growing Network

Our continually growing network currently includes 45+ programs located across the country and multiple Head Start Regions.

Want to Learn More?

Please complete this form, and a member of the Ideal Learning Head Start Network team will be in touch.