The keystone to my style of looking after children is the fact that in order to learn and grow, it is a requirement for children to feel safe exploring the world around them and not fear making mistakes. Ms. Frizzle said it best: "Take chances, make mistakes, get messy!" I find that in most cases, routine is helpful, but having the flexibility to know when to throw it out is also important. I meet a child where they currently are developmentally, and provide scaffolding to reach the next step. In day to day life, this plays out in a number of ways, depending on children's ages and stages. I generally encourage children to participate in their own day to day care and the "maintenance" of daily life. I provide opportunities to explore new environments and concepts, both in the home and out and about. Turning mistakes into teachable moments is paramount, and I often find that taking a step back myself allows for more connections to be made as a child thinks through their options and creates a plan. Exposure to music, language, and literacy are important to me, and I incorporate these activities into daily plans. While I occasionally find that adult intervention is necessary to resolve an issue (particularly if it involves another child), I typically expect children to have worked on a solution for themselves before coming to an adult for help - in an age appropriate fashion, of course! Helping to raise respectful, curious, and independent children is why I do what I do.

How do all of these ideas look in practice? To one child, this might mean climbing just a little bit higher on the jungle gym. I'll be there to catch them, but it is up to the child to test their limits in balance and strength, and learn what happens when they exceed their abilities. To another child, this could look like them trying out what happens if they start shouting and making demands, rather than asking for help. I'll be their example and practice partner for how they can best ask questions and negotiate for things they want. As I keep an eye on their development, I will see what accomplishment they are nearing, and set up the environment to make that more accessible.

There is no one specific childcare philosophy that I adhere to, but I am constantly looking for new material that supports my basic idea about interacting with the environment. While I am not trained in RIE, I can use the idea of a "yes space" to better design an area for a baby to explore without needing constant input from me - and eliminating the need for me to disallow certain actions. While I wouldn't necessarily call play "work" like Montessori teachers do, I love to involve children in everyday tasks like preparing meals, wiping up spills, and putting dirty clothes in the appropriate place. As a self-described "artsy-crafty" person, I'm drawn to the idea of Waldorf education and bring movement and visual arts into many academic or cognitive based goals, but I still see a role for store-purchased toys.

There are a couple of hot topics that could use special comment:

Screentime: Generally I don't find it to add a whole lot of value to the daily routine and avoid the use of movies, shows, and ipad games. I appreciate the ability to use my own discretion to use the internet as a resource for information, use spotify for playing music, or yes, that occasional screens-as-entertainment scenario for an unusual day where it makes sense.

News Stories: I will follow your lead, but I won't lie. Give me a heads up if there's a "party line" on an issue. Typically, I encourage children to explain to me what they know, and allow them to draw conclusions on their own, only adding questions to their musing to pull them back on the right track if their imagination has derailed the information available to them. I'll generally give you a heads up if a hard topic has come up during the day, and if I suspect the answer to a question is a bit too far for my role, I will redirect with something like "I'm not sure what your parent's thoughts are on this topic, why don't you that when you next see them."