

Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Education

The following principles guide the practice and decisions made at Squiggle Room Early Center and are borrowed from Foundations of the Reggio Emilia Approach by Lella Gandini.

Image of the Child

Children are viewed as competent, curious, full of knowledge, potential, and interested in connecting to the world around them. Teachers are deeply aware of children's potentials and construct all of their work and environment of the children's experience to respond appropriately.

Collaboration and Interaction

Collaboration and cooperation are intentional in a school inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to education. The entire system is designed to be connected and in relationship. Nothing is left to sit in isolation. Everything is alive and connected. Children, teachers and families join together to continually improve the system that supports our school community.

The Environment

The space within the school or the environment is considered the third teacher. Teachers intentionally organize, support and plan for various spaces for children. The daily schedules are planned to ensure that there is a balance between individual, small and large group activities, child directed and teacher initiated activity and inside as well as outside experiences.

The Three Subjects of Education: Children, Families and Teachers

For children to learn, their well-being has to be guaranteed; such well-being is connected with the well being of parents and teachers. Children, parents and teachers have rights; the right to safety, care and welfare, the right to be involved and the right to grow professionally.

The Power of Documentation

Documentation is a means to collect information, observations and learning. It can be in the form of observations, photography, video, conversation transcripts and/or visual mediums like paint, wire, clay or drawing materials. Teachers use documentation to identify strengths, ideas, and next steps to support learning.

Emergent Curriculum

Emergent Curriculum is a way of teaching and learning that requires teachers to observe and listen to the children. Teachers ask questions and listen for the children's ideas, hypotheses and theories. After observing children in action, the teachers compare, discuss, and interpret their observations. Teachers plan activities, studies and long term projects in the classroom based on their

observations. Teachers partner with children and the exchange of theories are referred to as the Cycle of Inquiry. Teachers use their interpretations, intentions and goals (social, emotional and academic) to make choices that they share with children. Learning is seen not as a linear process but as a spiraling progression.

The Hundred Languages of Children

The Studio teacher (or Atelierista) works closely with other teachers and the children through the Studio, an intentional space containing materials and tools to pursue thinking and concepts. In addition to the larger Studio, Mini-studios are found in every Discovery. What is done with the materials is not art per se, because in the view of Reggio educators the children's use of media is not a separate part of the curriculum but an integral part of the whole cognitive symbolic expression process of learning.

The Role of the Teacher

The image of the child shapes the role of the teacher and involves four major components. Teachers are:

- **Co-constructors:** partners, guides, nurtures, solves problems, learns, hypothesizes
- **Researchers:** learns, observes, revisits
- **Documenters:** listens, records, displays, revisits
- **Advocates for children:** involved in the community, politics relating to children, speaks for children and presents work to other educators and community members.

The Role of Parents

Parents are an essential component of the school. They are an active part of their children's learning experiences and help to ensure the welfare of all the children in the school. All families are members of the Family Team.

The Role of Time and the Importance of Continuity

Time is influenced by the interests and activities that the children bring to life within the school. This in turn impacts schedules, groupings and routines. Teachers get to know children (strengths, needs and personality) because children stay with the same teacher and the same peer group for two years.

Projects

Projects provide the backbone of the children's and teachers' learning experiences. They are based on the strong convictions that learning by doing is of great importance and that to discuss in group and to revisit ideas and experiences is the premier way of learning. Project ideas come from experiences of the children and teachers, a chance event or problem posed. They can last from a few days to several months.