

How Early Learning Responds to the Reggio Emilia Model of Teaching.

Reggio Emilia — A concept from Reggio Emilia in Italy that is new in preschool and primary education. The learning culture in this framework is child-led; children are considered as intelligent, competent and hard-headed individuals with curiosity at their core. We will cover here the main components and effects of the Reggio Emilia model in the early learning field.

Knowledge and Skills Development

Children as Knowledge Makers

In the Reggio Emilia model, children become participants. They build information through observing and probing. This chimes with Vygotsky's social constructivism: learning from social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Example:

In my classroom, I create learning stations that encourage children to explore and ask questions. For instance, I set up a nature table with various natural objects and magnifying glasses. Children are encouraged to investigate and share their findings, fostering their natural curiosity and knowledge-building.

Documentation and Reflection

Writing about Learning

Reggio Emilia teachers document children's activities meticulously. It's a process through which teachers get a feel for what children are interested in and how they learn, then create an engaging, responsive curriculum. Documentation becomes a mode of reflection and exchange between teachers, students and parents, says Rinaldi (2006).

Example:

I maintain a learning journal for each child, documenting their activities, interests, and progress. This information is shared with parents and used to tailor the curriculum, ensuring it aligns with the children's evolving interests and learning styles.

Collaborative Learning

Cooperation and collaboration are two of the principles of Reggio Emilia. For the children, teachers and society, learning is understood as an exchange activity. It creates an environment of belonging and shared purpose, according to modern studies on social learning (Bandura, 1977).

Example:

I facilitate group projects that require teamwork and communication. For example, children work together to create a mural, discussing their ideas and deciding on themes collectively. This promotes a sense of community and collaborative problem-solving.

Environment as a Teacher

Outdoor Spaces and Natural Experimentation

Environment is the "third teacher" in Reggio Emilia. Outside space is supposed to be aesthetic, with lots of room for exploring. The idea is supported by evidence showing that being in nature improves the development of children's brains and bodies (Louv, 2005).

Example:

My classroom environment is designed to be inviting and stimulating. I incorporate elements like plants, natural light, and diverse materials that children can interact with. Outdoor learning is also prioritized, with activities like gardening and nature walks integrated into the curriculum.

Flexible Spaces

Our classrooms and gardens are open, and ready for anything from painting to scientific experimentation. This flexibility accompanies different learning styles and promotes imagination, according to Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (1998).

Example:

I arrange the classroom to allow for flexibility and creativity. Furniture is easily movable, enabling quick reconfiguration for different activities, from art projects to science experiments. This adaptability supports various learning experiences and encourages children to take initiative in their learning environment.

Conclusion

In Reggio Emilia, children are always the focus of the education. In instigating curiosity, cooperation and relationship to nature, this model encourages whole development. Even though child-directed and experiential learning continues to receive scientific support, Reggio Emilia philosophy still shapes contemporary early childhood education.

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