

Learning in Reception class at Egginton Primary School

Reggio Emilia and Te Whariki Approaches to Children's Learning.

WHAT WE ARE DOING AND WHY.

This year we are working with an "emergent curriculum". We are working from the children's' ideas, inspirations, thoughts and enquiries, an educational philosophy has been taken from and inspired by the work done in Reggio Emilia and in New Zealand.

A bit about Reggio.... (OK it's more than a bit! but please read its good)

Reggio Emilia a village in Italy after the war embarked on an interesting and innovative educational journey. The idea in brief is to work *with and alongside* the children to foster their own abilities and curiosities to progress their learning. It can take a little brain adjustment, "Reggio educators do not see children as empty vessels that require filling with facts. Rather they see children as full of potential, competent and capable of building their own theories."- Reggiokids website. We are and have been as educators told what to deliver to fulfil the curriculum, this way is more intuitive to the child and prevents "turning them off" to education. "It invites us, as teachers, to see the possibilities of what can be, if we are willing to take risks and let go of our traditional roles." - Reggiokids website.

Key bits to Reggio

We recognise the right of children to realise and expand their potential, placing great value on *their* ability to socialize, receiving their affection and trust, and satisfying their needs and **desires to learn**. And this is so much truer when children are reassured by an effective alliance between the adults in their lives, adults who are always ready to help, who place higher value on the search for constructive strategies of thoughts and action than on the direct transmission of knowledge and skills. These constructive strategies contribute the formation of creative intelligence, free thought, and the individuality that is sensitive and aware, through an on-going process of differentiation and integration with other people and other experiences. The fact that rights of children are recognized as the rights of all children is the sign of a more accomplished humanity.

Project work is a large component of the Reggio Approach but there is much more to this complex system. Each day the teachers reflect on the experiences of the children always mindful to watch for "the ants instead of always waiting for the elephants" (Amelia Gambetti-Reggio Children).

The Reggio Teacher --- this means "educator" so includes, TA'S, Helpers and Parents etc.

The Reggio teacher is unique because she/he offers her/himself to the process of co-construction of knowledge, she/he releases the traditional roles of a teacher and opens doors to new possibilities. She/he starts with the use of the child's own theories, promotes disequilibrium, and helps the child to think about their thinking to facilitate new learning. (Seong Bock Hong 1998). **YES WE ARE THAT GOOD!**

The Reggio teacher allows the children to:

- Ask their own questions, and generate their own hypotheses and to test them.
- To explore and generate many possibilities both affirming and contradictory. She welcomes contradictions as a venue for exploring, discussing and debating.
- She provides opportunity to use symbolic languages to represent thoughts and hypothesis.
- She provides opportunity for the children to communicate their ideas to others.
- She offers children, through the process of revisiting the opportunity to reorganise concepts, ideas, thoughts and theories to construct new meaning.
- She is a keen observer, documenter, and partner in the learning process.

The Environment as the Third Teacher

The educators of Reggio Emilia view the school as a living organism.

The layout of the physical space in the schools encourages encounters, communication, and relationships. The arrangement of structures, objects and activities encourages choices, problem solving, and discoveries in the process of learning. In preparing the space, teachers offer the possibility for children to be with the teachers and many of the other children, or with just a few of the children, or even alone. Teachers are aware, however, that children also learn from their peers, especially when they can interact in small groups. Gandini (1993 p.6)

Long Term Projects as Vehicles of Learning

One of the highlights that often first attract educators to the Reggio Approach is its complex long term exploration of projects, the projects undertaken by Reggio educators may derive from both children's and teacher's ideas and interests, thoughts and theories in things worth knowing about. Teachers often work on projects with a small group of children while the rest of the classroom continues to involve itself in other self - selected activities and explorations.

The Importance of Documentation

Documentation is a key element in the Reggio Approach. Documentation serves many purposes but most of all it is used as a research tool for studying children's learning processes. Documentation is about what children are doing, learning and grasping, and the product of documentation is a reflection of interactions between teachers and children and among children. Documentation, because it is done on a daily basis, is a medium through which teachers discuss curriculum, keep it fluid and emergent, and develop a rationale for its course. It provides a growing theory for daily practice. (Seong Bock Hong 1998 pg 51).



Documenting children's daily experiences and on-going projects gives meaning and identity to all that the children do. It is through the documentation that the teachers are able to gain insight into the thoughts of the children, determine further investigation for working on topics, create a history of the work and generate further interest.

On a daily basis, they collect data via notes, recordings of conversations between children and through videoing of events and activities whether related to project work or just during classroom time. The documentation is then used to analyse children's understanding and thoughts-it is revisited by the teachers and children together. This revisiting process provides children with the opportunity to discover their own questions and problems and to determine, together, what the next steps could be. In the process of revisiting, children theories and understanding grows. Also, in the revisiting process they collect more data and information which enhances the work. Documentation of work in progress is made visible on large panels throughout the classroom, thereby keeping the memory of the work vivid and alive.

How it fits with the new curriculum...

The new framework for Early has been streamlined. There are now 17 ELG with less pointers and we are to show that the children are Emerging, reaching Expected level, or have Exceeded these goals when assessing. There are 7 main areas which are split into Specific and Prime areas. The Specific areas are areas that need to be a little more "taught", often involving a teacher led session, such as Phonics. Especially when dealing with Literacy and Numeracy. The Prime areas are area which are to entwine through all areas and are linked to developmental stages of the children. One key focus is the **Characteristics of Effective Learning** which need to be imbedded in and across all areas. These are Playing and Exploring - Engagement, Active Learning -Motivation, Creative and Thinking Creatively - Thinking. These Characteristics of Effective Learning are absolutely essential when looking at the children's learning and progress, these fit hand in hand with the Reggio approach.

Assessment examples have been given by the frame work as photos and observations with annotations. The focus is still largely on a child achieving things independently and not being "spoon fed" or assessed during adult based tasks. The emphasis is heavily on a child's access to the curriculum independently.

All of the above leans beautifully towards the Reggio approach and allows for freedom within the curriculum. The evidencing matches well with Reggio's documentation of tasks or activities. The less directed approach to the areas of the curriculum allow the children to explore and discover without restriction.

Te Whariki fits because...

It is Maori for 'woven mat' and develops the idea that children interact completely with their environment and everywhere is a learning environment.

The four broad principles of Te Whāriki are:

- **Empowerment.** Children will be empowered to learn and grow
- **Holistic development.** Children learn and grow in a holistic way. Their intellectual, social, cultural, physical, emotional and spiritual learning is interwoven across all their experiences
- **Family and community.** A child's family and community are recognised as part of the learning experience
- **Relationships.** Children learn through positive relationships with people, places and things.

Five learning strands

Te Whāriki's five principles are interwoven with these learning areas:

- **Mana atua** wellbeing
- **Mana tangata** contribution
- **Mana whenua** belonging
- **Mana reo** communication
- **Mana aotūroa** exploration.

Because learning happens everywhere and all the time, the connections children make about their learning between home and their school setting helps them build strong learning foundations.

This links completely with the work of Reggio and the vision of the Development Matters and EYFS frameworks.

What we have to show

Basically **PROGRESS!** Progress over the **day, week, term** and **year**. We need to make sure that we have evidenced well, consistently and regularly. In a variety of ways.

Day- Answer to their own questions...shown in photos or scanned in work (on board) immediate feedback, round up sessions, post its, session assessment sheets.

Week - Answer to their own questions...shown in photos or scanned in work (on board) immediate feedback, round up sessions, post its. PLUS story boards and books, lesson assessment sheets, displays, stars on post its, post its collected and saved.



Term - Answer to their own questions...shown in photos or scanned in work (on board) immediate feedback, round up sessions, post its. PLUS story boards and books, lesson assessment sheets, displays, stars on post its. PLUS End of term assessments, collation of post its for profile, highlighted areas in profile.

END OF YEAR ---see above!!

And **ENGAGED CHILDREN!**

What we have shown (already)

We have shown that the children can and do come up with their own ideas and projects. We have shown the children are engaged and have more perseverance when they "own" the learning. We have seen that they are enjoying the challenges and taking ownership of their learning and their environment.

Our project books, displays, post it board and learning space reflect (and will even more in future) the "emerging curriculum", the enjoyment and the children's learning journeys.

What we need to work on

Consistently evidencing in all the above ways, with all adults involved in the day to day and week to week collation.

To stand back, let the children's thoughts and ideas unfold with provocations and questions used to guide and mould.

To ensure the environment is accessible to the children inside and out.

To use different ways for children to share and express their ideas... encourage some drawings of ideas and suggestions which can be placed on Enquiry wall.

Using allocated timetable time to follow up, remind and question children for topic.

Feedback ASAP to children, either through photos, work, story book, and story boards etc.

KEEP MOTIVATED