

The following is taken from the book, Bringing Reggio Home, by Louise Boyd Cadwell

Fundamentals of the Reggio Approach

The child as protagonist

Children are strong, rich and capable. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, negotiating with everything their environment brings to them. Children, teachers, and parents are considered the three central protagonists in the educational process (Gandini, 1993).

The child as collaborator

Education has to focus on each child in relation to other children, the family, the teachers, and the community rather than on each child in isolation (Gandini, 1993). There is an emphasis on work in small groups. This practice is based on the social constructivist model that supports the idea that we form ourselves through our interactions with peers, adults, things in the world, and symbols (Lewin, 1995).

The environment as third teacher

The design and use of space encourage encounters, communication, and relationships (Gandini, 1993). There is an underlying order and beauty in the design and organization of all the space in a school and the equipment and materials within in (Lewin, 1995). Every corner of every space has an identity and purpose, is rich in potential to engage and communicate, and is valued and cared for by children and adults.

The child as communicator

This approach fosters children's intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation, including words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play and music, which leads children to surprising levels of communication, symbolic skills and creativity (Edwards et al., 1993). Children have the right to use many materials in order to discover and communicate what they know, understand, wonder about, question, feel, and imagine. In this way, they make their thinking visible through their many natural "languages". A studio teacher, trained in the visual arts, works closely with children and teachers in each school to enable children to explore the many materials and to use a great number of languages to make their thinking visible.

The teacher as partner, nurturer, guide

(Edwards, 1993). Teachers facilitate children's exploration of themes, work on short- and long-term projects, and guide experiences of joint, open-ended discovery and problem solving (Edwards et al, 1993). To know how to plan and proceed with their work, teachers listen and observe children closely. Teachers ask questions; discover children's ideas, hypotheses, and theories; provide occasions for discovery and learning (Gandini, 1993).

The documentation as communication

Careful consideration and attention are given to the presentation of the thinking of the children and the adults who work with them. Teacher's commentary on the purposes of the study and the children's learning process, transcriptions of the activity, and representations of the thinking in many media are composed in carefully designed panels or books to present the process of learning in the schools. The documentation serves many purposes. It makes parents aware of their children's experiences. It allows teachers to better understand children, to evaluate their own work, and to exchange ideas with other educators. Documentation also shows children that their work is valued. Finally, it creates an archive that traces the history of the school and the pleasure in the process of learning experienced by many children and their teachers (Gandini, 1993).

The parent as partner

Parent participation is considered essential and takes many forms. Parents play an active part in their children's learning experience and help ensure the welfare of all the children in the school. The ideas and skills that the families bring to the school and, even more important, the exchange of ideas between parent and teachers, favor the development of a new way of educating, which helps teachers to view the participation of families not as a threat but as an intrinsic element of collegiality and as the integration of different wisdoms (Spaggiari, 1993).