

## The Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Here is an outline of the fundamental principles that the Reggio Emilia approach stands by. The educators in Reggio Emilia view:

- ***The child as protagonist.*** Children are strong, rich, and capable. Children are able to construct their own learning because they have valued ideas in the community. Children, teachers, and parents are considered the three central protagonists in the educational process (Gandini, 1993).
- ***The child as collaborator.*** The children work as part of a community not in isolation (Gandini, 1993). There is an emphasis on work in small groups. This practice is based on the idea that we form ourselves through our interaction with peers, adults, things in the world, and symbols (Lewin, 1995).
- ***The child as communicator.*** Children are encouraged to communicate through words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play, and music. Children are encouraged to use many materials to discover and communicate what they know, understand, wonder about, question, feel, and imagine. A studio teacher works closely with the children to help them explore their surroundings.
- ***The environment as third teacher.*** The design and use of space encourage encounters, communication, and relationships (Gandini, 1993). Each space has an identity and a purpose. The space is valued by the children and adults.
- ***The teacher as partner, nurturer, and 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). The main goal for teachers is to listen and observe the children closely. Teachers question and listen the children and provide opportunities for discovery and learning (Gandini, 1993).
- ***The teacher as researcher.*** Teachers maintain strong collegial relationships with all the teachers and staff in the center. They exchange ideas with each other which provides training and enrichment. Teachers will prepare documentation of their work with children, whom they also consider researchers.
- ***The documentation as communication.*** Teachers document what is happening in the classroom by commentating on the purpose of the activity and the children's learning process, they transcribe the children's verbal language, they photograph the activity and show their documentation through panels or books. Documentation is important because parents are able to become aware of their children's experiences. It also allows teachers to better understand children, to evaluate their own work, and to exchange ideas with others. Documentation is also very important because it shows children that their work is valued.
- ***The parent as partner.*** Parent participation is considered essential and takes many forms. Parents play an active part in their children's learning experiences and help ensure the welfare of all the children in the school. Parents ideas and skills are highly valued in the community.