

WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE *reggio inspired*

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE - WORKBOOK

Reflections

Date





Welcome

*Hello fellow educator!
So glad you're here!*

I'm Veronica Green, Early Childhood Educator & Consultant. For the past 10 years I've been mentoring and inspiring my fellow educators from all over the world. I share PRACTICAL & INSPIRING ideas to support your team with planning, documentation, understanding behaviours and building strong relationships. Using the power of play, loose parts & sensory processing I have carefully curated resources and professional development that connects theory to practice so that Educators become more knowledgeable, plan with ease, understand behaviours, build relationships that last and most importantly...actually enjoy their role too!

I have been deeply influenced by The Reggio Emilia Approach® in my practice and I continually share my experience with others to support and inspire my fellow educators and to grow in my own journey as well.



*“Education is a right.
Education is the responsibility
of the community.”*

- Amelia Gambetti

"How do I get started?" This is such a common question when it comes to embracing The Reggio Emilia Approach®.

There are **many key elements that come together within this approach** that are deeply intertwined and ever evolving in the Educator's journey to embracing this way of thinking and learning alongside the children and families.

It can be a little daunting, overwhelming and even feel like you might not be "reggio" enough. Or impossible because you have so many rules and instructional directions to follow.

We can never operate our programs the exact same way as the inspirational and transformational educators do in Reggio Emilia. We can learn from them and apply their philosophies and ways of working with children and families into our own context.

The Reggio Emilia Approach® is a way of thinking. This we can do. We can change the way we think about children, educators and families; use their inspirational stories and teachings to infuse it into our own individual contexts, programs and communities.

QUO

The Reggio Emilia Approach® is an **educational philosophy** based on the **IMAGE OF THE CHILD** with *strong potentialities* for development and a subject with *rights*, who learns through **THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES** belonging to all human beings, and grows in *relations with others*.

- REGGIO CHILDREN

SET

Educators in Reggio Emilia have no intention of suggesting that their program should be looked at as a model to be copied in other countries; rather, they consider their work as an educational experience that consists of reflection of theory, practice, and further careful reflection in a program that is continuously renewed and readjusted.

Considering the enormous interest that educators show in the work done in the Reggio schools, they suggest that teachers and parents in each school, any school, anywhere, could in their own context reflect on these ideas, keeping in focus always the relationships and learning that are in process locally to examine needs and strengths, thus finding possible ways to construct change.

Values & Principles of The Reggio Emilia Approach -
by Lella Gandini

why we say
reggio inspired



WHERE YOU ALREADY SEE THIS ALIVE IN YOUR PRACTICE?

WHERE YOU FEEL CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE?

WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO GROW IN YOUR PRACTICE?



As you learn about each principle, pause and notice, ask yourself:

- Where do I already see this in my practice?
- Where might I stretch or deepen my understanding?

Use the chart to capture your reflections. This is not about doing more — it's about becoming more intentional.

REGGIO PRINCIPLE	WHAT YOU ALREADY NOTICE IN YOUR PRACTICE	WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO EMBRACE INTO YOUR PRACTICE
IMAGE OF THE CHILD		
TEACHER AND CHILD AS PARTNERS IN LEARNING		
ENVIRONMENT AS A TEACHER		
THE 100 LANGUAGES		

Values and Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Lella Gandini

What are the distinguishing features of the education of young children with regard to theory and practice that have made the Reggio Emilia approach so notable?

An examination of the features of this philosophy soon reveals that the educators have been serious readers of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, David Hawkins, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, and other world-renowned scientists and philosophers. In fact, Reggio educators have continued to keep abreast of the latest research in child development and education in other countries. At the same time, though, they continue to formulate new interpretations and new hypotheses and ideas about learning and teaching through their daily observations and practice of learning along with children.

The image of the child. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity; they have interest in relationship, in constructing their own learning, and in negotiating with everything the environment brings to them. Children should be considered as active citizens with rights, as contributing members, with their families, of their local community. Children with special rights (rather than using the term special needs) have precedence in becoming part of an infant/toddler center or a preschool.

Children's relationships and interactions within a system. Education has to focus on each child, not considered in isolation, but seen in relation with the family, with other children, with the teachers, with the environment of the school, with the community, and with the wider society. Each school is viewed as a system in which all these relationships, which are all interconnected and reciprocal, are activated and supported.

The role of parents. Parents are an essential component of the program—a competent and active part of their children's learning experience. They are not considered consumers but co-responsible partners. Their right to participation is expected and sup-

ported; it takes many forms and can help ensure the welfare of all children in the program.

The role of space: amiable schools. The infant/toddler centers and preschools convey many messages, of which the most immediate is: this is a place where adults have thought about the quality and the instructive power of space. The layout of physical space fosters encounters, communication, and relationships. Children learn a great deal in exchanges and negotiations with their peers; therefore teachers organize spaces that support the engagement of small groups.

Teachers and children as partners in learning. A strong image of the child has to correspond to a strong image of the teacher. Teachers are not considered protective babysitters, teaching basic skills to children but, rather, they are seen as learners along with the children. They are supported, valued for their experience and their ideas, and seen as researchers. Cooperation at all levels in the school is the powerful mode of working that makes possible the achievement of the complex goals that Reggio educators have set for themselves.

Not a pre-set curriculum but a process of inviting and sustaining learning. Once teachers have prepared an environment rich in materials and possibilities, they observe and listen to the children in order to know how to proceed with their work. Teachers use the understanding they gain thereby to act as a resource for them. They ask questions and thus discover the children's ideas, hypotheses, and theories. They see learning not as a linear process but as a spiral progression and consider themselves to be partners in the process of learning. After observing children in action, they compare, discuss, and interpret together with other teachers their observations, recorded in different ways, to leave traces of what has been observed. They use their interpretations and discussions to make choices that they share with the children.

The power of documentation. Transcriptions of children's remarks and discussions, photographs of their activity, and representations of their thinking and learning are carefully studied. These documents have several functions. Most importantly, they help to determine the direction in which the work and experiences with the children will go. Once these documents are organized and displayed, they help to make parents aware of their children's experience and maintain their involvement. They make it possible for teachers to understand the children better and to evaluate the teachers' own work, thus promoting their professional growth; they make children aware that their effort is valued; and furthermore, they create an archive that traces the history of the school.

The many languages of children. Atelierista and atelier. A teacher with a background in the visual arts works closely with the other teachers and the children in every preprimary school and visits the infant/toddler centers. This teacher, who works in a special workshop or studio known as an atelier, is called an atelierista. The atelier contains a great variety of tools and resource materials, along with records of past projects and experiences. What is done with materials and media is not regarded as art per se, because in the view of Reggio educators the children's use of many media is not a separate part of the curriculum but an inseparable, integral part of the whole cognitive/symbolic expression involved in the process of learning. Through time, the materi-

als and work of the atelier has entered into all the classrooms through the setting up of "mini-ateliers," as teachers and atelierista learn to work in very connected ways.

Projects. Projects provide the narrative and structure to the children's and teachers' learning experiences. They are based on the strong conviction that learning by doing is of great importance and that to discuss in groups and to revisit ideas and experiences is essential to gain better understanding and to learn. Projects may start either from a chance event, an idea or a problem posed by one or more children, or an experience initiated directly by teachers. They can last from a few days to several months.

Educators in Reggio Emilia have no intention of suggesting that their program should be looked at as a model to be copied in other countries; rather, they consider their work as an educational experience that consists of reflection of theory, practice, and further careful reflection in a program that is continuously renewed and readjusted. Considering the enormous interest that educators show in the work done in the Reggio schools, they suggest that teachers and parents in each school, any school, anywhere, could in their own context reflect on these ideas, keeping in focus always the relationships and learning that are in process locally to examine needs and strengths, thus finding possible ways to construct change.

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1. 25-27, L. Gandini, "Values and Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach," in *Insights and Inspirations from Reggio Emilia: Stories of Teachers and Children from North America*. Ed. Lella Gandini, Susan Etheridge, Lynn Hill. Davis Publications, Worcester, MA. 2003 Earlier versions of this introduction appeared in L.Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emila Approach to Early Childhood Education, "Young Children," NAEYC, Washington, DC, 49, no. 1, 4-8, and L. Gandini, "The Story and Foundations of the Reggio Emilia Approach in V.R. Fu, A.J. Stremmel, and L. Hill (eds) *Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach* (Upper Saddle River Valley, NJ:Merrill/Prentice Hall, 1997)



THANK YOU

You've already begun the work — noticing what's present and where you'd like to grow.

If you're curious about what it looks like to build this into a strong foundation — not just inspiration, but implementation — I've written a blog post that walks you through my [Reggio Inspired Practice Beginner Course](#).

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