Curriculum

Reggio-Inspired Learning

As a play-based preschool inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, our program views children as capable, curious learners who construct knowledge through exploration, collaboration, and creativity. Learning experiences emerge from children's interests and are supported by thoughtful guidance from teachers. Our curriculum is aligned with the principles of the California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations, ensuring that children develop strong social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical skills through meaningful play and inquiry.

Emergent & Project-Based Curriculum

Learning will be shared through Documentation Panels via email and displayed on our classroom walls. The following information shares our approach to making magical learning experiences for the children and the class as a whole.

In the Reggio Emilia philosophy, curriculum is not pre-planned in a rigid way, but rather emerges from children's interests, questions, and daily experiences. Teachers observe thoughtfully, listen deeply, and document children's words and actions. From this documentation, teachers design proposals–intentional experiences, materials, and provocations–that extend children's thinking.

> Our schools have not had, nor do they have, a planned curriculum with units and subunits (lesson plans), as the behaviourists would like. These would push our schools towards teaching without learning; we would humiliate the schools and the children by entrusting them to forms, dittos, and handbooks of which publishers are generous distributors. (Loris Malaguzzi, in Gandini, 2012, p. 62)

Emergent curriculum is not about following every fleeting interest, but about finding the threads of meaning in children's play and dialogue, and weaving them into a deeper, richer project of shared inquiry. When visiting the schools in Reggio Emilia in 2023, the relationship between freedom, play, and learning was explained so clearly by a Light Atelierista, Marcus. He shared:

> "Reggio doesn't say 'freedom' as in children are free to do whatever they wish. They are free through dialogue and languages. Teachers choose the 'what' and 'where' in proposals and materials, and the children choose the 'how'–they explore, and their learning processes are observed. Teachers are not facilitators; we're here to complicate and create questions."

This perspective highlights how intentional the Reggio Emilia approach is: Children's freedom is not without structure, but rather made possible by thoughtful planning, rich materials, and the teacher's role as a co-learner who deepens inquiry through questions and provocations.

In an emergent curriculum inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, learning unfolds from children's ideas, questions, and discoveries. Each year—and even each week—our classroom journey evolves as teachers listen closely to children and design experiences that reflect their interests and developmental needs.

> "In nature, a child finds freedom, fantasy, and privacy: a place distant from the adult world, a separate peace."
> — Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder

Daily Routines as Learning Experiences

In everyday contexts, routines occur regularly and predictably, giving children a sense of security. While routines are routine in their timing, they are also intentionally planned in how they take place. Each step – from arrival and mealtime to cleanup and goodbye – becomes a meaningful learning experience. Through these moments, children develop independence, self-regulation, social and friendship skills, and confidence in navigating their environment.

Mixed-Age Learning

At Storybook Village, children of different ages learn and play together in the same classroom. This approach is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy and reflects our belief that children grow best in a true community.

In Reggio Emilia-inspired programs, children are seen as active participants in their own learning and as members of a learning community. Mixed-age groupings reflect this belief by creating classrooms where younger and older children learn side-by-side.

Benefits of mixed-age learning include:

- **Collaboration and mentorship:** Older children take on leadership roles, modeling skills and supporting younger peers. Younger children are inspired by the competencies of older children, which motivates their growth.

- **Rich social-emotional learning:** Children learn patience, empathy, and communication by working with peers at different developmental levels.
- **Diverse perspectives:** A variety of ages and abilities brings a richness to discussions, projects, and play, deepening the group's collective knowledge.
- **Continuity of relationships:** With multi-year classrooms, children and teachers develop long-lasting bonds, fostering security and trust.
- **Emergent curriculum opportunities:** Teachers can design projects that allow for multiple entry points, ensuring all children can contribute according to their abilities and interests.

Mixed-age classrooms mirror the "**village" concept**: children are part of a community where everyone has something valuable to contribute, regardless of age. Teachers act as researchers and guides, designing environments and proposals that honor the diversity of skills and perspectives in the group.

Small Group Experiences

Small group experiences are integrated throughout our school day, offering rich opportunities for learning and development. For younger children, these experiences often occur within caregiving routines, such as handwashing, toileting, diapering, and mealtime transitions. These moments provide essential support and extra time to help children master key developmental skills while fostering independence and confidence.

Our emergent curriculum fosters dynamic, engaging learning experiences within a supportive environment, with the environment itself acting as the "third teacher," inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Small group experiences allow children to explore topics deeply, at their own pace, and with a focus on individual interests, skills, and abilities. Both planned and spontaneous lessons unfold in diverse spaces like the atelier, garden, and creek, encouraging a rich connection to nature and the environment as essential tools for learning. One of our first projects centered around the

creek–a beloved space for exploration–where children immerse themselves in inquiry, discovery, and hands-on learning.

The children are placed in learning groups by age for observation, documentation, and project-driven experiences, but they are free to play with others from all learning groups. As our teachers are co-responsible for meeting all the children's needs, establishing strong connections with each child, and supporting learning as a team, each teacher has a designated learning group to observe and assess to ensure that Documentation Panels are authentic and thoughtful, reflecting the process of learning and the current threads/themes in learning.

Observation and Documentation

At Storybook Village, our team uses evaluation tools with rubrics to document and understand children's learning through careful observation. The pedagogical documentation reflects our values and aligns with the outcomes we define as most important for young learners. They draw on the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations and the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) Curriculum and Learning Progressions, ensuring that our practices remain developmentally appropriate and meaningful for each child's growth.

We focus on the process of learning, not the outcomes. At our annual Back-to-School Night and throughout our time of being partners in care, families are invited to learn more about our approach to assessment, ask questions, offer feedback, and explore how they can be part of the children's learning experiences at school and provide support at home.

In addition, teachers create individualized documentation panels for each child twice a year. These panels make learning visible and are shared during our One-to-One family meetings, providing a rich opportunity to celebrate growth, reflect together, and plan next steps in our learning journey together.

California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF)

"The child has a hundred languages." Loris Malaguzzi

Children continue their learning journey with Storybook through Transitional Kindergarten. Within our mixed-age classroom community, we offer a high-quality TK program that provides a developmentally appropriate bridge toward the expectations of the Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten. Our TK program supports growing independence, confidence, and readiness while honoring the importance of play, exploration, and meaningful relationships in early childhood.

The PTKLF provides guidance to all California early education programs, including TK, federal and state preschool programs (for example, CSPP, Head Start), private preschool, and family child care homes, that offer an early education experience. As a private early education program, Storybook Village chooses to use the PTKLF to nurture each child's learning and development.

The Learning Foundations:

1. Approaches to Learning
2. Social and Emotional Development
3. Language and Literacy Development
4. Mathematics
5. Science
6. Physical Development
7. Health
8. History-Social Science
9. Visual and Performing Arts

Documentation: Meaning Making of Learning Experiences

A glimpse into how our children learn through play, where thoughtfully designed environments and intentional provocations invite curiosity, exploration, and discovery. Through the use of open-ended materials and rich, hands-on experiences, children engage in meaningful learning that supports early concepts in math, science, and creativity. Our preschool environment is carefully designed to inspire wonder, encourage problem-solving, and nurture each child's natural desire to learn.

Social and Emotional Development

As educators who know when to step back and when to step in to provide support as co-learners, it was the sweetest moment to capture two friends in our outdoor Cozy Cove–a place to tuck away, like Tucker Turtle.

Zara was heard saying, "Let's take three deep breaths like Turtle, and I will help you," while using our turtle puppet to model tucking away to take deep breaths.

This teacher-guided lesson allows children to practice the social-emotional strategies while calm. When the children use their experiences with teachers to initiate peer-modeling through play without any adult prompting, you can observe their growth and development.

Satya took three deep breaths and shared, "I am still feeling a little sad about missing my mom." Zara responded, "Alright, what do you want to do next?"

Satya said, "Teacher, I need the solution cards." Zara and Nicole found the solution cards for them. After going through the solution cards together, Satya paused on the "Ask for a Hug" picture. Satya smiles and asks, "Zara, can I have a hug?"

Zara opens her arms and hugs Satya until Satya lets go. Satya says, "I feel much better." Zara and Satya's smiles were huge, and this learning experience was bigger.

Sub-Strand–Emotional Knowledge - Foundation 1.3 Understanding Emotions in Self and Others; Foundation 1.4 Regulating Emotions, Behaviors, and Stress; Foundation 1.7 Understanding Other People's Thoughts, Behaviors, and Experiences; Foundation 1.8 Empathy and Caring

Language and Literacy Development

As we continue our alphabet project, the children have noticed that some letters appear more often than others in names–this was the perfect opportunity to talk about the five Zoo-phonics animals who are considered the "hardest workers" because they're always seen in names and words.

While the children were exposed to the concept of vowels, the focus was on letter recognition and on researching their thoughts and observations as a group, using factual information. The children circled the hardest workers in their names in a lesson as they transitioned from circle to snack. This was the first time, so some friends were more intrigued with making circles than identifying vowels. It's all about promoting a love of literacy!

Sub-Strand–Listening and Speaking - Foundation 1.1 Understanding and Using Vocabulary; Foundation 1.5 Asking Questions; Foundation 1.8 Participating in Conversations

Sub-Strand–Foundational Literacy Skills - Foundation 2.1 Isolating Initial Sounds

Sub-Strand–Alphabetics and Print - Foundation 2.4 Identifying Letters; Foundation 2.5 Learning Letter–Sound Correspondence

Sub-Strand–Concepts About Print - Foundation 2.6 Understanding the Concept of Print

Sub-Strand–Writing - Foundation 4.1 Developing Fine Motor Skills in Writing; Foundation 4.5 Writing Own Name

Mathematics

This spring, we introduced a rainbow-inspired mathematical provocation to our learning environment, inviting children to explore mathematical thinking through play, color, and creativity. Inspired by a shared interest in rainbows, the space was thoughtfully designed with loose parts and repurposed materials, including a collection of containers sourced from

SCRAP in San Francisco. These real-world objects offered open-ended possibilities, encouraging children to engage with loose parts in meaningful and imaginative ways.

As children approached the provocation, they were immediately drawn to the vibrant colors and inviting arrangement of materials. Many began by sorting items by color, carefully placing objects into corresponding containers. Others explored grouping and counting, lining up pieces, filling and emptying containers, and comparing quantities. Through these experiences, children demonstrated emerging understandings of classification, one-to-one correspondence, and number sense.

As their exploration deepened, more complex mathematical thinking began to emerge. Some children experimented with patterning, creating repeating sequences and rainbow gradients. Others focused on design and spatial relationships, arranging materials to build symmetrical patterns or intricate structures. The open-ended nature of the materials allowed each child to enter the experience at their own level, fostering both confidence and curiosity.

Equally meaningful were the social interactions that unfolded. Children collaborated, shared ideas, and built upon one another's discoveries. Mathematical language naturally surfaced in their conversations as they described their thinking, compared their creations, and problem-solved together.

This provocation highlights the power of play-based learning and the value of using authentic, repurposed materials. By offering an environment rich in possibility, we support children in developing foundational mathematical concepts while nurturing creativity, communication, and a sense of wonder.

As we continue to revisit this space, we look forward to observing how children's ideas evolve and how their mathematical thinking grows through ongoing exploration.

Sub-Strand–Counting and Cardinality - Foundation 1.1 Reciting Numbers; Foundation 1.2 One-to-One Correspondence; Foundation 1.3 Cardinality

Sub-Strand–Recognizing Quantities - Foundation 1.4 Subitize; Foundation 1.5 Numeral Recognition; Foundation 1.6 Number Comparison

Sub-Strand–Operations and Algebraic Thinking - Foundation 2.1 Principles of Addition and Subtraction; Foundation 2.3 Solving Addition and Subtraction Problems

Sub-Strand–Classifying and Patterning - Foundation 2.5 Sorting and Classifying; Foundation 2.6 Recognizing, Duplicating, and Extending Patterns; Foundation 2.7 Creating Patterns

Sub-Strand–Measurement and Data - Foundation 3.2 Ordering Objects

Science

We enhanced our water play with loose parts to support sensory exploration and early scientific thinking. Children explored a variety of objects, discovering which items sank and which floated as they tested ideas and formed simple theories about materials and weight.

We also introduced two separate water trays–one blue and one magenta–along with droppers for transferring water. As children combined the colors, they discovered that blue and magenta make purple, sparking excitement and repeated experimentation. Many began predicting outcomes and refining their techniques.

This experience supported hands-on learning in science and color theory while encouraging curiosity, problem-solving, and collaboration through play.

Sub-Strand–Science and Engineering Practices - Foundation 1.1 Making Observations; Foundation 1.2 Comparing and Contrasting; Foundation 1.3 Asking Questions; Foundation 1.4 Defining Problems; Foundation 1.5 Making Predictions; Foundation 1.6 Planning and Carrying Out Investigations; Foundation 1.7 Using Tools

Sub-Strand–Changes in Nonliving Objects and Materials - Foundation 2.3 Exploring Changes in Objects and Materials

Physical Development

Our regular visits to the creek have become a meaningful part of the children's weekly experiences, supporting both their physical development and their growing understanding of school expectations.

As we walk together, the children demonstrate increasing coordination, balance, and endurance. They navigate uneven terrain, step over roots, and adjust their movements to the natural environment. These experiences strengthen their gross motor skills while building confidence in their physical abilities.

Safety is a shared responsibility. The children are familiar with designated "stop spots" along the path, where they pause, wait for others, and check in with teachers. This routine supports their ability to follow multi-step directions and builds awareness of group safety practices.

At the creek, the children are given the freedom to explore and engage with nature. One of their favorite experiences is throwing rocks into the water. Together, we have developed a clear agreement: rock throwing is for the creek, not for school. This simple but meaningful boundary allows children to safely express their natural curiosity and physical energy in an appropriate setting.

Through these repeated experiences, children are learning more than just physical skills. They are developing self-regulation as they learn when and where certain behaviors are appropriate. They are also building an understanding of what it means to be part of a community—respecting shared agreements, caring for one another's safety, and participating in group routines and rituals.

These walks to the creek highlight how outdoor exploration fosters not only physical development, but also social-emotional growth, decision-making, and a sense of belonging.

Sub-Strand—Fundamental Movement Skills - Balance, Locomotor Skills, Manipulative Skills

Sub-Strand—Active Physical Play - Active Participation and Physical Activity

In Addition, **Approaches to Learning:** Engagement, Perseverance, Managing Impulsive Behaviors, Problem-Solving, Collaborative Effort

Health

Children demonstrate an awareness of hygiene by washing their hands throughout the day and before engaging in cooking experiences. These moments are approached as opportunities for experimentation and learning: children explore the steps of handwashing—wetting, soaping, scrubbing, rinsing, and drying—with attention to effectiveness and safety. Teachers observe and document children's developing independence, supporting self-regulation and understanding of personal responsibility.

Through cooking projects and discussions about food, children identify vegetables, fruits, and other ingredients, sharing knowledge about what contributes to a healthy body. They ask questions, compare colors and textures, and make connections between what they eat and how it helps them grow strong and stay healthy. Children are encouraged to bring their own experiences, observations, and family traditions into conversations, making the learning personal and meaningful.

These routines and explorations reflect the Reggio philosophy, treating children as capable, competent learners who construct knowledge through experience. They are not only following routines–they are reasoning, observing, and reflecting, gaining skills in self-care, nutrition awareness, and decision-making.

Sub-Strand–Understanding Health and Wellness - Communicating Health Needs, Nutrition

Sub-Strand–Health and Safety Habits - Basic Hygiene, Handwashing, Injury Prevention, Following Safety Rules (cutting fruit and vegetable lessons)

Visual and Performing Arts

In both indoor and outdoor environments, atelier, and creek visits, children are invited to engage in small group experiences that honor their curiosity, creativity, and capacity for expression.

The indoor atelier serves as a thoughtful, intentional space where materials are carefully organized and displayed to provoke wonder. Light, texture, and arrangement invite children to slow down, observe, and engage deeply. In small groups, children explore a variety of tools and media—developing familiarity with materials while discovering new possibilities for expression. Our teachers act as collaborators and researchers, listening closely to children's ideas and supporting their processes rather than directing outcomes.

Outdoors, the environment becomes an extension of the indoor classroom and atelier. Natural elements such as leaves, sticks, and stones offer open-ended opportunities for artistic exploration. Children experiment with scale, movement, and impermanence—painting with chalk and creek water that disappears in the sun, arranging found materials into temporary compositions, or using tools in new ways inspired by the environment.

Working in small groups fosters dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. Children observe one another's strategies, revisit their own thinking, and build shared meaning. These social interactions enrich the creative process and support the development of communication and relationship skills.

Through these experiences, children express their "hundred languages"—using materials as symbolic tools to represent ideas, emotions, and theories about the world. The focus remains on process over product, valuing each child's unique way of thinking and creating.

The atelier, both indoors and outdoors, becomes a space where children are seen as capable, imaginative learners—constructing knowledge, expressing identity, and engaging in meaningful exploration through art.

Sub-Strand—Visual Arts - Notice, Respond to, and Engage in Visual Art;. Develop Skills in Visual Art; Create, Invent, or Express Through Visual Art