

The Reggio Approach at Home

We invite you to find ways to incorporate aspects of the Reggio Approach into your child's experiences at home. Below are some tips from CHT Preschool for how to bring the main ideas of the Reggio philosophy into your home environment. Feel free to implement these principles and activities in ways that you feel would be appropriate for your family. I suspect you may find that you are already more "Reggio" than you realized!

Children are capable of constructing their own learning.

In the Reggio-Emilia approach, the children themselves are the main leaders of their education. Reggio teachers believe that young children are already motivated to learn and figure out the world around them, and that the educator's role is to just facilitate learning opportunities. Learning activities are designed by the teachers to promote continued growth, multi-day projects and collaboration and are based on the children's unique strengths, capabilities, and interests. Children are empowered to have an active voice and role in deciding what they will learn about. In the classroom, this is exemplified when teachers ask the children about their interests, ideas, and questions about topics they want to learn about. At home, this could be demonstrated when a parent takes the time to support a child's specific interests and provides opportunities for them to learn more about something they show curiosity about.



What natural objects does your child love to collect?

What topics does your child like to read about?

What are your child's favorite shows or movies about?

Is your child an expert about something?

How could you support more learning in this area?

How can you extend your child's learning about a favorite topic in new directions?

How can you help their love of this topic to inspire learning in other areas such as math, language, science, etc?



Children are collaborators and learn through interaction within their communities.

In the Reggio-Emilia Approach, there is also an emphasis on creating strong relationships between students, families, teachers/staff and communities. The child learns about the world through his or her relationships and should be seen as active collaborators, not passive learners. In a Reggio school, the children are encouraged to work together on projects in small or large groups, share their ideas and take others' perspectives into consideration. Disputes or difficulties are often addressed during group meetings when children can brainstorm, problem-solve and agree on solutions together.

At home, you are demonstrating this principle when you have a family meeting to discuss a problem or concern and include your children in deciding how to solve, fix or prevent the problem from happening again. Giving children the opportunity to discuss, brainstorm solutions and see everyone's point of view about something can often inspire a child to cooperate or change their behavior more effectively than the threat of punishment.



As your children get older, try having short family meetings to talk about how things are going at home. Before or after mealtimes or before bedtime are great times to review what was difficult or wonderful about the day and to share ideas about how to improve things going forward.

"How was your day? What did you like best? What was hard about today?"

"What were you and your brother playing today? How did it go?"

"Today I noticed that all the toys got left on the kitchen floor. This is a problem for me because I am afraid I am going to trip on them and break them. Can you think of what we can do differently tomorrow so there aren't so many toys left out?"

Children are natural communicators and should be encouraged to express themselves however they feel they can.

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio-Emilia philosophy, wrote about *"The Hundred Languages of Children."* He believed that children had an innate desire to express and share their ideas with others in a wide variety of ways. As a result, Reggio teachers encourage children to communicate or represent their ideas through whatever means they can (words, movement, drawings, painting, sculpture, construction, etc.) In a Reggio classroom, teachers provide a wide range of materials for children to express themselves creatively and children are encouraged to explore their surroundings, reflect upon their findings, and find ways to represent their discoveries. At home, when parents provide an art area with a variety of art materials, an easel for painting, a tinker box or recyclables for building and creating, music for dancing, and props for acting out stories, they too are supporting their child's ability to express their ideas in many creative ways.



Set up an art basket or table for your child to have a creative space in your home. Rotate art materials regularly to encourage creativity with a wide variety of media such as tempera paint, crayons, markers, scissors, cray-pas, watercolors, colored pencils, playdough or clay.

Provide a basket or table for your child to place natural items collected on nature walks. Help your child compare, sort, name, and use these items creatively.

Make a tinker tray for your child or provide them with a box of recyclables, tape or glue for making creative constructions.



NATURE EXPLORATION TABLE
for kids

Make a playlist of your child's favorite songs and have a dance party.



Provide lots of dress-up clothes and props for acting out stories, shows or movies they love.

The classroom environment acts as the third teacher.

The Reggio Approach believes that the classroom environment itself has an important role in teaching the child, and because of this it is very important to provide natural, authentic materials and intentional provocations that promote creativity, discovery, and learning. Classrooms are organized into centers and allow children to play and explore materials on their own or in small or large groups. Materials chosen by teachers reflect the children's interests and play-themes and are aimed at extending their activities into projects that last for days, weeks or even months. Provocations often highlight certain learning concepts (counting, sorting, the butterfly life-cycle, phonemic awareness), but are open-ended enough to be appropriate for a range of developmental levels and allow room for creativity. At home, you, too, can set up centers for your child to explore.



How can you support your child's learning through the way you set up the environment?

Can you offer different areas for different types of activities? Such as having a designated area for art, drama, science, building, etc. that is separate from other toys and materials? This can help your child stay focused on a particular activity for longer amounts of time.

Can you put some toys or materials away to eliminate distractions and encourage sustained attention?

Can you present toys or materials in a new way or in a new room of the house? This can encourage your child(ren) to interact with them differently or to create something new with them.



Can you provide a cozy spot in your house for reading or dramatic play?

Adults are partners, nurturers, and guides who help facilitate the exploration of children's interests as they work on short and long-term projects.

In the Reggio-Emilia philosophy, teachers, parents, and children are partners in the learning process. The adults are expected to be good listeners and observers of the children in order to discover ways they can facilitate learning, exploration, and problem solving and follow the children's interests.



The aim is to facilitate collaborative learning experiences for children that extend for longer periods of time than just one day. Teachers observe the children interacting in the classroom, listen to their conversations and reflect on what they observe so they can follow the children's lead, often allowing projects to emerge in surprising ways. This is what we call *Emergent Curriculum*. When beginning to explore a topic, teachers will ask children what they already know about a topic and encourage them to share and express their knowledge in creative ways. They will then ask the children to wonder about what else they want to learn about the topic and facilitate their finding answers to the questions they still have. Even if the teachers could easily provide the answers to their questions, they provide the opportunity for the children to discover the answers themselves. New knowledge is gained through a wide variety of activities and experiences and the children work on together, sharing their reflections about their discoveries, increasing their depth of understanding about a topic and representing what they have learned. The value of this process is that it promotes higher level thinking and allows children to learn how to acquire knowledge through collaboration. At home, you can replicate this process and find ways to support long-term explorations of topics. You can also encourage siblings of different ages to collaborate on projects together.



- What are your child's current interests? What does your child want to learn more about?*
- Can you and your child think of a project that you could focus on?*
- What is a question that your child would like your help finding the answer to?*
- How can you facilitate your child in exploring this topic?*
- How could you extend this topic into a longer investigation or project?*

Documentation is a critical component of communication.

Reggio teachers are responsible for documenting the learning process in the classroom by capturing the children's words, taking photos or videos of the children engaging in activities and curating displays that make the learning process visible to parents and visitors to the school. This serves as an essential component of communication about the learning that has been happening in the classroom and how the children have been co-constructing knowledge. The documentation process helps children see the value of their ideas and allows them to reflect on their progress through the stages of a project. Documentation panels often include descriptions and photos of the children engaged in learning activities and the questions and topics investigated. At home, this principle can be supported by providing an area for your child to display their artwork, by displaying photos of your child engaged in various activities or play or making photo books or scrapbooks together. These provide a way for your child to remember and to reflect on their past experiences and find their own ways to extend their learning as they continue to grow.



Parents are partners in education.

Reggio-inspired programs recognize and respect parents as a child's true primary teacher and encourage parents to take an active role in their child's learning experiences. Parents are welcomed into the classroom and are invited to share their talents and interests with the children. Teachers communicate with parents about how to support their child's interests and development and work collaboratively to address behavior issues or concerns. To promote learning connections between home and school, parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers about their child's emerging interests and experiences outside of school. Parents act



as partners in their child's education when they maintain open communication with teachers about their child's progress and work together to promote

learning or behavioral goals. They are also acting as partners when they volunteer to help with a learning activity in the classroom, act as a chaperone for a field trip, or provide "expert" knowledge about a topic for the class. The positive relationships formed between teachers and parents help children feel safe at school, stay connected with the school community and provide the necessary bridge between the child's learning experiences at home and school.