

Where little minds can soar...

A bluebird logo where the bird is integrated into the letter 'B' of the word 'Bluebird'.

*Bluebird*  
Early Learning Centre



**EMBRACING THE  
REGGIO EMILIA  
APPROACH**

**JOYFUL  
LEARNING**

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## "Nothing without joy."

This is an phrase often used in association with one of the world's most popular and globally respected educational approaches in early childhood education, the Reggio Emilia approach . This booklet explains why we are embracing the approach at Bluebird Early Learning Centre.



# WELCOME

There are important guides set down by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). They provide guidance, resources and services to support early learning centres to improve outcomes for children. Through the National Quality Framework, our centre is bound by law to focus on the seven standards set out by ACEQA.

## More than following rules and regulations

Our Family Handbook sets out our philosophy to be a part of a child's extended family. We are committed to ensuring that we provide the foundations for future growth through warm, nurturing and safe educational environments.

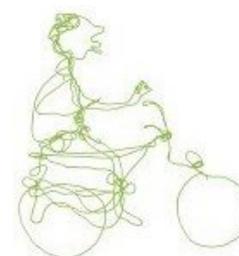
We are constantly looking towards the future, imagining how to develop a child's cognitive, emotional and physical capabilities. Embracing the seven NQF standards within a Reggio Emilia approach is a natural progression for us to utilise one of the best early learning approaches in the world.

The approach is not about following a 'recipe' but a way of continuously focusing on how "children are born with amazing potential and capacities: curiosity, a drive to understand, the ability to wait, to wonder and to be amazed, the capacity to express themselves in many ways." As a result, as educators and parents we join together in deeply collaborative ways to nurture these capacities in *all* children.

We have joined the **Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE)**, a national reference organisation for the **educational project of Reggio Emilia** in Australia. REAIE believes that the Reggio Emilia approach demonstrates what is possible when a society that values human potential, relationships and the power of imagination, educates its children. Such an approach enables us to focus on standards in an deeply creative way.



Figure 1: National Quality Standards



Reggio Emilia Australia  
INFORMATION EXCHANGE  
*re search for a new culture of childhood*

Figure 2: REAIE Logo

# THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH



It all started...

The Reggio Emilia approach to education was founded by a group of inspired parents who desired an educational system where their children could flourish. After the despair of World War Two, the parents of the *commune of Reggio Emilia*, a region of Emilia-Romagna in northeast Italy, had the desire to bring about change, create economic prosperity and social development.

There is a lovely story about how a school in war torn northern Italy was lovingly rebuilt by hand by the parents of the school, using funds that were raised by selling an abandoned German tank, trucks and horses. Families salvaged whatever they could from the war damaged town and integrated these items into the school design and build.

The first school was named "April 25<sup>th</sup> School" to honour the day on which the Allies liberated the region. The town was very much united in their longing for a better education system.

Loris Malaguzzi, an educator, psychologist and philosopher had heard about the school rebuild and was drawn to become involved. Loris was riding his bike past and couldn't help but be amazed and inspired by the parents drive and passion. He got off his bike and stopped to help, working alongside the families to bring their collaborative dream to reality.

Many schools, not just in Italy, but across the globe have been implementing the Reggio beliefs and principles since then. In 2006 the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre opened in Reggio Emilia as a meeting place for professional development and research of the Reggio approach. Today, Italy is still the motherland of the Reggio Emilia and people travel from all corners to participate in study tours and experience this wonderful approach first hand.



**Figure 3: Centro Internazionale Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia**

# THE REGGIO EMILIA EXPERIENCE

The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy, a pedagogy which endorses the belief that children are confident, responsible, independent, creative and curious beings. It is a self-guided curriculum, driven by the children's interest and needs and encourages exploration and freedom to learn in their own way, at their own pace.

Children are encouraged to learn and explore not only individually, but collectively as well, with group projects often lasting for long periods of time and promoting learning through exploration, research and teamwork. They are encouraged to explore, observe, hypothesize, question and discuss to clarify their understanding.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following set of principles, which are led by respect, responsibility and strong sense of community:

- Children must have some control over their direction of their learning.
- Children must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing.
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that they must be allowed to explore.
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.

Malaguzzi believed the physical environment to be of fundamental importance to the early childhood programme and referred to it as the "third teacher", alongside the educators and other children. The environment should be set up in a way that is aesthetically pleasing, with natural materials and indoor plants. It should encourage strong relationships between people, the world of experience, ideas and many ways of expressing ideas.

Children should always have access to a variety of activities, resources and experiences which are designed to promote exploration, discovery and play.



# IMAGE OF THE CHILD



The Reggio Emilia philosophy believes in the rights and opinions of each child, viewing them as important and valued citizens within our community.

A child is a competent, capable and natural researcher who has the desire for knowledge and is always ready for challenges. At the core of the Reggio's approach is an assumption that children form their own personality during early years of development and are endowed with "a hundred languages" through which they can explore their ideas.

Painting, sculpting, drama, dance, shadow play and art are seen as some of the vessels that children use to express these symbolic languages. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas about everything they could meet or do during the day.

Influenced by this belief, the child is beheld as beautiful, powerful, competent, creative, curious and full of potential and ambitious desires. Each child has the right to their own opinion and the means to explore their world in their search to discover and learn. The sky is the limit for his or her potential and the educators are there to enable the forming of opinions and constructing of knowledge.



## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We value parents as participants in their child's learning process. Parents are a vital component to the Reggio Emilia philosophy as they are viewed as partners, collaborators, and advocates for their children.

Their involvement in the school gives their children a sense of security and is deeply appreciated. This lends itself to having parents as role models for their children, and for them to have an incentive for their own learning.

Parents are encouraged to take part in discussions about the Centre's policies and procedures, child development progress and curriculum planning and evaluation.



CREATIVITY BECOMES  
MORE VISIBLE WHEN ADULTS  
TRY TO BE MORE ATTENTIVE  
TO THE COGNITIVE PROCESSES  
OF CHILDREN THAN TO  
THE RESULTS THEY ACHIEVE  
IN VARIOUS FIELDS  
OF DOING & UNDERSTANDING

Loris Malaguzzi

## Role of the teacher

The teacher plays a critical role by being the child's partner and recognizing many learning possibilities. To further the learning process, educators listen, observe, inquire, document, work together and reflect upon the experiences of children. In the Reggio approach, the educator is considered a co-learner and collaborator with the child, and not just an instructor.

While working on projects with children, educators can expand the child's learning by collecting data that can be reviewed later. Educators are encouraged to facilitate the children's learning by planning activities and lessons based on their interests, asking questions to further understanding, and actively engaging in the activities alongside each child. Continuing evolution of the children's ideas and practices allows them to be flexible with the programmes.

Learning and teaching  
should not stand on  
opposite banks and just  
watch the river flow by;  
instead, they should  
embark together on a  
journey down the water.  
Through an active,  
reciprocal exchange,  
teaching can strengthen  
learning how to learn.

- Loris Malaguzzi



## Community & Group Work

It is essential that we make visible the fact that each child knows and understands that we are all different and can co-exist peacefully. We have different ways of thinking, a fact we embrace. By responding to each other's processes and opinions we can get along as a community. Each citizen within our community is valued and can contribute to the bettering of our society and community.

Incursions and excursions are a great way to expose children to their surrounding world and explore all aspects of it.

Children in a Reggio classroom are encouraged work closely together and to learn from one another. Louise Boyd Cadwell describes the child in a Reggio classroom as a protagonist, a collaborator and communicator.

## References

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