



MADGE SEXTON K I N D E R G A R T E N *McLaren Vale*

The Reggio Emilia Philosophy

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The Reggio Emilia Approach derives its name from its place of origin, Reggio Emilia, a city located in Emilia Romagna in Northern Italy. Shortly after the Second World War, Loris Malaguzzi, a young teacher and the founder of this educational approach, joined forces with the parents of this region to provide care for young children. They felt that it is in the early years of development that children form who they are as individuals. This led to the creation of a program based on: the principles of respect, responsibility, and community; the value of exploration and discovery; a supportive and enriching environment; and the interests of the children through a self-guided curriculum. Originally inspired by the need of women to return to the workforce, over the last 50 years, this educational philosophy has caught the attention of early childhood educators worldwide.

The principles of the Reggio Emilia approach that are in place at Madge Sexton Kindergarten fit beautifully within our curriculum, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Belonging, Being, Becoming. The Reggio Emilia philosophy is simply excellent early childhood practice. We believe that by implementing learning programs and experiences through the lens of the Reggio Emilia principles we are able to create rich, engaging and exciting learning experiences for children in a beautiful, respectful environment that fosters strong relationships and a strong sense of identity and belonging for children and families. Outlined below are some of the principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy that we foster.

Relationships

Relationships and learning through relationships underpin everything that we do. Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff are committed to making connections with every child and building “real” relationships. We provide experiences for children to connect with each other and develop a sense of belonging to our Kindergarten community. We also value relationships with families and the wider community and strive to create opportunities and experiences to connect with them. We aim for “partnerships” with parents, not just superficial parental involvement, we strive to develop a culture where staff and parents respect childhood as a time for children to explore, create and be joyful.

Image of the child

Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff see the children as strong, competent, creative and curious, and capable of building their own theories, not as empty vessels that require filling up with facts. Children are seen as unique individuals within a group. Children are encouraged to share their experiences, ideas, theories and curiosities. A strong sense of identity in children is promoted, children’s images are projected everywhere: in photographs; in reflections through mirrors; in celebrations of learning; and in the child directed learning projects and journeys. Children are respected and valued for their unique individual personalities and identities.

Listening – “child’s voice”

Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff are genuinely interested in, and listen deeply to what the children have to say/are communicating. We believe that children bring valuable experiences, theories, knowledge, skills and questions to Madge Sexton Kindergarten with them. Educators value skill acquisition but not in isolation, or at the expense of the exploration of knowledge, concepts, theories, questions and collaboration. A loose “guiding curriculum” is planned at the beginning of each term, and the children’s interests, knowledge, needs and wonderings determine the direction that the learning journey takes.





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Environment as the “third teacher”

The Madge Sexton Kindergarten learning environment reflects that children are highly valued and respected. The physical environment is a beautiful, calming and welcoming space. Educators take much time to set up engaging and enticing experiences to engage children in learning and provide a myriad of spaces for children to “be” alone and with others. The layout of the physical space encourages encounters, communication and relationships. The arrangement of structures, objects and activities encourages choices, problem solving, and discoveries in the process of learning.

100 Languages

A core principle that we believe in is that children possess a hundred languages, a hundred ways of thinking, of expressing themselves, of understanding and encountering others, with a way of thinking that creates connections between the various dimensions of experience rather than separating them. At Madge Sexton Kindergarten, we provide opportunities for children to express themselves and learn through many mediums and experiences. The space of the atelier plays a large role within this. Our atelieristas work collaboratively with educators to ensure that children are provided with opportunities to express themselves through their “100 languages.”

Projects

Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff are committed to research within the Kindergarten and community. Children are given time to explore ideas and theories and develop skills and this is not dependent on strict timetable restrictions. Children are encouraged to ask questions at any time and to be “researchers”. Many “projects” unfold within the Kindergarten learning programs, some long term over weeks, a term, or more; and others more short term and happen within a day or week at Kindergarten. Projects may derive from both children’s and teacher’s ideas and interests, thoughts and theories in things worth knowing about.

Documentation

Recording, reporting on and interpreting children’s learning is a vital part of an educator’s work. Group and individual learning stories are documented and used to celebrate and share learning, as well as to inform future learning possibilities. Documentation serves many purposes, but most of all it is used as a research tool for studying children’s learning processes. Documentation is about what children are doing, learning and grasping, and the product of documentation is a reflection of interactions between teachers and children, and among children. Documenting children’s daily experiences and ongoing projects gives meaning and identity to all that the children do. It is through documentation that educators are able to gain insight into the thoughts of the children, determine further investigation for working on topics, creating a history of the work and generating further interest.

Professional Development

Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff are committed to lifelong learning and engage in ongoing professional development outside of the Kindergarten environment, but also within the Kindergarten environment and local community, sharing and supporting one another and learning together. Madge Sexton Kindergarten is a member of the Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange and are committed to learning from and sharing with others.

