

More than Words: Hundred Languages of Deaf Children

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Ethnographic Study

Study Questions

- 1) What are the schools' goals and purposes in using Reggio Emilia (RE) approach in their early childhood programs with Deaf children?
- 2) What principles of the RE Approach are evident in the selected early childhood classrooms for Deaf children?

Participants

Two ASL and English Bilingual Schools that use the RE approach for more than 10 years

Data collection included:

- 1) classroom observations,
- 2) artifact collection of children's work using photographs,
- 3) focus group interviews with the school leaders, teachers, and family members of the children, and
- 4) field notes and reflections.

Reggio Emilia Principles

- **The Image of the child**
- **100 languages of children**
- The role of the environment
- Partnership between the child, family, and teacher
- No pre-set curriculum
- Power of documentation
- Projects



“Hundred Languages of Children”

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The Reggio Emilia approach calls this freedom of expression and it involves **symbolic, metaphorical, imaginative, logical, and relational languages** (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2011).



Image of the Deaf Child: Reframing how we view young Deaf children

Deficit perspectives

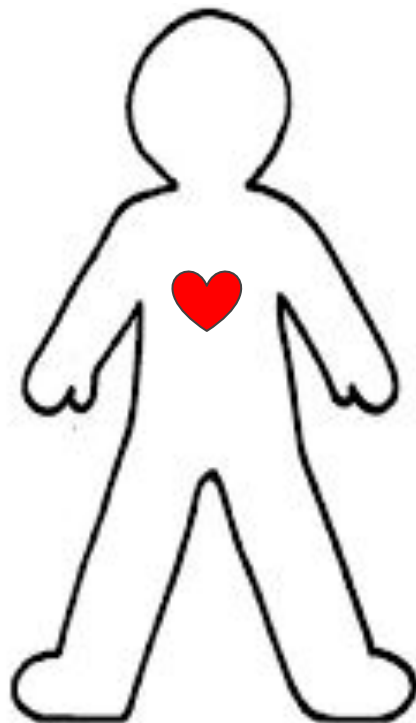
Incompetent

Low expectations

Disabled

Intense Language Therapy

Teacher-directed approach



Strength-based perspectives

Competent

High expectations

Capable, creative

Freedom to express in different ways

Learner-centered approach

Quotes from the Interviews

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“I also think one of the strengths with the RE approach is children are able to show who they are, the whole child. I can easily see that as their teacher and it makes it easier for me to support them to grow and thrive.” (Karen, Pre-K Teacher, School #2)

“I believe all children have special (unique) skills, diverse skills. This deaf school have (children with) many different levels like language levels or whatever. If we focus on only one language or only on their academic skills, then we will lose many kids’ experience. It will be lost. They will always feel they are less than or not good enough.” (Jackie, Preschool Teacher, School #1)

Quotes from the Interviews

“I believe (with the RE approach) the kids feel empowered. They feel confident here, maybe not much at home. Here they have the freedom to express. I think that the idea we discussed before, that their ideas and their input are valued. You know, among other things. They feel connected through communication. Through this kind of simulation, we provide them, the children develop the ability to be confident with their learning and to explore things (themselves).” (Steve, Principal, School #2)

“The RE approach allows for full access to language for her child which creates a sense of equality. The Reggio Emilia approach promotes visual and sensory experiences so that the whole experience is available rather than hiding parts of the experience from the children. (Bridget, Parent, School #2)

Role of Adults

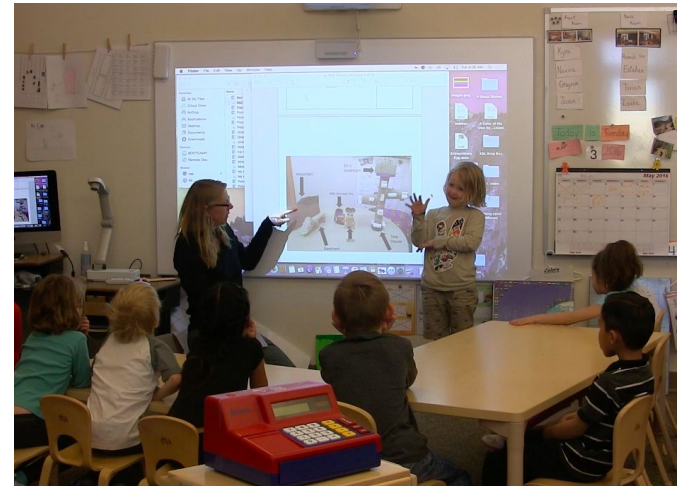
Set up the environment

Facilitate and document children's exploration

Language models

Recognize children's capabilities

Follow children's lead



Examples of 100 Languages from our study...









“Our task is to
HELP children
communicate
with the **WORLD**
using all their
potential, **STRENGTHS**
and *languages,*
and to overcome
any **OBSTACLE**
presented
by our *culture*”

Loris Malaguzzi