

Comparison Matrix Montessori – Reggio Emilia – Waldorf (Steiner) – REI

| | MONTESSORI | REGGIO EMILIA | WALDORF |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| Image of the child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children want and need to care for themselves and their surroundings, adults have spent too much time “serving” children, and this has an affect on their self worth and individuality (Mooney, 2000). Each child is seen as having an inherent set of strengths and that these strengths will emerge differently from each individual. An active child, eager for knowledge and prepared to learn, seeking perfection through reality, play and work (Edwards, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loris Malaguzzi the founder of the Reggio Emilia Model saw children as ‘rich’, not ‘rich’ materially. Rather ‘rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and most of all connected to adults and other children’. The ‘rich’ child is an active learner, ‘seeking the meaning of the world from birth, a co-creator of knowledge, identity, culture and values’, a citizen, the subject of rights not needs; and born with ‘a hundred languages’. Focusing on the infant and preschool years only, the child is seen as social from birth, full of intelligence, curiosity, and wonder (Edwards, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood matters and children should not be rushed through this period of their lives, but should be viewed as of tremendous importance needing to be experienced fully in it’s own right (Roopnarine, 2009). Each child is filled with potential, it is simply a matter of giving every child a nurturing environment and the freedom to unfold at one’s own pace (Roopnarine, 2009). Image of the child as; capable, confident, creative and active learner. |
| Teaching and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The classroom is to be child-centered and teachers should; Provide real tools that work (sharp knives, good scissors, woodworking and cleaning tools) Keep materials and equipment accessible to the children, organized so they can find and put away what they need Create beauty and order in the classroom (Mooney, 2000). Montessori teachers are trained to “teach little and observe much” (Mooney, 2000). Children are capable of great concentration when they are presented with interesting things to do and the time and freedom to do them. Within a Montessori classroom large blocks of time are used to explore and learn without unnecessary interruptions. There are no text books, and seldom will two or more children be studying the same thing at the same time. Children learn directly from the environment, and from other children—rather than from the teacher. The teacher is trained to teach one child at a time, with a few small groups and almost no lessons given to the whole class (Montessori Method & Philosophy). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher’s role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Working as co-teachers, the role of the teacher is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children (New, 2007). The teacher is a teacher-researcher, a resource and guide as she/he lends expertise to children (Edwards, 1993). Within such a teacher-researcher role, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children’s work and the growth of community in their classroom and are to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking, and children’s collaboration with peers. Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning. The curriculum has a purposive progression but no scope and sequence. Teaching and learning are negotiated, emergent processes between adults and children, involving generous time and in-depth revisiting and reviewing (Edwards, 2002). Based on careful and sensitive listening, observation and documentation, and reflection with other adults, the teachers serve as resources and guides to the children (Edwards, 2002). Routines are minimal in Reggio schools. The children are not interrupted by unnecessary transitions from one activity to another, there are times to eat, sleep and meet with the class, but there are few unnecessary interruptions in the children’s day (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are dedicated to creating a genuine love of learning within each child. By freely using art, craft, music and language in conjunction with the teaching of academics, learning become a living, creative process. The academic subjects are enriched and enlivened in a way that meets the developmental stages of the children, offering both sensory and intellectual nourishment. Children should not be rushed into adult consciousness but allowed to savour their childhood. To assist the young people to learn to know and love the world in childhood, to begin to develop good judgement in adolescence, to freely take responsibility for life’s journey in adulthood; these are our tasks as teachers and parents. The teacher presents a curriculum that has structure and sequences but that relies on lessons unaccompanied by textbooks (Edwards, 2002). Children listen as the teacher presents the material, and the children integrate what they have learned through design and illustrations within their own lesson books. (Edwards, 2002). |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no grades, or other forms of reward or punishment, subtle or overt. Assessment is by portfolio and the teacher’s observation and record keeping. The real test of whether or not the system is working lies in the accomplishment and behaviour of the children, their happiness, maturity, kindness, and love of learning, concentration, and work (Montessori Method & Philosophy). Observation and documentation are key components to the Montessori Method, if children are not learning; adults are not listening or watching carefully enough. By taking observations teachers can figure out what the children need that they are not presently receiving from the current environment (Mooney, 2000). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tests and other types of regurgitated assessments are not the top pick of a Reggio based school. Instead of intense discussions or worksheet type quizzes, the assessment strategy implemented by Reggio Schools consists of a wide variety of child documentation (The Effectiveness of a Play-Based Curriculum). Documentation is a key element in the Reggio Approach. 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. Documentation, because it is done on a daily basis, is a medium through which teachers discuss curriculum, keep it fluid and emergent, and develop a rational for its course (Edwards, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized testing is not part of Waldorf education at any grade level (Roopnarine, 2009). Classroom observation is perhaps the most frequently used tool to keep track of children’s growth. Teachers utilize assessment data not to grade or scale the students but simply to develop a deeper understanding of the child so as to best facilitate development and learning in the classroom (Roopnarine, 2009). The Waldorf approach to assessment is performance based and looks at the development of the human personality as well as the acquisition of academic tools. The methods or teaching practices of Waldorf education provide for activities and generates materials for such performance-based assessment (The Waldorf Approach). |
| Environment | <p>The environment should exhibit the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction in proportion to the child and his/her needs. Beauty and harmony, cleanliness of environment Order An arrangement that facilitates movement and activity Limitation of materials, so that only that material that supports the child’s development is included (Mooney, 2000). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For children to learn through their surroundings the classroom needs to be beautiful and orderly (Mooney, 2000). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within the Reggio Emilia schools, great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom. Environment is considered the “third teacher.” Teachers carefully organize space for small and large group projects and small intimate spaces for one, two or three children (New, 2007). Documentation of children’s work, plants, and collections that children have made from former outings are displayed both at the children’s and adult eye level. Common space available to all children in the school includes dramatic play areas and worktables for children from different classrooms to come together. The attention to detail and the importance of ambience is perhaps the most obvious and provocative feature of a Reggio Emilia classroom. Teachers want children to learn to notice and appreciate colors, textures and design (New, 2007). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The priority of the Steiner ethos is to provide an unhurried and creative learning environment where children can find the joy in learning and experience the richness of childhood rather than early specialization or academic hot-housing. Color and the use of natural materials and carefully chosen props are intrinsic to the uncluttered, warm and homelike, aesthetically pleasing environments (Edwards, 2002). The Waldorf early childhood classroom is seen as an extension of the home, in both design and function, and allows experiences in all five senses to be achieved through the color on the walls to the furniture and classroom materials (Roopnarine, 2009). |
| Relationship with Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is essential to develop a positive relationship with parents in order to ease fears and to celebrate competence (Drake, 2008). Montessori teachers believe that when good communication is achieved with parents, the energy and excitement of this partnership will yield lifelong benefits for the children in their care (Brooks, 2001). The school community as a whole, including the parents, work together to open the children to the integration of body, mind, emotions and spirit (Edwards, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. Teachers respect parents as each child’s first teacher and involve parents in every aspect of the curriculum. It is not uncommon to see parents volunteering within Reggio Emilia classrooms throughout the school. This philosophy does not end when the child leaves the classroom (Exploring Reggio Emilia). The social relationships that are developed in the schools of Reggio Emilia are the fabric in which everything else is woven. These social relationships go beyond the classroom walls to reach out to families and the community. The teachers try to create a community that uses the parent’s particular skills (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement and support have primary influence on a child’s success, and when combined with a school’s influence that promotes this dynamic, potential is tremendous. Teachers need the support of parents; the parents need the support of teachers (Roopnarine, 2009). In most Waldorf schools, parents are expected (or even required) to attend three or four “Parent Evenings” a year, The teacher will often engage parents in the sorts of artistic/pedagogical activities done by the children of that grade level, discuss aspects of child development, and share her approach to the subject matter being studied at that time (Discover Waldorf Education). |

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– REI

| RIE: Resource for Infant Educators. | |
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| Image of the child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect is the basis of the RIE philosophy. • Each child is seen as being competent, focused, peaceful, involved, aware, secure and inner-directed. • RIE believes that children initiate and guide the ‘educarers.’ |
| Teaching and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIE believes the child to be an initiator, an explorer, and a self-learner. • Provides an environment for the child that is physically safe, cognitively challenging and emotionally nurturing. • Provides time for uninterrupted play. • Freedom to explore and interact with other infants. • Involvement of the child in all care activities to allow the child to become an active participant rather than a passive recipient. • Sensitive observation of the child in order to understand the child’s needs. • Consistency and clearly-defined limits and expectations to develop self-discipline. |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no grades, or other forms of reward or punishment, subtle or overt. Assessment is by the educarers observation. The real test of whether or not the system is working lies in the initiation and accomplishment of an activity by the infant. • “Infancy is a vulnerable stage of development, therefore, it’s not enough that babies receive good care, the care must be excellent.” – <i>Magda Gerber</i> |
| Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a safe, challenging and predictable environment. • Our role is to create an environment in which the child can best do all the things that the child would do naturally. The more predictable an environment is, the easier it is for babies to learn. • As infants become more mobile, they need safe, appropriate space in which to move. • Their natural, inborn desire to move should not be handicapped by the environment. |
| Relationship with Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIE works closely with infant and toddler parents and teaches them to be the primary ‘educarers’ of children. • Parents learn from RIE associates and primarily by observing their children move and play. • RIE provides one-on-one and small group training sessions for parents. |