

Hundred languages of children



Children use many languages to discover, invent, imagine and make meaning of the world around them. Right from birth children begin to express their emotions and find ways to communicate their needs. Lois Malaguzzi the founder of Reggio Emilia approach describes these forms of expression as the hundred languages of children.

The hundred languages of children are found in words, actions, symbols, and codes, and

are expressed through **multimodal learning** experiences that explore child interests, skills and developmental capabilities.

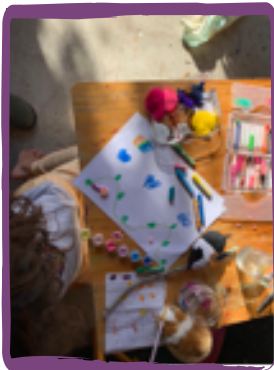
Hundred languages poem
by Lois Malaguzzi - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=174pYUcwn7w>

Multimodal learning incorporates visual, physical, audio, spatial, and movement ways of being such as painting, drawing, dancing, movement, thinking, pretend play, sculpting, speaking, singing, silence, gardening, discussing, questioning and building.

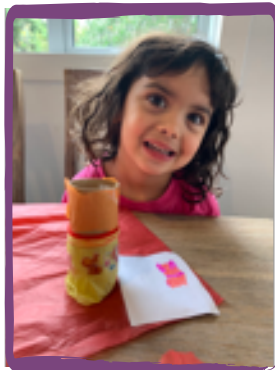
Wright, S. (2012). *Children's meaning-making and the arts*. Frenchs Forest, Australia: Pearson Education Australia.

Fairy designs

Draw a fairy world



Design a fairy outfit



Make fairy wings



Fly like a fairy



Creating learning opportunities

Learning opportunities emerge when we notice, recognise and respond to children's interests and needs. Using a **pedagogy of listening** the hundred languages approach identifies ways to help children find the meaning in what they do, what they encounter, and what they experience?

Pedagogy of listening is a complex and multifaceted process that engages all the senses with respectful, reflective listening to interpret and understand learner needs.

Rinaldi, C. (2001). The pedagogy of listening: the listening perspective from Reggio Emilia. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/526fe9aee4b0c53fa3c845e0/t/540fce31e4b00c94d884e002/1410321969279/Pedagogy+of+Listening+-+Rinaldi+-+Fall+2001.pdf>

Respectful listening values what a child says, does and feels, it is active and thoughtful, hearing emotions, facts and purpose. Educators need to look beyond what the child does to hear why?

Play scenario - Hiding the trains

“At first I noticed a child playing with trains so encourage the play with more train track equipment, signs and people. I observed the child hiding the trains, people and signs in the tunnel. I wondered whether the child was interested in trains or trying to understand more about enclosures? I decided to set out a range of boxes all different sizes to see what would happen. The child played with the boxes all morning.”

In the train scenario the educator allows their initial thoughts to be challenged, seeking to understand the child’s motivations and **play urges**, resulting in a meaningful play extension.

Play urges or schemas are universal patterns of play that children use to make sense of the world around them.

Brownlee, P., & Crisp, K. (2016) *The Sacred Urge to Play*.

Read more about schemas <https://www.playcentre.org.nz/2019/11/what-are-schemas/>

Reflective listening tests preconceived ideas, observations and assumptions, creating learning opportunities that stimulate deep engaging play through responsive and reciprocal relationships.

Preparing the environment as the third teacher

The environment plays an important role in fostering the hundred languages of children. In Reggio Emilia the environment is considered the third teacher, inspiring children’s curiosity, encouraging collaboration and fostering expression with flexible, open, and engaging spaces.

“More than the physical space, (the environment) includes the way time is structured and the roles we are expected to play. It conditions how we feel, think, and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives”. Jim Greenman

Creating an environment that is aesthetically pleasing, homely and culturally responsive requires being intentional.

- Eliminate as well as supplement, create a balanced environment that is decluttered, well organized and thoughtful.
- Home from home, use wooden crafted furniture, soft touches, real life tools and family images to foster a sense of belonging with an environment that feels homely, comfortable and inviting.
- Respectful, encourage the environment to be valued with quality materials, natural resources, beautiful art and special treasures.

Carter, M. (2007). *Making your environment the third teacher*. Retrieved from

<https://earlylearning.prn.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Environment-as-the-3rd-teacher.pdf>

Provocations are thoughtful invitations to play that build on children's emerging interests to evoke project learning through exploration, inquiry, creativity, problem solving and collaboration.

What is a provocation? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9tPJsQu67E>

Provocations encourage children to use many languages by engaging all the senses with integrated learning experiences that support holistic development.

Documentation is the process of collecting, interpreting and reflecting on how children think and learn, providing meaningful ways to share learning with children, adults and the wider community. Making learning visible builds connections with people, places and things, and makes children feel valued when they see their images of play and discovery displayed.

Documentation uses photographs, drawings, writings, videos, art displays and learning stories to demonstrate the many languages children use to express their ideas, thoughts and emotions. Documentation also creates opportunities to revisit learning, supporting children's development of **metacognition** for higher process thinking.

***Metacognition** is the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes.*

The Hundred Languages toolkit

1. Recognise child curiosities to support emerging interests.
2. Deeply listen to children's play.
3. Prepare the environment as the third teacher.
4. Create meaningful provocations.
5. Make documentation visible.

To learn more about the Reggio Emilia approach watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7n2hCebmT4c>

Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning Exemplars are a best practice resource that consists of a series of books that will help kaiako/educators to understand and strengthen children's learning.

<https://education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/assessment-for-learning/kei-tua-o-te-pae-2/>

Monarch Butterfly Adventure - Integrated learning experience

A child brought along a dead monarch butterfly from home to the kindergarten catching the attention of a number of other children, leading to a lot of questioning from the children and discussion about the dead butterfly. "What is it?" "Where did it come from?" "Why did it die?" The conversations between the children and the teachers continued and led to some of the children and teachers discussing together the life cycle of a butterfly. They searched out a book from the science box that illustrated and described this life cycle. As they discussed the pictures and read the words, some of the children obviously made a connection between what they saw in the book and what was familiar from home because it wasn't long before several children announced that they had monarch caterpillars at home on swan plants. A special area was set up to house swan plants, eggs, and chrysalises at the centre. This led to collaborative discussions about how to protect and engage with the butterfly area, and inspired creative drawings and art representations.

The project stimulated holistic development through discussions, research, collaboration and creative art work.

Read the full documented story at:

Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning Exemplars. (2009). Book two sociocultural assessment. Retrieved from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Kei-Tua-o-te-Pae/ECEBooklet2Full.pdf>