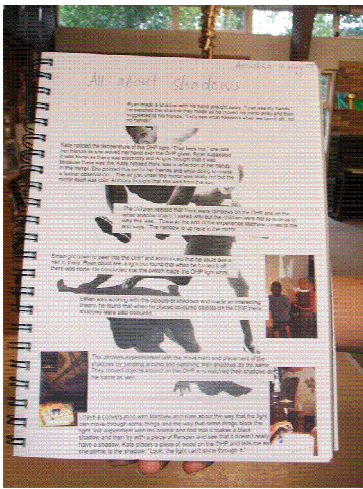


Assessment: Influenced by Reggio Emilia

What is assessment?

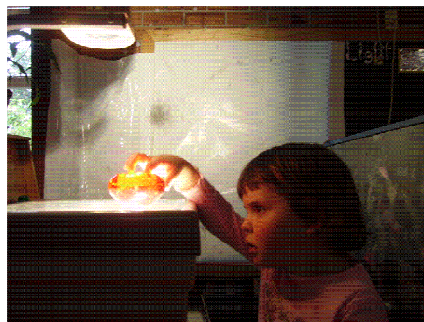
Assessment is crucial in our teaching and learning environments. It guides our programme, creates a basis for our documentation, creates dialogue based around interpretation, gives us better understandings of our students, challenges us and promotes a sense of empowerment for the children we teach.



The power of assessment

Most of us probably think back to our school days when we think of assessment. More often than not the assessment comments would be negative and focused on what you needed to improve.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is different, as is our New Zealand early childhood curriculum Te Whaariki. The Reggio Emilia philosophy views every child as strong and competent and encourages us to embrace each child's strengths, interests and differences through documentation of their thoughts, ideas, theories and learning processes. The documentation of these aspects gives the child a feeling of empowerment and a sense of pride in themselves as capable of constructing their own knowledge.



Children documenting their own explorations—what a sense of empowerment that creates.

The teacher, child and parent— Their roles in assessment

The Teacher— As teachers in a Reggio inspired centre we see it as our role to capture and extend the children's interests—we do this through documentation and assessment. We use written observations, photos and technology, planning meetings, documentation boards and books to aid us in this. All of these combine to create a programme that follows the children's interests and fosters their learning. Communication and collaboration amongst the teachers is essential during assessment as it allows us to see the many views of the child and their learning process rather than just one - thus creating a deeper dialogue between the educators and also the opportunity to see all of the possibilities that may lie ahead.

“Teachers who know how to observe, document and interpret the processes that the children undergo autonomously will realize in this context their greatest potential to learn how to teach” (Rinaldi –2006)

The Child— In Reggio Emilia the child is viewed as powerful, competent and capable of constructing their own knowledge. Their ideas and theories are respected and teachers actively support the children's interests, therefore the child guides the programme. It is important that the child has a role and voice in the documentation process. It is also encouraged that children have a part in the assessment process themselves. This could take place in many forms, for example— the child's voice, photographs, documenting their own learning and even designing and creating their own documentation boards.

“Documentation also offers children a valuable opportunity for revisiting, reflection, interpretation and self-organization of knowledge...offering the child the opportunity to re-read her own process, to self-correct, to find confirmations and denials...and this enables an important transformation in the terms of the construction of knowledge and thus identity” (Rinaldi, 2006)

The Parent— We realize how powerful the parent / whanau role in assessment is; No one knows their child better. Our “Parents Voice” forms and learning stories written by families contribute to our assessment and give parents and whanau a voice in their child's learning. Documentation and assessment also creates a dialogue among families, staff and children as it encourages parents to see and understand not only what their children are doing but also how and why.