Greetings Parents,

A very short letter to accompany a very short week. For those who celebrate Eid Al Adha I wish you a happy holiday and to all of you I hope that you all have a restful short break.

As you all know now, the Early Years program at ACS is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Below is a brief description of this approach’s principles. For families new to ACS it serves as an introduction, and for non-new families, it’s a refresher.

**Reggio Emilia Philosophy**

The following overview of the Reggio Emilia Approach was taken from a packet of information available at *The Hundred Languages of Children* traveling exhibit:

Hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education (Newsweek, 1991), the Reggio Emilia approach to education is committed to the creation of conditions for learning that will enhance and facilitate children’s construction of "his or her own powers of thinking through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages" (Edwards and Forman, 1993). The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education is designed for all children from birth through six years of age. The Reggio Emilia approach can be viewed as a resource and inspiration to help educators, parents, and children as they work together to further develop their own educational programs. The Reggio Emilia approach is based upon the following principles:

**Emergent Curriculum:** An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests of children. Topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadow, dinosaurs, etc.). Team planning is an essential component of the emergent curriculum. Teachers work together to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the materials needed, and possible parent and/or community support and involvement.

**Project Work:** Projects, also emergent, are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests, which arise within the group. Considered as an adventure, projects may last one week or could continue throughout the school year. Throughout a project, teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase the topic and the selection of materials needed to represent the work. Long-term projects or *progettazione*, enhance lifelong learning.
**Representational Development:** Consistent with Howard Gardner’s notion of schooling for multiple intelligences, the Reggio Emilia approach calls for the integration of the graphic arts as tools for cognitive, linguistic, and social development. Presentation of concepts and hypotheses in multiple forms of representation -- print, art, construction, drama, music, puppetry, and shadow play -- are viewed as essential to children's understanding of experience. Children have 100 languages, multiple symbolic languages.

**Collaboration:** Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. Children are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of group membership and the uniqueness of self. There is a high emphasis on the collaboration among home-school-community to support the learning of the child.

**Teachers as Researchers:** 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. 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.

**Documentation:** Similar to the portfolio approach, documentation of children's work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents. Pictures of children engaged in experiences, their words as they discuss what they are doing, feeling and thinking, and the children's interpretation of experience through the visual media are displayed as a graphic presentation of the dynamics of learning. Documentation is used as assessment and advocacy.

**Environment:** 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. 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.

Respectfully,

Sawsan Yaseen
Early Years Principal

**Upcoming Events & Dates to Remember:**

September 23-27   Eid El Adha Holiday