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Head Start Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of Reggio Emilia Principles Practiced Within Their
Own Setting: A Case Study

A dissertation

presented to

The faculty of the Department of Teaching and Learning

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education

by

Tara Terry Voit

December 2020

Dr. Jane Broderick, Chair

Dr. Pamela Evanshen

Dr. Carol Trivette

Keywords: Reggio Emilia, Head Start, observation, documentation, interpretation, conversation,
teacher beliefs, preschool

ABSTRACT

Head Start Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of Reggio Emilia Principles Practiced Within Their
Own Setting: A Case Study

by

Tara Terry Voit

The Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) and Head Start (HS) value high-quality early education, support for families, and community partnerships according to the literature. Exploring principles of REA in relation to the HS program model may reveal alignment that will inform high-quality developmentally appropriate practices that are meaningful and enhance learning outcomes. This multiple case study explores the REA in alignment within three Head Start programs in New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee. Participant groups include one education director, one education leader, and four teachers in each of the three locations. In New Mexico, the HS program was located on a Native American pueblo. In Massachusetts the HS program was located in a diverse urban community, and the HS program in Tennessee was located in rural east Tennessee. Data to demonstrate participant's alignment with nine REA principles include a survey, an interview, and observations without children present at each location. All participants responded with some alignment to the REA principles, yet lack of clear understanding was found among a majority of participants. Classroom observations revealed stronger alignment with REA principles in New Mexico. An interesting finding was that across cases there was one teacher who had more experience with including Reggio-inspired principles in her teaching practices. Teachers were interested in professional development beyond HS mandates. A small ungeneralizable sample is a limitation, which suggests future research using the survey and development of the

observation tool with a larger sample. Implications suggest future professional development introducing the REA may inform teaching practices in Head Start programs.

DEDICATION

I would like to respectfully dedicate this dissertation to my incredible parents, William and Ruth E. Terry, for they are the impetus for my determination. I stand in awe of you, my husband, Stewart L. Voit; my children, I adore you, son and daughter-in-law Stewart L. and Claudia Briana Voit II, daughter Shepleigh R. Voit, daughter Seychelles J. Voit; maternal grandparents George G. and Ruth Gould Bingham Sr.; paternal grandparents Victor and Lula Terry; my phenomenal and beautiful sister, Jill E. Smith, CWO3 US Marine Corps; intellectually gifted brother, Daryl W. Terry; and to all of my loving uncles, aunts, cousins, and kind in-laws. Without family sacrifice, struggle, and perseverance, such an honorable academic accomplishment could never have been possible. My family is my core. They protect me, love me, and remain the ultimate caretakers to ensure what *freedom in education* really means. God delivered me into the most admirable and strongest African-American family imaginable.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express special acknowledgement and gratitude to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Jane Broderick, and committee members Dr. Pamela Evanshen and Dr. Carol Trivette.

The list of what I learned on this academic journey was immeasurable. Thank you, Dr. Amy Malkus, for the inspiring fireside class time and dinner gatherings. Emily Redd, I offer authentic well-wishes to you for your commitment and dependability editing my lengthy dissertation. I learned all about ethics directly from Dr. John Wheeler. Dr. Wheeler and Julia Herwig took me under their wings and guided my first graduate research assistant position and first research project, and provided funding support to attend my first early childhood professional conference as a doctoral student.

I acknowledge standing on the shoulders of those human beings at East Tennessee State University that taught me how to promote my ideas and hold on to my integrity: Dr. Arnold Nyarambi, Dr. Angela Radford Lewis, and Mary Jordan. I owe to them my ability to secure appropriate funding resources and the honor of the dissertation fellowship from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

Finally, this dissertation would not be possible without the constant encouragement and prayers from friends. My friends are brave and courageous. My friendships reveal all that is right with the world.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this research began during an observation of some remarkable preschool-aged children engaging in peer-supportive play. It was the start of a new partnership between Head Start (HS) and the laboratory preschool at East Tennessee State University that incorporates Reggio Emilia (REA) influences as part of the curricula. There were more opportunities to learn further about the frameworks of Head Start and REA influences on early childhood education through the shared objectives of promoting high-quality education for young children and strengthening the family structure with opportunities to guide children's intellectual capacities. Literature reviews and research articles (Dewey, 1966; Malaguzzi, 1993; Malaguzzi, 1998; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Smith, 2014; Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978) support the need for high-quality early education for lifelong learning. In addition, REA principles acknowledge the family as the child's first teacher. The HS program model is a construct that attests to guiding the family as the primary teacher and promoting the best possible outcomes for facilitating family services. It is in these areas in particular that the HS model appears to overlap with the Reggio principles. Investigating the principles of REA in relation to HS might lead to discovering more of an alignment between these two approaches.

Statement of the Problem

Children enrolled in Head Start programs qualify for services based on their individual needs and on characteristics of their family's inability to secure resources, typically defined as economic or fiscal instability, mother's or parents' education level, access to transportation, their demographics, race/ethnicity, marital status of parents, and access to affordable, high-quality childcare (Henry, Gordon, & Rickman, 2006; Lim, Schilder, & Chauncey, 2007). While the Head Start model serves as a comprehensive program to continue the healthy development of children's

abilities from their social, cognitive, emotional and physical well-being, it also links appropriate services for the family unit to develop in relation to their needs. When the family is better positioned to care for and guide their children successfully, the trajectory for marginalized children can change to increase their opportunities for attaining higher education and beneficial lifelong outcomes (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999; Schweinhart, 2000; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Unfortunately, that isn't the only issue involved in resolving the education gap among low-socioeconomic and marginalized children. Currently in the United States there are still deep divides for children's learning aptitude culturally, racially, academically, behaviorally, economically, socially, and emotionally (Gichuru, Riley, Robertson, & Park, 2015; Goleman, 1995; Hart & Risley, 2003; Henry et al., 2006; Ontai, Hinrichs, Beard, & Wilcox, 2002; Schweinhart, 2000; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Wilson, 1997; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). One of the sustaining elements of REA is that these aspects of children's lives are not tangentially regarded but considered within the curriculum and interrelationships in which appropriate guidance from adults supports children's learning while also establishing patterns for lifelong success.

Head Start seeks to implement the best approaches for guiding early childhood education (Haigh, 2007; Zigler, & Styfco, 2010) using research to advocate for the preparation for children's school readiness, stable family life, and the school community, as well as its choice of curriculum (Lambert, Abbot-Shim, & Oxford-Wright, 2001; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). In response to research, Reggio-inspired educators place significant value on the co-learning teacher-child relationship they facilitate and its role in children's success (Ainsworth, 1989). These teachers view children as individually unique in their development, with diverse intellectual capacity for

creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge acquisition, and inquisitiveness (Cadwell, 1997; Gardner, 2011). Reggio-inspired programs are not relegated to a one-size-fits-all model and instead, are organized to meet the individual learning needs of children.

The practices within the Reggio Emilia Approach are internationally renowned as among the best in the field of early childhood (Gandini, 1997). While the literature on both HS and REA reveal shared values in relation to family culture, community and the developing child, further research needs to include how teachers' education levels, training and professional development, and perceptions of children and their families, informs teachers' classroom practices and the types of interdependent relationships they develop within the context of their classroom community (Ainsworth, 1989; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman et al., 1998; Hart & Risley, 2003; Hendrick, 1997; Lambert et al., 2001; New, 2007; Wien, 2008). Teacher perceptions define the strategies they use in planning their classroom curricula, organizing the environment to accommodate the diverse learning styles of children, understanding cultural norms of the children they are serving, and meeting administrative oversight (Fukkink & Lont, 2007; Gillespie, 2000; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993; Malaguzzi, 1993).

The principles of REA provide a framework for questioning teachers to determine their perceptions of children's capacity, culture, and connections to family. The REA principles recognize the role of the classroom environment as the *third teacher*, the use of best practices such as documentation and collaboration, and the value of family and community relationships (Edwards et al., 1998; Gichuru et al., 2015; McClow & Gillespie, 1998; Spaggiari, 1993). This research study seeks to understand whether Head Start, as an early childhood program, may benefit from the practices and considerations of the RE approach.

Purpose of Study

The purpose for this study was to determine feasible alignment between the Head Start program model and the Reggio Emilia principles as perceived by Head Start directors, education leaders, and teachers in Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Northeast Tennessee. The participant sample of $N=18$ was given a survey of 56 questions, an interview that included 21 open-ended questions in addition to 15 Likert Scale questions, and a follow-up observation of classrooms, without children present, to observe whether there were visible artifacts and documentation of the REA principles within the HS model. The second purpose, was to determine whether HS teachers' beliefs suggest that they might benefit from professional development, training, and/or awareness of the REA principles to better support them in bringing together teachers, families and the community into the processes of sharing the responsibility of serving the educational, emotional, safety, and care of children interdependently (Cooper, 2010; Crosnoe, 2012; Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; New, 2007).

This study continues the rich history and research Head Start utilizes to identify important critical learning connections for marginalized populations of children, and investigates whether there is evidence of HS educational practices and approaches that align with the RE Approach. The Reggio Emilia Approach can potentially inform the need for a deeper investigation into how it supports greater benefits for long-term children's learning; especially creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and predictability (Edwards et al., 1998; Gillespie, 2000; McClow & Gillespie, 1998). This research was especially relevant to the researcher because the achievement gap exists for children who are often identified as marginalized, minority, disabled, poor, or at-risk. Some researchers have reported that children of color comprise a disproportionate number in academic achievement and note that the achievement gap is a reality in the American education

system, and more research needs to be done to reveal the causes and investigate possible solutions (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016; Sykes, 2014; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). While the achievement gap is a multifaceted problem, other examples, are identified as families who are experiencing generational poverty, poverty, or the lack the access or economics, to enroll their children into high-quality early childhood education programs. The greater the quality of the early childhood educational environment, the greater learning experiences children will be exposed to, and that has been determined as one solution to mitigate the achievement gap (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Sykes, 2014; Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Research Questions

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?
2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?
3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start Education Leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?
4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

Definition of Terms

Reggio Emilia inspired – following the principles of an approach begun in Reggio Emilia, Italy, originated to provide immediate ways to educate children whose life and educational experiences had been thwarted due to the crises of war. Reggio Emilia inspired or influenced, represents a loose term and is often interchangeable. REA theory and practice can be influential in guiding higher levels of learning using provocations. It is referred to in generalized definitions described by Haigh (2007) and Hendrick (1997) below:

1. An image of the child as capable, ready to learn, and wanting to socialize.

2. An environment that teaches as it provokes and supports a sense of wonder, experimentation, thinking, socialization, and connections with nature, community, and identity.
3. Use of a variety of materials and languages as a means to express, represent, and construct understanding and meaning.
4. Use of documentation to see, reflect, and revisit ideas, feelings, experiences, and understanding.
5. Listening and observing to develop emergent curriculum experiences and studies.
6. Parent partnerships in which teachers and parents work together and share different perspectives.
7. Use of collaboration among children and adults, given that different perspectives can support more complex thinking or understanding.
8. Professional development that allows for vision, dialogue, planning, experiences, revisiting, and reflecting.

Summary

This chapter introduces the problem that frames this study. The achievement gap does not only exist in inner cities, but in every facet of society where socioeconomics, and level of education attained, defines how families directly influence their children's lives and experiences. (Hart & Risley, 2003; Sykes, 2014; Wilson, 1997). The Reggio Emilia Approach is introduced as an approach to early childhood education that is recognized for high quality in supporting children's intellectual development within the context of family and community (Edwards et al., 1998). The similarities between Head Start and the Reggio Emilia Approach are suggested, specifically in relation to family and community connections (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999). From the perspective of the researcher, conducting research about other early education

approaches that may possibly offer opportunities to Head Start for increasing the learning experiences for marginalized children is an effort in the right direction. The Head Start model began in the vein of serving children and families who needed support in academic achievement and providing connections to resources, to sustain their prospects for greater lifelong outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999; Zeigler & Styfco, 2010).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories Impacting This Study

As the systems of educational norms and reforms progress in America, it is notable to describe legacy and current theories of academic practices that impact the current perspective of programs in our early education schools throughout the decades. The theorist's perspectives that will be discussed in relation to this study are Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey and Bronfenbrenner. The section on Bronfenbrenner leads into the section on Head Start, due to Bronfenbrenner's substantial influence in the development of Head Start. The early childhood learning environment is then introduced due to the significance of the influences of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Principles of REA are identified as vehicles for collaborative learning, and communication among children, families, and teachers. There is need for a better understanding of the early learning environment and how it is supported by the work and practices of the Reggio Emilia Approach. The REA principles recognize the environment as a third teacher in children's learning. Literature on REA describes how the expressions of children are authentically represented through provocations meant to challenge children's interests, encourage their ideas and promote problem-solving skills. The REA values the agency to children, families and the communities and culture they represent. Curriculum models relevant to Head Start are described, and two specific, yet different, curriculum models that are dominant in relation to the RE practices and in the HS model are presented as relevant to the focus of this study.

Piaget

Piaget (1997) was interested in studying how children construct their knowledge and found that children's interests, their social relationships, and their experiences were directly reflected in how they learn and acquire knowledge. Children learn in stages from the pre-

operational to the abstract. Children's experiences are derived from their social interactions with their peers and the environment. How they negotiate guides them into their own conceptual understanding of the world.

Initially children enter a situation with an idea, a schema, in place that is based on prior experiences. Assimilation occurs when children begin to connect their prior knowledge with new experiences. Accommodation is when the child readjusts his or her thinking in order to make sense of the new experiences in the environment. A child can't return to previous schema because the child has already built onto that schema and developed new connections that increase the foundations of what is understood, and that knowledge forms new meaning (Piaget, 1997).

Disequilibrium is an unexpected occurrence that interrupts the learner's normal thinking processes and how the learner organizes their thinking, which can cause conflict or disruption. It is a catalyst that can lead to new ways for a child to capture the experience or influence the way a child problem solves in a situation (Piaget, 1997).

DeVries, Hildebrandt, and Zan (2002) recommend several teacher practices to support children through the processes of disequilibrium, to assimilate and accommodate new information. For example, when focusing curriculum on children's interests they are much more inclined to work through a challenge than if the curriculum is prescribed and uninteresting. Working in small groups, children scaffold new terminology, perspectives, and concepts that promote problem-solving and connections to prior learning. When children learn to form meaningful relationships with one another they learn not only new literacy and critical-thinking skills but also moral codes of respect.

Piaget (1997) noted that morality of children is cognitively learned by a process and "system of rules" (p. 13). Children develop an understanding for morality based on the rules of

games handed down generationally, often by adults, but also through playing games with older children or peers such as board games, cards or marbles. It is the process of how children follow the instruction, how it is facilitated, and the importance of adhering to important features of the game rules that children learn to respect.

Creating early learning environments where teachers foster children's social and moral relationships and model social moral values starts with designing curriculum and programs that engage and nurture children's intellectual abilities. To apply these concepts into practice, teachers set up provocations throughout centers that engage children with the materials and verbal communications to establish a basis for children to think about what they are doing and why. This process creates a pathway for children to think about the decisions they make, fostering reasoning abilities and skills (Dewey, 1938; Duckworth, 1987; Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007).

Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky was a social constructivist who introduced the premise that children are social learners. He theorized that children acquire knowledge through their social interactions with their peers and adults in shared experiences. Vygotsky's (1978) theory is rooted in social development and constructivist principles as a pathway for learning. He believed children learn as social beings through engagement with their environment and social interactions.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is an important element of Vygotskian theory. The ZPD is a model that represents what children know and can do on their own, the state of cognitive conflict where children work to the edge of their capacity, and a stage in which an experienced peer or adult can guide the child to a new level of experience with assistance (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding facilitates the highest potentials for learning in children. It represents the tools necessary to guide higher-level thinking and engage learning. These are the strategies that

experienced peers or adults provide for children to move them forward in learning. Through scaffolding peers and adults are encouraging children to combine what they know to what they are learning. This social learning is a premise for learning that Vygotsky observed and presented in his theory (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding promotes independent thinking and problem-solving skills as new concepts that emerge through the struggles children face in the learning cycle as they master new skills and connect them to new learning through social interactions and cognitive development (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). As children engage with one another and adults in activities such as play, conversation, and exploration of their environment, the spontaneous learning that unfolds promotes learning. Their meaning-making also reflects their cultural environment. The scientific processes of learning occurs when the teacher guides a child to the next phases of understanding by providing opportunities to engage with more information or challenging skills (Vygotsky, 1978).

As children explore and develop new schema, they become co-constructors of shared knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The experiences children and adults share as co-collaborators influences their relationships and guides the scaffolding process. Vygotsky (1978) also theorized that a child's environment was an influential factor in shaping their ideas, thoughts and how they interpreted, predicted and problem-solved their experiences.

Dewey

Dewey's (1938) contributions to the constructivist theory were that he focused on early childhood education having a child-centered approach. He was a proponent for children to experience active and engaged learning rooted in real-life experiences. Dewey also introduced the theory that the learning communities of children include their classroom, and that all children are

influenced by their peer group, teachers, and influences inside and outside of the school, including nature and society.

Dewey (1938) described the lessons educators should consider from traditional and progressive education as being an awareness in understanding the need for inclusivity of both theory and active learning as part of educators' reflective practices, and not one or the other. This education model promotes unique opportunities to enhance learning outcomes for all children.

Complementary to Piaget and Vygotsky, Dewey understood that children construct their understanding of the world and what they know based on what interests them. Thus, engaging in play is important to the processes of inquiry with children and teachers, and can facilitate the learning process in child-centered environments through play (Dewey, 1938; New, 2007; Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978).

Play affords opportunities for children to create, implement new ideas, and foster valuable social relationships. Dewey accentuated the role of provocations and inquiry-based learning environments. These attributes of play define the experiences of children as both collaborators and interdependent learners while exploring shared interests. The children all learn together and feed off each other and the adults in their world, within the cyclical process of learning and play.

Dewey (1938) noted that principles derived from legacy of cultural education can be equally important. He theorized education as a continuum of shared experiences within the context of the social experiences in humanity. Therefore, he believed it worthy to invest in early education models that promote healthy, stable children and families, and imbed students' innovative ideas and progress into communities. At the core of his progressive education model are the freedoms valued by Americans in a democratic society: liberty, justice, the pursuit of

happiness, and the right to experience the best lifelong learning outcomes for young children and their families.

Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner was influenced by his background as a very young Russian immigrant whose father's work centered on helping disabled people (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was not fully realized prior to his role at the beginnings of Head Start. When Bronfenbrenner became a member of the planning committee for Head Start, he began to introduce his theory and concluded that "You never understand a phenomenon until you try to change it" (p. 337). Bronfenbrenner believed that in attempting to change the educational trajectory or outcomes for poor children, one must consider the direct and indirect influences that children experience that contribute to gaps in learning and lifelong outcomes. Those experiences are aspects of a wide range of considerations that support learning and other experiences in which children are engaged throughout their lives and include the role of the mother, father, immediate and extended family, community, economic, and environmental factors.

Bronfenbrenner (1975) suggests that the individual child is influenced by the environment. The environment, per Bronfenbrenner's (1975) definition, is comprised of several systems he designates as ecological systems. Each system is a culmination of experiences a child interacts with and engages in that shapes the development and characteristics of a child beyond his or her genetic predispositions. These systems are represented by the people closest to the child and branch out to other influential societal infrastructures: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem.

The microsystem is the first layer of influence in which a child becomes engaged and can be expressed through the types of interpersonal relationships a child develops with immediate

parents, siblings and family, as well as his/her school environment with peers, teachers and administrators (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The mesosystem represents the interactions of at least two of the child's microsystem influences. This is exemplified by the parents and the child's teachers, for instance, and how they gather and use information about the child's performance to ensure the child is meeting expected academic goals. The relationship between the parents and teachers in this example determine an influential outcome that becomes an aspect of how the child develops the skills required to succeed in school and life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Exosystem — The third layer consists of the external system that indirectly impacts the child. For example, if a parent receives orders to relocate to a new job site in another city, those events would alter the ways a child's routine, school, and friendships are affected. And, indirectly these influence decisions the parent will make for transitioning the child into the new environment. The parent may bear the brunt of the strain of readjusting family living conditions that indirectly changes the way the child interprets the relocation in one way or another (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Macrosystem — The macrosystem is the fourth layer which is characterized by the social, cultural, and societal practices directly influencing the ways a child believes their role is in the world. A child's disposition can be represented by how they perceive themselves in relation to the world, and by their experiences with adults in life. An example of this is how a child practices the cultural norms they see portrayed in their environment, and how they experience religious practices or identify with their gender (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Chronosystem — The chronosystem was developed later and to model the impact of the life events in socio-historical context, to measure the characteristics of the child based on the

influences of each system. It examines the connections from the *person* the child becomes through the *context* of the span of measurable development, often reflected in families with generational influences of practices and rituals over the course of *time* (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The influence of Bronfenbrenner’s research. Bronfenbrenner’s (1975) research on the family structure was studied in two categories; the changing conditions of families and the impacts on the development of their children. He outlined data in terms of single-parent families first, and then single-parent families by race all in relation to how children were developing and what factors were involved. Bronfenbrenner (1975) noted, “families that live in similar circumstances, whatever their color, are affected in much the same ways” (p. 449). Later on in his studies he noted that though the experiences between blacks and whites were different ... “In reality the overwhelming majority of blacks and whites do not live in similar circumstances” (p. 449). During the first decade of Head Start from 1960 to 1970, the number of single-parent Black families rose to “five times that for Whites” (Bronfenbrenner, 1975, p. 449). In 2015, Kids Count Data (2017) suggests that in the entire nation, 66% of black children reside in single-parent households compared to 25% of non-Hispanic white children.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1975) research led to awareness that many factors contributed to single family households and the need for mothers to seek financial stability by moving into the workforce. Some of those variables are: divorce, low median family income levels, poverty, where a family lives (urban, suburban, or rural areas), education level of the mother, children born to single mothers, and “progressive fragmentation and isolation of the family in its child-rearing role” (Bronfenbrenner, 1975, p. 451). Overall, Bronfenbrenner (1975) established that Black and White families from similar circumstances, such as the economic instability of two-parent

households, women entering the workforce, divorce, and unwed single mothers, impacted the role of women becoming the head of many households.

Weisner (2002) stated in his article describing ecocultural theory and child development that the most important decision a parent can make before their child is born is not how to pad bank accounts, deciding what color to paint the nursery or what brand of clothing to purchase, but what community in which to raise their child. The community a child grows up in determines the types of cultural engagement, social outcomes, availability of resources, educational opportunities, and experiences to which a child will be exposed. Weisner (2002) goes on to state that it is the cultural community a child is reared in that becomes the “tool that children learn for adaptation to life” (p. 277). Weisner’s (2002) work informs future considerations for children who bring different learning experiences into the classroom shaped by their cultural experiences and their abilities. This concern is central to the premises for Head Start and the principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

In the United States during the 60s, what is commonly termed as *the poverty level* was defined based upon several markers (Bronfenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Moen, & Ceci, 1996). Family size, the cost of food, and family expenses were measured across a large sample of families to determine that food costs represent 1/3 of the total costs of family living expenses. This led to the demarcation of a poverty line, which varies per the number of people in family and income earnings. If a family’s income falls below the set threshold based on this poverty concept, then the family is deemed poor and eligible to apply for welfare, food stamps and Medicare. Bronfenbrenner’s view that these factors are essential to the child’s development impacted a shift in perspective in the field of early childhood and education because he exposed the degree in

which family economics, culture, diversity, and social relationships shaped the values, intellect, and character of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

Researchers such as Hart and Risley (2003) noted that birth to 5 years of age is the most important time for children to develop the type of literacy skills through their experiences that will carry them forward throughout their lives. In a Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory model, the child develops literacy, social, and life skills by engaging and interacting in the environment in an interdependent model sustained by direct and indirect relationships, surroundings, and experiences in which literacy is a significant feature.

There are several processes that come together in the development of a child. In addition to the genetic factors there is the nurture effect. The Bronfenbrenner model promotes a connection between the interpersonal, environmental, and social factors of a child's experiences. The systems outlined in his model are important to understanding how his ecological theory became important in the underpinnings of the Head Start program model (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

It is important to note that Bronfenbrenner's theory was a work in progress that was more fully realized through his work during his time serving on the board of Head Start. His perspectives on the needs of children and families in relation to community are what surged Head Start into a new child development direction (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

It took a common purpose back in the early part of the 60s for then President "Lyndon Johnson, Sargent Shriver, Julius Richmond, and Jule Sugarman, who insisted on opening Head Start on a giant scale, so it blanketed the nation" (Zigler & Styfco, 2010, p. 333). In trying to understand how American society facilitated the concept of providing early education, free education, and high-quality education for all poor and marginalized children, across the spectrum of abilities, race, culture and economics, one must reflect on the words of common sense and

reasoning. Arendt (1958) stated that what we all share as human beings is our common sense, an idea in the early stages of Head Start that framed its focus on commonality in children: “What we now have in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in common, strictly speaking; their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody” (p. 283). The early beginnings of Head Start came to fruition to serve a purpose of increasing educational opportunities for marginalized children to reach their highest potential. The means to achieve the goal was often experienced through hard-work in academic institutions and a connection to opportunities, which fertilized the practices for all that was learned.

The Movement toward Head Start

The movement toward the development of Head Start can be historically attributed to the aspirations of many people who wanted to see American children from every socioeconomic status, especially marginalized children, reach their best potential academically and socially and to reap the benefits of attaining the *American Dream* of living a good life, liberty and freedom, career and financial prosperity, and health and wellness. Sargent Shriver’s mission was to find a resolution to the plight of children living in poverty and to change their learning potential to a higher-quality level of education. Sargent Shriver was authentically noted to be the *father* of the Head Start movement, though history often erroneously attributes the role to Edward Zigler (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Sargent Shriver was a long-time advocate for positively increasing the educational opportunities for mentally challenged children. In his desire to mitigate education efforts for children with intellectual disabilities, he learned about a study that had been conducted through the George Peabody College for Teachers (now Vanderbilt University). The study used experimental and control groups of minority children, and the purpose was to apply various instrumentation tools and assessments to measure whether children’s cognitive and intellectual abilities could be elevated through educational interventions. The authors were making a point to

provide context to the study based on the historical period of time which this study took place. Data outcomes suggested improvements and an elevation in the literacy and grade-level abilities of marginalized children through third grade (Klaus & Gray, 1968). The research studies were conducted by Klaus and Gray (1968) and Gray and Klaus (1970), and generated so much enthusiasm for Shriver that he actually misunderstood the premise of the research, and thought it was carried out on mentally challenged children, when in actuality, it was conducted on children who were poor, African American, and whose early learning opportunities were limited by social status, familial constructs, and access to meaningful literacy experiences (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). The impacts of the study became the spark and impetus for Shriver's future perspectives on teaching children who were mentally challenged beyond the genetic theories of abilities, and guided him to appreciate the potential in the environmental nurturing of intellectual preparation and experiences (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Shriver surmised that environmental factors, such as teachers, learning environments, and welfare services and supports, might mitigate the absence of learning in children who are influenced by the effects of poverty, and hence, change their aptitude for literacy in beneficial ways (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). The Head Start mission and goal was to elevate children and families out of poverty through education and family services to support lifelong outcomes through a two-generation approach.

Head Start

The Head Start program that is in practice today focuses on the whole child, the family, and the community, moving beyond the early theories that suggested a child's development was solely organized from the mother-child bond. Head Start now recognizes the child as an independent and social learner as opposed to the earlier view of the child as an empty vessel that relies on the teacher for knowledge (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Head Start in modern society has roots that are influential across the 50 states. It is an impetus for international models and in

developing countries (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Bronfenbrenner (1975) developed his theory through his relationship with Head Start in which he fully understood that the organization had shortcomings: especially, and often reflected in, the initial academic gains in low-socioeconomic children that declined once they entered the public-school system. Thus, by looking at the factors influencing children's development, his research changed the compass of Head Start to include opportunities for family development and services, as well as links to the greater community (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Head Start has evolved in direct response to studies of the progress of its children on entering the public-school system, because of a strong principled belief that this wide-ranging program should demonstrate strong positive outcomes for marginalized children. This led to partnership with programs like High Scope as a means for obtaining positive lifelong outcomes for children. Head Start continues to be influenced by High Scope and Tools of The Mind, though currently Creative Curriculum has been integrated to address the concept of promoting rich experiences for children to expand their communication of knowledge (Teaching Strategies, LLC., 2013).

High Scope Curriculum Model

The High Scope program model was a curriculum often implemented and adopted in Head Start programs across the country. In 1962, three years prior to the roll-out of Head Start, David Weikart implemented the High Scope approach. It has a long history in connection with the 40-year research study High Scope published (Hohmann, 2002) measuring the effects of high-quality early education for low income and marginalized children in their most important stages of development (Frede, Gilliam, & Schweinhart, 2011).

Weikart and colleagues (Schweinhart, 2000; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999) collected data from preschool children enrolled in their research study on an annual basis at the Perry School

Preschool, in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The school served children of predominantly African-American heritage. Weikart observed children living under impoverished conditions and ranging from preschool through third grade. He set up a longitudinal study based on interviews with these students through the age of 40. The data identified significant evidence in positive lifetime achievements in areas of economic, social, moral, and academic accomplishments, and notes applicable gender differences. The High Scope approach demonstrates the benefits of high-quality ECE as part of an intervention process that reduces the influences of poverty by enrolling children in high-quality early childhood programs. It has been stated that the cost of High Scope is expensive, but in comparison to the savings, “\$3 for every dollar invested, \$7 by age 27, and over \$16 by age 40” (p. 217), decreased time for children spent in special education classes and programs, and projected positive outcomes for life-long learning, it is an arguably relevant investment. Long-term research data reported lifelong participants pursued higher and quality educational opportunities, more successful longer-term relationships, and attained higher economic status (Hohmann, 2002; Schweinhart, 2000; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999).

High Scope is organized around a plan-do-review process. The plan-do-review sequence is defined whereby children spend up to around 20 minutes at the start of the day making choices for what to do during the day. They then enter into the activities that interest them for about 45 minutes to an hour, in which teachers are engaging but not necessarily in ways intended to extend the thinking and experience beyond the daily event. Teachers document key experiences, which are really another form of a standards checklist, so they are not documenting to learn more about children in order to plan for future curriculum around children’s thinking. At the close of the play period teachers engage children in a recall/review experience where children share with the group about what they learned or did during the day. All children are encouraged to share so the

conversation doesn't necessarily allow for time to dig into particular concepts in depth among adults and children (Goffin & Wilson, 2001). The intention of High Scope is to implement a plan-do-review process to conceptualize and consolidate their understandings of activities and subject matter. In contrast, Reggio-inspired educators take the conceptualization from children's conversations to a much deeper level by finding ways to extend the current play into long-term investigations with potential for linking to family and community involvement.

Creative Curriculum

Creative Curriculum is a teaching strategy curriculum kit that guides teachers to prepare activities around skills determined necessary for school readiness for young children. Similar to other programs, Creative Curriculum recommends teacher and child engagement, small-group and large-group activities, and paying attention to children's interests; all of which contribute to children's experiences on a daily basis in their learning environment (Teaching Strategies, LLC, 2013). While these sound like wonderful goals, the curriculum is outlined in a prescribed way, providing teachers with daily plans, weekly themes, and monthly units. With such restriction teachers might not be able to fully respond to the learning interests of children in ways that engage children more deeply and intentionally.

A Head Start teacher recalls her experiences using the Creative Curriculum model stating, "It uses a planned theme every month, and with the theme we explore, and investigate it with hands-on activities and discussion cards, then we celebrate it at the end of every month" (P. Esquibel, personal communication, July 30, 2018). Creative Curriculum is organized around month-long themes that teachers must adhere to (Teaching Strategies, LLC, 2013). These are referred to as investigative studies (Teaching Strategies, LLC, 2013) and the requirement to focus on these limits teachers' abilities to stay open-ended to facilitating learning opportunities around other interests of children. C. Rivera, a Head Start teacher who is working hard to support

children in their learning in one of the poorest areas of the country noted this, “They (children) will use materials appropriately and creativity once they enter an interest area” (personal communication, July 30, 2018).

Teachers across the country are using the same Creative Curriculum lessons for a very diverse population of children, yet these set plans do not consider things like the demographics, culture, and the economics or trauma children and families experience. These plans tie teachers into processes that take a lot of time and likely hold them back from investigating the needs, characteristics, and interests of children in relation to their interconnectedness to family and community contexts.

Tools of the Mind Curriculum

Tools of the Mind, is another type of curriculum that Head Start programs have often implemented in the classroom. It is a play-based curriculum and modeled after Vygotsky’s theories for how children acquire knowledge, learn to self-regulate, and a plan to follow a child’s interests (Farran, Wilson, Meador, Norvell, & Nesbitt, 2015). B. Martinez (personal communications, September 6, 2018), a Head Start teacher with years of experience who has been trained to teach *Tools*, explained it as a boxed model of planned activities that teachers use to “teach academic skills to be ready for school ... *Tools* shows teachers what to teach and how to teach it.”

Similar to other pre-boxed curriculum models, it is difficult to expect all teachers to use the same prescribed instructional materials, demonstrated in the same language, regardless of children’s abilities and learning experiences and expect the exact same outcomes. While one-size-fits-all models aim to reduce the achievement gap, they erroneously assume all children require the exact same curriculum delivered without regard to the uniqueness of children’s comprehension and level of understanding. To reiterate, it is in the relationships of teachers,

families, and children, and what teachers know about and learn from their experiences delving into the culture and experiences the children already have, that makes the difference in what they teach to close the learning gaps.

Head Start Program Model Overview

The Office of Head Start (OHS) as a program model serves to promote the health and well-being of children from birth to age 5 years old who are impacted by the influences of poverty, from economically disadvantaged cultural groups, and who lack sufficient resources in opportunities to gain early education. The two programs OHS has established are Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS). HS serves children ages 2.5 – 5 years old, and EHS facilitates the care of children from infants to toddlers, as well as women who are pregnant. EHS grants were first authorized for distribution in 1995 to serve the needs of communities for 68 agencies. Just three years later, EHS expanded its programs to full-day and all-year support services collaborating and developing partnerships with community stakeholders to build alliances. Today EHS and HS programs often partner with already established early childhood programs and preschools to engage children in as many high-quality and diverse educational models and family support services as possible to enrich their learning experiences and environment (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

OHS also plays a significant role in family advocacy, emotional, psychological, and social health, well-being and safety, nutritional needs, and educational and career opportunities that support parents and caregivers who are raising very young children. OHS was developed in response to meet the growing needs of children from communities that needed strategies to reduce and eliminate the effects of poverty. Through culturally responsive curricula, OHS administers curricula in alignment with local and state teacher licensure and accreditation standards. HS teachers must follow and meet rigid guidelines in their own education and degree achievements.

They must continue training to address the shifts in policy guidelines that sculpt the framework of the program.

Funding resources from Office of Head Start. OHS is housed in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Agencies who partner with OHS to facilitate the care and education of young children receive grant-funded resources administered by the federal government. These grants are awarded to learning institutions, community centers, and local community schools that directly impact the lives the children and families. OHS states that they have served well over 32 million children since opening its doors in 1965 with an initial 8-week pilot project provided as a model for demonstration. Volunteerism and donations form an important portion of the funding stream outside of the federal funding OHS receives to support its programs (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Family support services. The first associate director of the Head Start initiative was Julie Sugarman (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Access to affordable healthcare for poor and low-income families was a struggle during the 60s in America. The Head Start program model was responsible for connecting health care for infants, children, and families, and for those who would not have otherwise had access. This healthcare model was the impetus for the start of Medicaid in America (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Head Start programs also served healthier breakfasts, lunches, and snacks to meet the nutritional needs, health, and well-being of children and their development. On a grander scale, the Head Start meal program influenced the national agenda for implementing federally-funded school lunch programs in America (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Family resources support staff (FRS) are hired to intervene in collaborative and supportive ways by guiding the services families often need. The FRS promotes community services HS is aligned with to enhance long-term and lifelong successful outcomes. These are integral to the

High Scope curriculum model and inform the direction the Head Start program model identifies as relevant in planning curriculum standards for their program. The FRS is very present and visible to families and children attending their educational programs. This is significant considering the family culture of children is an important aspect for HS to begin to engage children in developmentally appropriate curricula that fosters diversity and cultural awareness in respectful ways. Children see themselves reflected naturally in a HS classroom in terms of shared culture with their peers and shared celebratory events facilitated in collaboration with their teachers, families, and the FRS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

The Impact of Head Start in the Early Years

Wilson (1997) stated that economists and sociologists have contributed a great deal of perspective about poverty and inequality since the 70s in American society. When that occurs, social inequities become aligned, leaving the poorest of families and children to struggle in every facet of their living conditions (Wilson, 1997). Wilson (1997) noted that the loss of employment or the inability to find work for families living in inner-cities influenced the escalation of instability for parents, creating family disequilibrium, crime, and welfare dependence. As affluent neighborhoods continue to thrive, those neighborhoods in ancillary conditions fall out of reach, reflecting negatively on the overall sense of community experienced by those families and children living in poverty.

The social environment is an indicator for the complexity of learning experiences that form the intellectual foundations of youth living in underserved neighborhoods (Wilson (1997). Social problems are inherent in the divides of wealth, poverty, and race, and yet, Wilson (1997) noted that the controversial book *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) surmises that genetics are a determining factor of intellectual abilities found in low-income populations. Herrnstein and Murray (1994) based their premise on the beneficial educational gains of children

in Head Start programs at the entrance of kindergarten. Then when later measured through standardized tests and assessments in primary grades the gains of these children were lost, considered as a “fade-out” (p. xv) from those positive advances in cognitive and social development. Wilson (1997) suggested that if these Head Start children who demonstrated early academic gains in kindergarten were provided continued interventions through high school, there may have been more substantial long-term positive outcomes.

Neuman and Dickinson (2011) noted that even given the current intervention programs, Hispanic and African-American students through high school continued to lag in academic achievement gains compared to their White peer group.

Lim et al. (2007) interviewed parents ($N=1,605$) in Ohio to determine which parents would choose Head Start partnership programs. They noted that the types of services and job-related training parents received was part of the link between Head Start’s commitment to early childhood education and employability opportunities. The study also suggested that parents were able to contribute more to the community when they were employed. In addition, parents whose children did not necessarily qualify for Head Start, but were enrolled in Head Start partnership programs, became more connected to job opportunities available in the community due to an awareness of the services Head Start promoted.

Hayes, Jones, Silverstein, Auerbach, and Levant (2010) interviewed low-income fathers who participated in an EHS fathers’ program in the Northeast. They found that fathers who had lived in extreme poverty during their formative years were less likely to engage in personal development or foster nurturing relationships with their child when they became fathers. Those who reported not having positive relationships with their fathers at a younger age were able to find value from the Early Head Start programs in the study. The fathers stated that race and

difficult relationships with their child's mother yielded its own unique challenges as they described periods in their lives where they felt "invisible" (p. 249) in society. Participants stated they believed a lack of sufficient economic opportunities, escalating incarceration rates, systemic discrimination, and job insecurities contributed to their life struggles and ability to form meaningful relationships with their children. Therefore, the ways that the Head Start Program helped them become and remain a part of their child's early education, and understand the value of education and family, became meaningful to these men.

Stevenson, Davis, and Saburah (2001) published an earlier study noting similar results that directly coincided with the Hayes et al. (2010) study. Hayes et al. (2010) study results supported the importance of implementing program models in early childhood and family intervention programs. Programs that guide positive paternal relationships and self-sufficiency for the fathers, served to merge workable solutions for building stronger parent-child relationships.

The Hayes et al. (2010) study exemplified a strong commitment to establish emotional support services and participatory frameworks for fathers to become active participants in their child's early learning and development. Also, through initiatives with the father involvement program, minority fathers gained new options for working towards becoming better educated and trained for the workforce in their communities. Providing the essential tools necessary to establish nurturing father-and-child relationships, career training, and emotional support services promotes the long-term needs for independent living that fathers can model for their children. The results of the study captured the essence of the responsibility of instituting programs to guide the whole family, including the transformation of the lives of minority fathers, to reduce the influences of poverty for minority fathers in transition.

Children's Defense Fund (2016) asserts that if all of America's early learners had access to high-quality early childhood education, the *cradle to prison pipeline* (Children's Defense Fund, 2016) could be dismantled. The *cradle to prison pipeline* term is commonly interpreted to mean that from the time a child born into a family living in poverty is brought into the world, their chances of entering the criminal justice system is increased based on the variables that contribute to defining poverty in America (Children's Defense Fund, 2016). Breaking the cycle of poverty can be realized through education and opportunity.

The Head Start program continues to serve more children across the American landscape than any other single education care provider (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). The program is uniquely positioned to provide comprehensive whole-child and family services in the forms of health screenings, dental assessment and referral, mental health services, housing supports, and resources, transportation services, job training, and educational resources for eligible children and families (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). In addition, childcare partnerships and contracts between Head Start and outside educational entities are increasing as the need to diversify the experiences and educational opportunities for early learners demands greater quality for social and cognitive competencies (Ontai et al., 2002).

Early Childhood Learning Environments

The environment a child resides in and learns in is the impetus from which all experiences begin. Evanshen and Faulk (2019) stated clearly that the philosophical premises for establishing successful contemporary learning environments are found in the early theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Dewey. They recommend that teachers of today bring their own perspectives, experiences, and creativity to their contemporary learning environments. The environments teachers prepare for children to experience learning are vital to the types of learning in which children will be engaged. Teacher beliefs, practices, and how they prepare the classroom

environment influences children's understanding about learning. It is imperative for teachers to adapt to each new classroom of children and shape the learning environment accordingly.

In order to accomplish that, teachers must be prepared to connect new ideas to foster positive outcomes. Teachers need to support the families they serve, and learn as much about the children in their classrooms as possible by readjusting materials, curricula, the properties of the physical environment, and the relationships they establish with the children. Taking the time to fully get to know the students extends in three general layers: the family, the curricula, and the strategies for meaningful learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Learning the needs of the child and guiding the family in efforts to support the child in the learning extends from home, to school, and into the community. When teachers delve deeper and establish important relationships with the family, the child's culture and experiences can be better represented within the classroom, reflected by the activities and types of engagement in the classroom environment (Dewey, 1938; Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007).

Teachers modify and adapt curricula based on knowledge of the school's learning requirements and their children's interests, in addition to knowledge gained by developing relationships with the children, their families, and the community. This relevant content lends to effective, purposeful learning (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007). Photographs, artifacts, and documentation of work can represent examples of children's contributions within the classroom environment for all to share and experience (Evanshen & Faulk, 2019). Assessments and school-required mandates of children's development guide the ways that teachers cyclically prepare the environment in response to the children.

The physical environment can also be prepared as a tool for strategizing learning. Montessori (1912, 1964) understood that children's experiences with hands-on activities form

important imprints in the brain in which learning is best supported. Montessori (1912, 1964) believed the key for teaching the mind to think began by using the hands. Piaget (1963) also shared this perspective with Montessori (1912, 1964), that children learn through their sensing experiences. As children learn to manipulate their environment through creating, play, and exploration, they become agents in their own learning (Montessori, 1912, 1964; Piaget, 1963). Through play children construct knowledge and understanding of the way the world works (Piaget, 1963). An environment that supports play is one that promotes investigation, inquiry, and processes that encourage problem-solving to challenge children's thinking.

Children are social beings who construct their knowledge cognitively in associations with their peers and adults in their environments. These social relationships and interdependent engagement are conducive to higher-level learning potentials (Vygotsky, 1978). The environment should reflect children's ideas (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007). Dewey (1938) believed knowledge emerges and develops through and beyond lived experiences, which led him to recommend project work to develop and ground children's ideas in real-world experiences. Thus, teachers should organize concrete experiential learning and representation opportunities within the classroom. Teachers can then frame the classroom to scaffold towards higher-level thinking by observing children's play and planning environmental adjustments around their naturally occurring interactions within the classroom (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007; New, 1990).

The physical environment should be in a state of constant change to meet the needs of the children as they evolve. Topics, materials, inquiry questions, conversation, approaches to representations will shift continuously in response to what teachers observe children doing (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007; New, 1990). The environment should be well-maintained with appropriate space to move freely with work centers where learning and inquiry purposes are

clearly identifiable. It must be safe and welcoming with tones found in nature, relying on as much natural lighting as possible, non-poisonous plants, and soft seating throughout (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007; New, 1990). The environment should foster healthy eating habits and a sense of community. The environment should represent the culture of the students, families, and community it serves (Evanshen & Faulk, 2019).

Montessori (1964, 1967) believed that children require space, cleanliness, purposeful activities, and beautiful environments so children can *build themselves*. Her method consisted of materials and activities to provoke a child's interest to foster further inquiry with an intended outcome resulting in greater focus and concentration necessary for skill development and understanding. For children to concentrate, their environment must stimulate internal order to create external order. Thus, a child's classroom needs to be ordered, organized, and aesthetically and visually attractive to encourage them to use all senses to learn about their world. It is through activities that entice the senses that children learn, understand, and evolve their inquisitiveness in collaboration with their own inner-drive and respectful peer relationships (Montessori, 1964, 1967).

Another significant contribution Montessori (1912, 1964) made was her creation of scaled-down furniture and objects found in the child's everyday living environment which fit their small bodies and hands, and are comfortable for effective use. Recognizing that children need experiences to explore their environment with ease and without the constraints of trying to fit into adult-sized designs, her method revolutionized the function of furniture design, materials, and ideas historically. These ideas continue to influence how classroom environments are arranged and considered.

Reggio Emilia environments have also pushed the traditional education movement beyond the linear confines of curricula, integrating the power of individual and collaborative learning. This model reflects the compelling debate about the benefits of designing creative, attractive, functional learning spaces that nurture insightful methods to assess what children are actually thinking, wondering about, and learning. Reggio-inspired educators encourage the use of multiple mediums for children to expand their understanding of their world for example: paint, clay, drawings or illustrated work, and movement for children to communicate their ideas and interests (Edwards et al., 1998).

A leap of progressive insight evolved from the schools of Reggio Emilia, demonstrated by the way children use art and drawings to facilitate communication of their learning and what they understood. These representations became the foundation of a documentation approach that grew to capture children engaged in experiences, and provided teachers with data on children's developing understanding; a form of assessment that assists the teachers in preparing the environment to support and extend their learning (Edwards et al., 1998).

Legacy and current teaching models are exploring the value and role color and recycled and natural materials represent in the classroom. When artifacts from natural, outdoor settings (e.g., branches, stones, leaves, and mud) are introduced inside the classroom as tools to explore further in provocations, children can become connected and engaged in deepening their understanding of what else is in their environment through hands-on activities, researching, and learning (Cadwell, 1997; New, 2003).

The Reggio Emilia Approach

Haigh (2007) described the educational transitions of a Head Start (HS) program in a low-socioeconomic area school called Chicago Commons. She bridged principles of Reggio Emilia (RE) philosophy and expanded them to incorporate Paulo Freire's perspective on the value of

teachers and students as co-learners. Haigh's (2007) interpretation of principles of RE that were in conjunction with this perspective on co-learning are presented in the following list:

1. The child as competent, social, and eager to learn
2. The environment as another teacher: fosters interests, camaraderie with peers, and individual culture
3. The child as an able communicator
4. The process of documentation for invoking processes of learning
5. Guiding the processes of observation
6. Parents on the continuum of teacher for their child
7. Child as a collaborator
8. Value of professional development

The study was integral to the foundation of a transformation at the Chicago Commons Head Start Program. The action research design that Haigh chose became the model to support under-resourced children with opportunities to engage in collaborative learning with their teachers and peers. The impetus was to increase the learning potentials of children and expand the framework of the Head Start program model to include a co-learner component (Haigh, 2007).

Teachers and children were engaged in reflection and observation. Two preschool classrooms set the stage for the study. One classroom was a full-day program and the other was half-day. There were 17 children each ranging in ages from 3-5 years old. In one classroom the demographic make-up was 95% African American, and the second participant group was 70% Hispanic (Haigh, 2007).

The conclusion of the study facilitated new understandings for how children's interests are nurtured, provoked, and assessed. Planning, reflecting, and interpreting became the processes of

classroom learning and fostered better listening skills with both participant groups during the stages of curriculum development in a mutually respectful co-sharing environment. These stages included planning, interpretation, reflection, reciprocal learning, and documentation of children's thinking. Developing skills with these strategies and behaviors led teachers to encourage children to use observation and listening skills (Haigh, 2007).

McClow and Gillespie (1998) described in their focus group research study how Head Start parents in Iowa, from across several counties, first became introduced to the RE philosophy and their initial impressions of the program. After administrators provided parent education about the RE approach and history, parents were able to understand the expanding, deeper connections with schools and the community, and the framework, which guided the many principles of RE. Head Start parents had already been a part of experiences and opportunities to become more involved with their children's education as a component of the Head Start program model in which they were currently included. The transition to RE approaches became an easier model to support because Head Start parents had already experienced a shared progressive model in their child's classroom environment. Socioeconomic status aside, the standards for progressive education in the Head Start program model is an ever-evolving aspect for fostering and promoting the best educational opportunities for children; especially, if there are other opportunities to validate higher-quality experiences for children living in poverty or in low-socioeconomic (LSES) communities by aligning RE principles.

Howes et al. (2011) noted the predictors of positive behaviors in preschool-aged children are influenced by the close relationships they are able to secure with their teachers and peers. Their findings also found teachers who were from different cultural backgrounds supported children in their developmental stages of learning and were just as engaging by contributing to the

emotional stability of children from cultural experiences alternative to their own. Howes et al. (2011) indicated the teachers met standards and criteria evidenced by their professionalism. RE principles reflect the value of teacher-child relationships. Parents are considered to not only model as their child's nurturer, but most importantly their child's primary teacher or guide. The relationship between teachers and children is another model of interdependent co-learning that promotes the well-being and development of the child in their preparation for the academic environment. Peers are also integral to the classroom environment as they provide the scaffolding children often need to navigate new concepts, make connections with new friends in social interactions, and explore the multitude of provocations in their learning environment. Research indicates that the most influential learning children experience is when they form positive relationships with their families and at school with their teachers (Howes et al., 2011; Neuman & Dickinson, 2011). The principles of REA historically support, and continue to support, the foundations of positive family, teaching, and community relationships to foster children's learning.

Reggio Principles

Edwards et al. (1998) and Malaguzzi (1993) noted principles of Reggio Emilia that were later supported through Haigh's (2007) study and the writings of Howes et al. (2011). Several REA books, research articles, and practical teaching experiences have been published as a resource for those implementing REA-inspired schools. These principles have been identified as critical to guiding REA perspective (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008). From the researcher's understanding of the aforementioned literature on the REA, the principles as defined for this study are: (1) Child as a Protagonist; (2) Child as Collaborator; (3) Child as Communicator; (4) Environment as the Third Teacher; (5) Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide; (6) Teacher as Researcher; (7) Documentation as

Communication; (8) The Parent as a Partner; and (9) The Community as a shared Partner in Child Education. It is important to offer a description of these principles for clarity for the purposes of this dissertation:

The child as protagonist. A child is at the helm in the classroom. The child as a competent, social, and eager-to-learn person has every right to access high-quality education. All focus must be centered on growing the potentials in every child by fostering the interests of the child through careful observations and planning for child engagement. Socially, the child is able to navigate and reinterpret what is meaningful and use it as a base to construct knowledge. A child also is capable to connect what is learned from all experiences and tie it into new ideas and concepts supported by the relationships with peers, teachers, family, and the community where they live. The child is able to problem solve situations through manipulating challenges and disequilibrium from experiences. If children are given the opportunity to manipulate and renegotiate through their obstacles, then they learn how to find solutions and bridge prior knowledge to new learning concepts (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008).

The child as collaborator. The child is not autonomous in their learning and in the ways they construct their understanding and knowledge. The child does not learn through isolation, but in shared co-learning environments, peer relations, and teacher/adult-facilitated engagement. The child learns from their peers in social settings, small and large groups, and independently as they resolve and interpret new information. If the child is challenged to understand or grasp a concept, a teacher or adult may scaffold their learning opportunities (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008).

The child as communicator. A child has a rich sense of what they understand and know and will communicate it through a variety of mediums, sources, and tools to convey their ideas and expressions. Children require opportunities to practice their communication skills through provocations shared by adults/teachers that guide important literacy. Children's interests are then activated to cement deeper understanding of what they have learned (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008).

Environment as the third teacher. The environment as another teacher prepared to foster a child's interests, camaraderie with peers, and individual culture. Provocations are what Reggio-inspired and constructivist educators develop in the classroom environment that entice children's reasoning, questioning, and inquiry processes to encourage children to expand their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Provocations can take the form of simple questions or group conversations presented to a child to gauge what they know, or materials set-up in the classroom to further support children's interests and encourage deeper meaning through the investigation process (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993).

Teacher as a partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide. Teachers are leaders. Dannemiller, Jones, and Stiner (2002) interviewed Margaret Wheatley about her ideas on servant leadership, and she eloquently described how the world needs more servant leaders who guide people in their "processes that reveal people's competence to themselves" (p. 66). Teachers inspired by REA principles serve to foster the contributions of children, not by giving up adult authority, not by rigid, direct teaching, but by the invested relationships they have with children to encourage the mastery of children's competence so they can reach their fullest potential (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993).

Teacher as researcher. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, it is essential to the learning opportunities and experiences for children, to develop their higher-level critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In that vein, the role of the teacher and what is introduced to the learning environment stems from the ability for teachers to take an active role in digging deeper into the interests of children by becoming a *teacher researcher* (Edwards et al., 1998; Malaguzzi, 1993; New, 2003, 2007).

The value of a teacher researcher is to collaborate with children and shape new areas of interest, stimulate the learning environment in ways that foster a child's desire to know more, ask further questions, and set-up provocations to encourage focus, concentration, and make meaning from what they learn. As such, Edwards et al. (1993) noted, "We wanted to recognize the right of each child to be a protagonist and the need to sustain each child's spontaneous curiosity at a high level" (p. 52). Given the diverse abilities of children in any given setting, teacher exploration of subject matter is crucial to continuing the engagement of children and being responsive to their needs. Since REA has historically posited "Children from all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds attend [preschool]..." (p. 5), it is understood in the approach that meeting the abilities of all children are duly served academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and for general overall well-being. When teachers are researchers, children adapt to ever-changing ideas as they cooperatively discover new paths for consideration. Research is important in relation to uninvited change that children experience in open-ended inquiry classrooms. This brings disequilibrium, which encourages different perspectives for children and teachers. Edwards et al. (1993) stated that teachers in REA are devoted to their craft and the many inquiry directions that emerge within their community of learners, which is the essence of teachers in the role of researchers.

Documentation as communication. The process of documentation is used for invoking the processes of learning communicated through various mediums, strategies, and tools. Documentation is a participatory practice of the interdependent sharing of ideas between teachers and children. It is with careful consideration that REA teachers respect the processes of observation while children are engaged with peers, adults, and their activities. REA teachers listen closely to children as they speak. REA teachers are keen in their observations as children are connecting with one another and watch for the moments that concentration and focus occur. This process leads to an anticipated period for teachers to then reflect and find new ways to add to the curriculum based on what they hear and observe children communicating about to one another (Edwards et al., 1998).

Broderick and Hong (2011) developed The Cycle of Inquiry System as a tool to guide teachers to interpret and plan activities from what they see children doing in their daily activities and from the engagement with their environment and peers. Children reveal their thinking spontaneously. Teachers document the moments when children begin to gain confidence, problem-solving, predicting outcomes, and pondering what may come next as a result of learning. The REA teacher encourages children's thoughts when designing classroom activities for children to experience as active research. An analogy of the complexity of teacher leadership is a role often demonstrated by a progressive prospective. A statement by Wheatley (2006) supports this, "We need to be able to see what we are doing as we are doing it; this is where the true learning is. To develop this "observer self" requires practice, curiosity, and patience" (p. 149). Thus, documentation is a professional development tool, guiding teachers in their practices as well as a tool used for curricular planning that allows for co-sharing of knowledge among children and teachers, setting children onto a journey toward independent learning.

Documenting is considered an active, reflective process for children as well. They can revisit what they have worked on and be fully engaged in the processes of their activities. The many ways of communicating in Reggio classrooms is considered to be documentation that can be revisited, interpreted, and reinterpreted. Children draw, sculpt, and write their own stories about what they have learned and understand. Documentation can be a reminder of the stages in the process of learning and affords children an opportunity to reconsider what they have created and contemplate possible changes for another period in time (Broderick & Hong, 2011).

In agreement with Reggio values, Wheatley (2006) said, “the lens of values, traditions, history, dreams, experience, competencies, culture” (p. 86) can be found in how we represent ourselves through our lived experiences. Thus, documentation helps manifest these concepts into meaningful learning opportunities for children and as an expression of their identity, helping to shape the continuum of who the child becomes.

The parent as a partner. Parents are their child’s first teachers. Parents prepare their children for the world, and in doing so, have a role in introducing children to the joys of learning, encouraging problem-solving, and socializing respectfully with their peers. The relationship a parent establishes with their child’s teacher directly influences the decisions children make about how they negotiate their learning environment. Parents must be able to *read* their children for clues as to what they are learning and to determine diverse methods to continue the learning experiences from the classroom to the community. Head Start defines the learning outside of school as the “parent-child connectors” (L. Ortiz, personal communications, June 11, 2018). RE parents are uniquely positioned to establish their child’s learning experiences from home to school and into the community, so they can view themselves as collaborators of shared lifelong experiences. Edwards et al. (1993) stated that, “The participation of the families is just as

essential as is the participation of children and educators” (p. 102). Parents partnering with the schools and teachers on behalf of children enhances stronger relationships with the team of people shaping children’s views about the world and how they see themselves in it. Parents are the glue that binds the abilities they know their child has, and who they see their child becoming in their future. Parents as Partners comprise the continuum of teacher-child engagement. This research study seeks to learn what teachers working in Head Start programs perceive they are including in their daily curricula and learning environments that may be closely aligned with REA, in addition to the perceptions of Head Start directors and team leaders as to the inclusion of REA principles demonstrated in their schools. Finally, this study intends to learn more about the education influences of Head Start teachers that encourage positive relationships between parent-child-teacher and the community in efforts to support ongoing learning in the classroom.

The community as a shared partner in child education. Wheatley (2002) offered a poignant perspective on the value of the community in serving as a family education partner noting, “There is no power equal to a community discovering what it cares about” (p. 13). Spaggiari (1998) noted the importance of developing a connection between schools and the community by developing an exchange of service and support in active relationships. As teachers and schools form stronger alliances and relationships in conjunction with guidance from families, the formation will exemplify the richness in multicultural experiences, foster social connectedness, nurture emotional support, and fertilize the soil for all roots in education to flourish. When children and families seek no further than their communities to find resources, it can mark the broader scope for camaraderie, where individual community members come together and become the very tools that allow the community to unify and work toward the common goal of freedom and opportunity. We are the tools. Vygotsky (1978) surmised that our

mental tools are all we need to develop our intellect, yet as our society struggles to embark on economical ways to educate all of America's children, the opportunities we need are already in place, we just need to tap into them. This study also seeks to learn more about what our current Head Start programs implement to support families in their education so they can better understand what to do to guide the education of their children.

Emergent Curriculum

In the Reggio Emilia Approach, the best of constructivist theory is evidenced by following the child's ideas as a means for participatory practice. It is also a means for framing the interests of children in the context of learning environments rich with resources and prepared from provocations to evolve their interests. Jones and Nimmo (1998) first termed *emergent curriculum* in 1970, which simply describes the processes of planning that teachers use to determine the activities in which children engage. It is based first from children's spontaneous engagements in what they do best in their learning environments during play and divulging their interests. The teacher's role is to become a vessel for support and a resource for children to share their stories, reenact what they learn, and share their extended interpretations about what they understand (Jones & Nimmo, 1998).

Nimmo described it so eloquently:

Emergent curriculum is about finding the questions and the problems that have meaning in children's lives, and by that, I mean a child as an individual not in a vacuum. I mean a child that is part of a family, part of a neighborhood, part of the culture, part of the history, so the teacher's job in emergent curriculum is to really understand that child in all their context not just as a child without a family or a culture...(J. Nimmo, personal communication, September 19, 2014)

Emergent curriculum can be an important developmental tool for teachers and children to document the stages of learning to revisit and reflect shared knowledge on a continuum. This cyclical process of exploring the curriculum provides an avenue for inquiry and the diverse forms of provocations that result happen from no set rules or standards. They are intended to open a gateway to interdependent learning (Jones & Nimmo, 1998).

This concept is a compelling proposal for guiding the direction of learning opportunities that teachers prepare in their classrooms for early learners. Teachers develop their curriculum from listening to the conversations children engage in with their peers and adults. Teachers actively encourage children to voice their expressions, guide them to question, heed note of their direct concerns, and describe the challenges they may have while exploring their world (Wien, 2008). When teachers connect their ideas into researching subject matter in alignment with the inquiry of children, it fosters teachers' inquisitiveness in the ways children think and process what they learn. It is also important for children to gain confidence in their connections to their learning based on their own ideas and interests. Children need opportunities to learn everything they can about subjects that interest them. As teachers become researchers, they develop new methods to engage children in deeper-level thought processes to explore concepts exponentially and with purpose. Emergent curriculum is an important aspect of the Reggio Emilia Approach, serving as a tool to frame important ways children communicate their ideas. It is through the processes of diverse forms of communication that the authentic needs of children can be aligned with their cognitive development (Jones & Nimmo, 1998; Wein, 2008).

Within the framework of emergent curriculum, teachers plan and prepare activities for their students that become implemented in the curricula as opportunities in co-learning among peers and adults. It is not important whether children express their ideas from experiences

internally or externally, but what is significant is promoting the value for encouraging children to become open to representing their visions and use them in creative ways for learning. Of note, emergent curriculum is consistently open to change, and is dependent on the engagement and participatory involvement of children (Jones & Nimmo, 1998). Teachers promote the concepts of vision and creativity for children to develop on their own and what comes naturally and authentically from their own understanding.

Teacher Perceptions and Teacher-Child Relationships

Teacher perceptions matter; especially in understanding the cultural norms of the children they are serving and the overarching aspects of their strategies for planning, facilitating learning, interacting with families, and maintaining oversight in relation to administration. Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) noted that in children's early education years in school, greater positivity in teacher-child relationships contributes to higher levels of child academic success. The more behavioral problems and inability to self-regulate children exhibited in their behavior proficiencies, the lower quality of teacher-child bonding was demonstrated (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Also, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) found that the closeness teachers exhibit with the children occurs most often during the formative years in a child's development and related to teachers needing to be closer to facilitate children's language and social development.

Research and Head Start as a program model are synonymous in the world of early childhood education. Since the inception of Head Start, policies and program practices have ushered in means to conduct required assessments of the program by way of research, and to guide necessary funding streams for tackling the impacts of poverty in the lives of children and their families (Office of Head Start, 2018).

Lambert et al. (2001) conducted a study to understand how teachers and staff perceptions from three Head Start schools weighed-in for the research partnership they were establishing with

the intent to guide teaching support and learn in-depth information about many variables including the Head Start program model and job satisfaction. Lambert et al. (2001) noted the teachers' attitudes were found to be more positive as a direct relation to the research team establishing "personal endorsement and facilitation" (p. 32) of the teachers and staff by developing a researcher-teacher-staff relationship built on trust and support. When teachers became actively involved in the interpretation and planning of the research as partners with the researchers, their attitudes toward the partnerships changed, and they became more open to work together to guide stronger educational outcomes, philosophies, and practical applications of the program model for the children and families they serve. Researchers learned more about what the teachers' and staff needs were and coupled that information with insights for conducting their study. Overall, the collaborative partnership became an important aspect of teacher attitudes in how they perceived the collaborative research effort through establishing trusting relationships between teachers, staff, and the leadership administration on-site. The research was foundational in forming consistency in the climate of teachers, staff, management, and the school community as an active process of co-learning and co-partnering networks.

Researchers Gichuru et al. (2015) studied how seven Head Start teachers immersed children's culture in their classroom activities and learning environment by including new curriculum, personal reflection about their ideas on diversity, communications with parents, and the outdoor physical environment. Gichuru et al. (2015) found that teacher perceptions in cultural sensitivity became stronger and more connected to the children they served when they investigated their own experiences in many ways, especially through descriptions of their perceptions during the interview process, family engagement, home visits, and parent conferences.

Teachers offered that communicating with families played an important role in how they maintained inclusivity between themselves and parents. Teachers included children's interests as an integrated part of the daily curriculum in conjunction with addressing their developmental needs. Teachers hung photographs of the children's families to impart a familiar and close connection to families and to fully represent children. Challenges for teachers were also in attempting to communicate with families who did not speak English as their primary language, opening a difficult line for interpretation and exacerbating interdependent relationships. Teachers perceived that training in culturally relevant issues was limited and impeded their ability to promote more culturally-appropriate practices and immerse relevancy into the curriculum. Diversity and cultural training guides teachers to explicitly introduce new learning material and connect it with children's understandings about cultural competencies. Administrative responsibility was noted as a guide to provide teacher training and professional development so teachers can effectively continue to work with the culturally sensitive and diverse experiences of children, and the diversity reflected in their families.

Researchers Allen and Penuel (2015) found teachers' judgments on professional development are connected to their past experiences about what they already know in relation to their colleagues and associates in their schools. It is integral to teacher mandates that professional development is current and aligned with academic standards set forth by their administration in order to meet governing laws for their region. Allen and Penuel (2015) noted that when teachers have an opportunity to plan and resolve the uncertainty of a subject matter, they are more willing to work within the frameworks of the current standards, seek additional support from their peers, and take responsibility for the outcome. Teachers will try and make sense and analyze the new information within the parameters of their resources and goals, and attempt to modify their

teaching instruction to guide the needs of their students. While professional development informs teacher education, in this study, the ambiguity and lack of resources negatively impacted teacher perceptions (Allen & Penuel, 2015). Teachers believed that engaging students in activities was important for their students in more tangible ways. Teachers demonstrated positive need for professional development when they can apply practices and make assessments with their students to meet goals and objectives that are on the continuum of positive student outcomes.

Gichuru et al. (2015) found that teachers' perceptions and dispositions play an active role in reducing barriers in relation to language deficits with families. Gichuru et al. (2015) noted in their study that teacher participants were culturally and racially diverse. The teachers had varied levels of experiences in teaching, professional development experiences, and education levels. All participants were provided with the same tools to prepare culturally relevant learning in their classrooms that connect themselves and learners in meaningful engagements with families. The teachers perceived they were engaging families in two-way conversations and implementing other forms of communication to develop better relationships with families. The teachers included in the use of translators, transcribing newsletters and other forms of email communication, yet found they fell short of their goal to engage with families. In fact, when teachers used translators in the primary language spoken at home, "most of the communication tended to be one-way, from the teacher to the family" (p, 49). Therefore, the argument can be made for the importance of increasing teacher professional development/training through cultural awareness, and by learning more about the interests of children through their culture and developing strategies that address connections in the parent-child-teacher everyday interactions.

Teachers must intentionally develop stronger relationships and bonds and literacy efforts with families so they accurately transfer knowledge from teacher to parents to children. This

example also demonstrates the idea that teachers perceive they are taking the necessary steps to move communication through interpretation to mitigate communication barriers, yet gaps in shared learning and understanding remain challenging for parents, children, and teachers who do not share the same culture. Not every early learning environment can afford the cost of hiring interpreters, therefore, teachers must be willing to formulate other intentional methods to mitigate their perceptions that contribute to weak parent-teacher understanding and reinforce their interdependent family-child relationships.

It is imperative that we consider the dynamic intellect of children by creatively engaging early learners and connecting children's culture, home, school, community environments, and interdependent experiences with adults and their peers to support classroom learning. The Reggio Emilia Approach is a set of early childhood educational practices that links to a deeper, more connected culture of education through its reflection on the experiences of children, families, and communities. Promoting education is human. The realignment of our education is an act of moral leadership. Sergiovanni (1992) described moral leadership as our responsibility that is demonstrated through acts of our humanity and our intellect, which stimulates us into actions. The head is influenced by the heart, and then *moves* the hand into action, therefore, "the head, the heart, and the hand" (p. 6) in the most authentic sense, are intertwined in our moral acts. It is time to get to the action of promoting approaches such as the Reggio Emilia Approach to foster more meaningful learning experiences for children. What we think, feel, and do will matter for generations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Paulo Freire (1993) changed the literacy movement in South America by reinforcing the message of learning to becoming *readers* of the people. Liberating oppressed people, noted Freire, began with finding the resolve to understand their needs; hence, learning what to change to transform their struggles to become literate became essential to his overall view of guiding learners. This study attempts to break the “culture of silence” (p. 14) by promoting the need to mitigate the relationship of the quality of education with the economic security of employment and commit to make accessible educational opportunities for the poorest members of American society and their children. This study attempts to *read* an education gap in America and promote a means to transform it by learning more about the Head Start program model and figuring out whether aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach are visible within the model. The Reggio Emilia approach has been internationally acclaimed as promoting best teaching practices (Edwards et al., 1998; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993; Malaguzzi, 1993; New, 1990, 2003, 2007; Newsweek Staff, 1991). Thus, the goal is to learn where related teacher professional development inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach can be introduced within the framework of a Head Start program, to inform stronger learning opportunities for teachers of children who are considered at risk. Head Start’s mission centers on supporting the educational opportunities of young children and providing programs that support family stability for marginalized children and their families.

Restatement of Research Questions

Each research question was designed to capture the gaps in the literature review, and learn more from the participants’ responses to the survey, interview, and observations about the

principles of Reggio Emilia and what is perceived, demonstrated, and possibly found in Head Start program models from the aforementioned area. The research questions are:

Research question 1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

Research question 2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

Research question 3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

Research question 4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

Research Design

This study was originally designed as a mixed-methods study that includes a survey, interviews, and observations. The design was modified to a case study when there were only seven responses to the survey, which was sent electronically to a population of 200 Head Start teachers. The design was intended to draw the researcher closer to the gaps in the literature review and to understand if teacher professional development or training on RE principles might be considered among the Head Start teachers in the region.

The design of this study is a multiple case study which includes three cases: a Head Start center in New Mexico, a Head Start center Massachusetts, and a Head Start center in Tennessee. Cases are defined by clear boundaries (Baxter & Jack, 2008), such as the three Head Start centers in this study were in different locations but all functioning under overarching guidelines of the Office of Head Start. Multiple case studies are designed to explore differences across cases

(Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The use of three data sources chosen for the original mixed-methods study adapted easily to the focus of this multiple case study for triangulation purposes (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Triangulation of data across three forms of data collection focusing on the same overall concepts supports the dependability, transferability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study (Shenton, 2004).

As defined by Creswell (2015), in mixed-methods research studies, the survey and interview questions should be appropriately considered for the type of participants, and the observation criteria determined by the consistency of participant responses regarding specific observable indicators. Babbie (2012) noted that there are two types of questions: (1) closed-ended, which are used in quantitative research to garner trends, relationships between variables, analyze numbers statistically, and predict results, and (2) open-ended, which are closely associated with inquiry processes in qualitative research to understand the personal experiences, ideas, thoughts, and meaning of information participants share. Closed-ended questions with a 5-point Likert scale were developed for the survey, which was originally intended for surveying a large population and was then transferred to this case study to use with the 18 participants for triangulation purposes.

A second form of data for this study included observations in the classrooms of 12 teacher participants, four in each of three Head Start locations (New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee). The third form of data collected was an interview that was implemented by the researcher with the 18 participants, which included one education director, one education leader and four teachers in each of the three Head Start locations.

Databases are recommended for the organization of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008), therefore the researcher used Excel for coding interviews and survey findings (see Appendices C and D), as

well as a table format to catalog the observation findings. Findings from each case are reported in chapter four, along with summary statements that describe comparisons among the three cases.

Participants and Setting

The recruitment process began by sending a letter to the directors of Head Start Programs in New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee. The three programs who participated were the first to respond and agree to participate. IRB guidelines for ETSU were followed to obtain informed consent. There were six participants from each of the three Head Start locations, including the education director, the education leader, and four teachers. The education directors and education leaders met the Office of Head Start criteria for leadership. All teacher participants were certified Head Start teachers who held various levels of education and teaching experience.

Permissions

The ETSU Internal Review Board (IRB) is the initial and final authorizer for the research study approval prior to any processes of data collection. An advertisement introducing the study and inviting participants, as well as permission to request an interview and permission to authorize consent to be interviewed, were distributed to all potential Head Start participants through their education director. The director was asked to sign a statement that teachers at their site would agree to participate or not, and that it would have no effect on their job evaluation or status by the director. Researcher contact information was provided to potential participants to allow them to ask questions about the study in order to make their decision about participation.

Instruments and Data Collection

The literature review previously outlined the premise, history, and goal of the Head Start program, and the early development of Reggio Emilia theory and the current approach. It is necessary to examine the procedures for the data collection for this study in relation to the research questions. The instruments for this study included a researcher-designed survey,

interview, and observation tool based on literature focusing on the Reggio Emilia Approach and its principles, and content validity of experts in the field.

The survey was designed to obtain findings regarding the three research questions, asking what Reggio-inspired principles Head Start education directors, education leaders, and teachers reported as being demonstrated in their centers or classrooms. The interview questions intended to gain more in-depth knowledge of education directors', education leaders', and teachers' perceptions of the demonstration of the REA principles in their centers or classrooms. The observation tool was used in the classrooms of the 12 teacher participants: four in New Mexico, four in Massachusetts, and four in Tennessee, which are referred to as primary areas in this study. The observation tool was also used in the public areas of the school, which are referred to as secondary areas in this study. The observations are intended to provide data on REA principles that are visible in classrooms and the public areas in the three centers participating in this study, and to interpret how closely education directors', education leaders' and teachers' interview statements align with observable practices within the schools.

Survey

Basic survey use has roots in ancient history and is often used for inquiry in the field of social sciences (Babbie, 2012). Surveys were developed to adequately facilitate the measurement of data of a large sample to describe the general attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and opinions of participants (Babbie, 2012; Creswell, 2015; Patten, 2005). Surveys can be descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory in design depending on the type of information the researcher seeks to learn. Surveys are used to collect data that can be considered original to a large population. Soliciting groups of participants on average from a hundred, a thousand, or tens of thousands in a sample, the data can be extended to reflect or generalize to the larger population (Patten, 2005). This study drew from a population sample that was too small to generalize to the population, but

still has value in the relevance of the findings to the field of early childhood and Head Start and for helping the researcher to better understand the findings from the interview and observation data.

The survey for this study was organized around nine principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach as defined by the researcher, based on her review of the literature and her experiential study of the Reggio Emilia Approach over a five-year period of time. In the literature several authors and educators defined Reggio principles that vary in number and definition (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; Wein, 2008). Therefore, this survey is based on the researcher's adaptation that is grounded in a terse review of the literature on the approach and corroborated by Reggio-inspired and early childhood subject matter experts.

The survey is designed with two approaches for responding. The 56 quantitative questions are organized around a 5-point Likert scale. Additionally, the survey collects demographic information of respondents. The researcher developed a teacher demographics section of the survey to learn more about teachers' culture, education level, teaching experience and experience with the Reggio Emilia Approach, and to understand if future professional development in the subject would be of interest (Appendix A). Finally, the researcher designed the interviews to include 15 Likert-scale questions to be circled by the interviewee during the interview. The reasoning for this format is described in the interview section, following the sections describing the survey. The responses to these questions were calculated with the survey for analysis purposes.

Survey procedure. The survey in this study was the first tool used for data collection. It was initially distributed electronically to 200 participants in a Tennessee Head Start program. When only seven responses were returned after a three-week period, the study was modified, and the survey was completed by the 18 participants in what is now a multiple case study. When the researcher visited the Head Start site for each case, one Head Start education director, one Head Start education leader, and four Head Start teachers completed the survey on paper at their location. The researcher found it more successful to obtain survey completion when implementing the survey in person at a participant's work location.

RE principle survey questions. The survey questions are organized around the nine Reggio-inspired principles listed below and described in chapter 2. For each of the nine principles there are three questions using language to elicit beliefs of participants and three questions designed to elicit practices of participants, except for the first principle which includes four of each (Appendix B).

1. The Child as Protagonist
2. The Child as Collaborator
3. The Child as Communicator
4. Environment as the Third Teacher
5. Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide,
6. Teacher as Researcher
7. Documentation as Communication
8. The Parent as a Partner
9. The Community as a Shared Partner in Child Education

Below is an example of the five-item Likert scale used in the survey:

Strongly Disagree – Disagree - I do not fully understand – Agree - Strongly Agree

The questions for “Principle 1: The Child as Protagonist” are provided below to show the format of the questions. This principle contains four belief and four practice questions, each

identified for the reader with B (belief) or P (practice), codes that were not included in the version of the survey that was provided to the participants, which can found in Appendix B.

Principle 1: Child as a Protagonist.

1. [B] Children are self-directed by guiding their own learning in the classroom.
2. [B] Children bring unique learning styles to their classroom experiences.
3. [B] Children bring ideas that are valued in our classroom curriculum.
4. [B] Children construct knowledge through social engagement.
5. [P] Some teachers in our center(s) facilitate the interests of children by promoting their play.
6. [P] Some teachers in our center(s) make time to bond through meaningful relationships with each child in my classroom.
7. [P] Some teachers in our center(s) design learning center(s) around children's thinking.
8. [P] Some teachers in our center(s) encourage children to communicate their needs to adults.

Interview and Interview Field Notes

Interviewing, noted Babbie (2012), is based on listening to the words from the participant and asking appropriate questions to learn more about their experiences and who they are as people. There are spontaneous and standard formats for interviewing (Creswell, 2015).

Spontaneous involves a conversation without a prepared format where the interviewer asks questions in response to the interviewee statements. This study is organized around a standard interview approach that uses a prepared set of questions.

It is vital that the researcher demonstrates respect for the inquiry process when the participant is sharing information, using clarity, such as one question at a time, being mindful, and allowing the participant to have an opportunity to take time to respond (Babbie, 2012). Other factors for consideration in development of an interview are to organize interview questions so

the participant can understand what is being asked with simple, easily understandable vocabulary (Babbie, 2012; Creswell, 2015; Patten, 2005). It is also important to consider what is known about the designated participants: their culture, language, and perspective which should be reinforced by the researcher in terms of maintaining respect. Maintaining ethics and integrity when interviewing is an aspect of the researcher's responsibility. Therefore, honoring truthfulness and developing a professional demeanor with participants facilitates a better, more meaningful working relationship (Creswell, 2015). During the interviewing stage, it is often necessary to use probes to encourage completeness in responses that closely align with the question so participants can share more relevance, deeper understanding of the questions and provide rich, authentic information (Creswell, 2015).

The interview for this study is also organized around the nine principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach as defined by the researcher in chapter 2 and based on her review of the literature of the Reggio Emilia Approach (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007; Hendrick, 1997; Katz & Cesarone, 1994; Malaguzzi, 1998; New, 2007; Spaggiari, 1998; Vakil et al., 1998; Wein, 2008) and corroborated by Reggio-inspired and early childhood subject matter experts through the process of content validity (Creswell, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

The interview is designed with the following objectives in mind: (1) to include open-ended questions to start the interview and engage the participant, (2) to use qualitative, open-ended questions to find the gaps and learn more about what the teachers actually know about REA principles from their own perspective and experiences, (3) the inclusion of quantitative questions to get closer to the understanding of teacher knowledge and experience about REA principles, and (4) to include closing questions that bring the participant back to their own practice and to be able to ask their own questions. The Likert scale questions were included to

avoid participants inadvertently responding to the interview questions to appease the interviewer, or subconsciously telling the interviewer what may be perceived as unintentional agreement with the interview questions.

The interview format for this study is meant to gradually build the interview to a heightened focus from a personal connection regarding participants' teaching styles in the opening questions and another personal connection tying the overall interview to their educational beliefs in the closing of the interview. The final interview question gives the participants the opportunity to ask their own questions (Gizir, 2007).

The table below includes the opening and introductory questions, as well as the first sets of key questions, which focus on "Principle 1: Child as Protagonist" and "Principle 2: Child as Collaborator." Each principle includes an open-ended qualitative question, related Likert scale questions for participants to circle their response, and a probe question. The researcher gave each participant a document that included the Likert scale questions. The researcher read each question and guided the participants as to when to respond to each Likert scale question as it appears in the interview sequence (see Table 1). Participants were asked to circle their Likert scale responses.

Table 1. *Sample Introductory Interview Questions*

<p>Interview Questions. The questions organized around nine Reggio-inspired principles are listed below:</p> <p>Opening.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Could you please share about yourself and describe your teaching philosophy that guides your work within in Head Start? <p>Introductory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. If I were to visit classrooms in your center(s) what would I see in relation to best practices for children's learning and development?3. Can you please share what you know about Reggio-inspired practices? <p>Key Questions.</p> <p>Directions: Researcher will ask the initial question and then ask the interviewee to please circle one answer from each question that best describes your response. The interviewee will have the questions to circle on a separate document. Then after the interviewee circles responses the researcher will ask one further question for a verbal response.</p>
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Principle 1: Child as Protagonist

Question: What is the role of the child in the classroom?

4. I view the child in the classroom as capable, an independent learner, and problem-solver.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

5. The children in our center classroom(s) freely exhibit their interests, culture, and diverse learning styles in activities and engaging with one another.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

6. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 2: Child as Collaborator

Question: How do you encourage children to collaborate?

7. Children are collaborators in the classroom as co-learners with peers and teachers, scaffold with peers and adults, and participate in curricular planning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

8. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Interview procedure. The interview for this study was the second tool used for collecting data. It was administered with six participants at each of the three Head Start locations: New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee. A Head Start director, a Head Start education leader, and four Head Start teachers represent each of the three cases for a total of 18 participants who completed the interview.

The researcher audio recorded the verbal responses for the qualitative questions, while the interviewees circled responses for the quantitative questions. The researcher accommodated the

schools by traveling to their locations and meeting with participants at times suitable with their work schedules. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were reviewed by a research assistant, who checked for accuracy (Creswell, 2017).

Interview field notes procedure. An effective interviewer listens for cues to transition to the next question and becomes prepared for the unexpected, such as knowing when to cease an interview if the participant becomes upset, is reflecting on a question, or needs to take a break (Babbie, 2012; Creswell, 2017). Researchers should write field notes during and immediately following an interview to capture any information about setting and observable indicators or impressions that might have an impact on the interview. The researcher completed field notes (see Appendix C) for this study to ensure the best practices for capturing any details participants share that may support their responses (Creswell, 2017; Patten, 2005).

Observation and Observation Field Notes

Creswell (2015) noted that the process of obtaining data through observation techniques guides the research from first-hand experience, and promotes an opportunity to study participants who otherwise may not feel comfortable conducting interviews or surveys, or challenges in communicating their thoughts and expressions. It is also an opportunity to note the behaviors of participants that could be limited through a response-type data collection or checking-the-box designed survey (Creswell, 2015). Some limitations of collecting observational data could be not having an opportunity to develop a relationship with participants and the location site may not be optimal (Creswell, 2015). The same standards are applied for observations as any other form of data collection, which are to respect participants in their space, conduct data collection ethically, and use responsible measures to protect the confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of the participant (Babbie, 2012; Creswell, 2015).

The tool was used as a method for triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2017). The observation tool was organized around each of the nine identified Reggio Emilia Approach principles. Each principle was identified based on the literature review. The researcher designed a table with a row for each principle and seven columns. In order from left to right the columns represented: 1) number of the principle 2) the principle, 3) suggested evidence, 4) observed evidence, 5) New Mexico, 6) Tennessee, and 7) Massachusetts (Figure 1). Recommendations of what the researcher thought would be observed, based on a review of the literature, were recorded into the suggested evidence column. The tool was designed for the researcher to document artifacts in the table onsite during the time the researcher spent observing classrooms and secondary areas.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
#	REA Principle	Suggested Evidence Those noted are only some suggestions of what might be observed	Observed Evidence Note observed items that are suggested and others that relate to the principle	New Mexico n=6 Y=Yes;N=No 10/30/2019	Tennessee n=6 Y=Yes;N=No 11/19/2019	Massachusetts n=6 Y=Yes;N=No 11/15/2019

Figure 1. Observation tool columns

The researcher did not want to rely on memory or hand-written notes that required transcription at a later date to ensure the observation data was authentic and in-the-moment. Observation data was determined based on how it related to the perceptions, understanding, actions, and intentions of the participants in relation to what responses they provided from the interview and survey.

The structure of the tool (Table 2) was open-ended so that the researcher could list the many items observed as indicators of each principle and included suggestions of criteria to look for that the researcher deemed valuable based on the literature (DeVries et al., 2000; Edwards et al., 1998; Hendricks, 1997; Jones & Nimmo, 1998; New, 1990; Wein, 2008).

Table 2.

Initial Observation Tool

1. The child as protagonist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of transcripts where children initiate conversations
2. The child as a collaborator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images of children working/exploring together
3. The child as communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s expressive work displayed in classroom (not rote work) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arts (drawing, painting, emerging writing) • Images of creative work that cannot be displayed 2-dimensionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photos of block structures and such
4. Environment as a third teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teacher professional development • Various and multiple use of aesthetic materials and qualities in classroom (e.g., plants, clean, well-organized cultural artifacts displayed from children and community) • Multiple ways of implementing the ideas and creative thinking of children and research (e.g., visible documentation of the processes of children’s learning through images, displays of artwork and drawings, graphic organizers). • Visual images and creations that represent the children and families in the classroom environment (e.g., photographs of children and their families, family-decorated cubbies).
5. Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teacher collaborations and engagement with children (e.g., images of activities, images of teachers guiding children in developmental milestones: physical, intellectual and social-emotional child development). • Documentation of teacher-child-family partnerships (e.g., images, illustrations, literacy efforts, materials exhibiting reflective teaching and strategies).
6. Teacher as researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teaching strategies based on research from teacher and children’s ideas (e.g., projects, literacy artifacts).
7. Documentation as communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of the various ways children, teachers and families communicate information interdependently (e.g., documentation panels of children’s learning, documentation of questions and inquiry process children share with peers and school community).
8. The parent as partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of family-school-child-teacher collaborations and engagement. • Documentation of parent-fostered community efforts bridging school partnerships.
9. The community as a shared partner in child education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images and documentation of community-fostered and initiated educational and other partnerships. • Examples of community resources demonstrated through documentation in the school and or classroom.

The observation tool was then implemented in the classrooms of the 12 Head Start teachers as a form of triangulation to see if the participant responses from both the survey and interviews were aligned with observable practices in the classrooms of the six teacher

participants. Additionally, the observation tool was used in the areas of the schools outside of the classroom, including spaces like hallways and doors and shared spaces. In this study the classrooms are referred to as primary areas and the areas outside of the classrooms are identified as secondary areas.

Observation field notes procedure. The researcher wrote field notes during and immediately following an observation to capture any information about additional aspects of the setting or impressions that might have an impact on the observation. Field notes ensure the best practices for capturing any details participants share that may support their responses and accurately reduce bias to the instrumentation of data collection of the observer (Patten, 2005).

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study consists of content validity of the researcher-developed survey, a thematic coding of the observation, and interview data based on nine Reggio-inspired principles related to the literature (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007; Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008), each principle serving as an overarching theme, and an account of the percent of participant responses in agreement for each of the survey questions.

Content Validity

Content validity can be described as using subject matter experts to determine whether a survey defines the overall construct of the content; hence questions in the survey appropriately represent the content and whether it can hold its value in assessment or analysis (Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). It was important to the validity of the research design to utilize subject matter experts (SMEs) in the field as the premise for content validity of the survey tool (Creswell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). The survey was submitted to subject matter experts, individuals in the field of early childhood education with experience in teaching or research related to Reggio-inspired practices.

The researcher isolated each question for the survey, inserting two checklist questions for the SME raters to check to evaluate whether the survey question is not sufficient and clear, or whether the question is sufficient and clear. The rater also asked each SME to provide suggestions for improvement or comments for improving each question. Finally, the rater was asked to state whether the series of questions for each of the 9 REA principles satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle, and to add related suggestions or comments. There are two questions at the end of the content validity checklist for the survey asking the following to which the rater responds with a yes or a no.

- If the RE Principles Survey encompasses a range of questions for each principle that sufficiently captures the concepts within the Reggio Emilia Approach.
- If the REA Principles Survey encompasses a range of questions for possible teacher practices that when practiced represent the nine principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

The survey questions were redeveloped based on feedback from the subject matter experts' evaluation. The forms for content validity for the survey are in Appendix D and the content validity forms for the interview are in Appendix E.

The recommended changes from the four subject matter experts were overall in relation to the same questions. Out of the four subject matter experts one claimed that it is too complex to put the Reggio Emilia Approach principles into a survey, though she provided valuable feedback on several questions. Two of the subject matter experts claimed the survey to be excellent with minor recommended changes, and the fourth subject matter expert didn't comment on the survey overall but recommended changes that were similar to the other subject matter experts. Of the 56 overall questions, 33 had comments or recommendations and 23 had no comments or recommendations. There were 11 questions that were edited for clarity and language, making it

easier for the identified participant group to understand in layman’s terms. There were 14 questions where one or two subject matter experts recommended language changes, yet the researcher chose not to make those edits due to the recommended language was too complex for a survey question or using jargon more easily understood by Reggio-inspired experts as opposed to laypersons. Additionally, there were two recommendations for language edits where the words were interchangeable with the words of the survey, therefore the researcher did not make these recommended edits. These findings are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3.

Content Validity Analysis

Findings	
Analysis	Recommendations
<p>56 overall questions: 33 - Questions had comments or recommendations 23 - Questions had no comments or recommendations</p>	<p>Red = recommendations Red Strikethrough = words that were removed <i>Italics</i> - Final survey edited question in italics Bold – recommended word change</p>
<p>11 – Edited language to be more clear</p>	<p>Reciprocal Collaborative experiences across classrooms creates meaningful community within a school.</p>
<p>14 – Recommended language that related to question focus but with more than one concept included & not suited for one survey question, and some of these were REA jargon that would not be lay language friendly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three of these were for questions where 1st SME language was adopted for clarity 	<p><i>I promote collaboration by allowing children choices during long periods of uninterrupted exploration</i></p> <p>Reggio Emilia educators carefully choose group members –a learning group approach.</p> <p>... collaboration stimulated by teacher input, materials, group choice</p>
<p>3 – Comments without disagreement or clear recommendation</p>	<p><i>I believe that it is important for children to develop meaningful learning relationships with individuals and groups in the greater community as a way of promoting their futures as active citizens.</i></p> <p>They are citizens from birth</p>
<p>2 – Recommended word/s that was interchangeable with the word provided</p>	<p><i>Child generated questions frame the way teachers plan for the inquiry process (curriculum plans).</i></p> <p>are part of what is considered (frame)</p>

Member Checking of Interviews

The qualitative interview data was measured for reliability by a member checking procedure. Participants were given back a copy of their responses after transcription to ensure the researcher captured an authentic response from the participant to ensure the responses exhibited applicability to the study, consistency in responses, and authenticity or triangulation of data, sources/resources, and theories (Creswell, 2015; Patten, 2005; Shenton, 2004). If any participant had changes to their responses to further clarify or provide accurate spelling or other pertinent adjustments, then every opportunity was provided by the principle investigator in this study to make these changes.

Survey Analysis

The participants' responses to the questions related to each of the nine principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach survey designed by the researcher were counted. These data were reported in visual graphics representing the percent of participant responses that are in agreement and disagreement to each item on the 5-point Likert scale for each question.

Interview and Interview Field Note Analysis

The open-ended interview responses were captured using an audio recording and transcribed by the researcher. A research assistant reviewed the transcripts while listening to the audio recording to assure accuracy. A thematic coding approach was used to analyze and organize the qualitative responses (Creswell 2015) around the nine Reggio-inspired principles, which form the initial coding categories. As subcategories emerged and were clustered, a theme was identified. Established themes (see Table 3) evolve the theory from the data to see how data aligns with RE principles and the HS program model.

Table 4.

Thematic Coding Approach

Code: TEECE	- Teaching Experience in Early Childhood Education
Code: OMP	- Open Mindedness to Other Educational Perspectives
CODE: CCF	- Child-Centered Focus Curricula Planning
Code: MCIM	- Mandatory Curricula Implementation or Mandates
Code: IR	- Intentional Relationships: Child-Teacher-Parent, and/or community
Code: PD	- Professional Development for Teacher/Child/Parent Education Observed
Code: REA	- Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) Knowledge, Practices, Noted Need for Professional Development, and/or Visible in Head Start Classrooms from Principle 1-Principle 9.

Creswell (2015) described thematic coding for case studies as allowing the data to emerge in relation to the initial theme, in this case alignment of the nine RE principles through the perceptions of three HS directors, three HS education leaders, and twelve HS teachers in each of three cases in New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee.

The Likert scale responses from the interview process were added to the survey questions and counted for frequency and percent as one quantitative unit.

Inter-rater reliability of qualitative interview coding. Initially, the researcher reviewed the interviews of each participant using line-by-line coding (Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015). A format was developed with a list of responses and color-coded by like-response and categorized. A number was assigned to each like/color-coded response equal to 1 point for every like-coded response. The responses were tallied up, analyzed, and reported in terms of common, consistent information provided in order of largest to least number of responses given for a specific question. The researcher and a research assistant (enlisted for coding) were in 100% agreement following this procedure.

If the researcher and research assistant found differences in the recorded number of like responses, they made a notation on the specific question, discussed the differences and whether another category consideration should be recalculated. If the researcher and research assistant could not agree on the differences, the percentage in agreement was appropriately noted. The targeted agreement to ensure objective reliability was defined by 75% in agreement of scores from coded responses (Creswell, 2015).

This careful approach guides the researcher to recognize and create categories that then develop from the common themes, as well as ideas and concepts that are most often repeated by the interviewees. Using cross-case analysis the researcher looked across participants for common responses, depicting where themes are strongly shared across participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Then, the researcher reviews the themes to determine which are the strongest, most repeated, and of most significance in relation to each research question. The data is then organized in relation to the research question, identifying main themes; including sub-themes that add to the understanding of the overarching main themes (Creswell, 2015).

Observation Analysis

The observation data were captured using images of artifacts that were found in primary and secondary areas of the school, and compared to the description of concepts and references most often found in REA literature, REA-inspired classrooms, and schools. If an image or artifact was found, then the researcher made notes and corroborated it with drawings, images, or explanations from REA literature. Participants often made comments to the researcher trying to clarify something they noted the researcher was observing. This helped the researcher in documenting examples during observations. The observed artifacts were then categorized into sub-indicators for principle, being mindful of what participants were reporting in the interviews

and survey, in conjunction with the REA literature and noting what the researcher needed to observe.

Within-case and cross-case analysis. The presentation of findings for this study is presented for each of the three Head Start programs in a within-case analysis. These sections provide a rich description of each case through the observation, interview, and survey data, to satisfy the triangulation of data necessary for the purposes of validity (Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The within-case analyses are followed by a cross-case analysis where patterns of similarity and difference across the cases are identified (Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Each of the three Head Start programs had its own particular culture, yet interesting patterns of similarity were also present. The within-case analyses and cross-case analysis are each articulated in chapter 4 in relation to each of the four research questions.

Limitations of the Study

With the small sample of participants from this study, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Also, the coding of qualitative data using a thematic theory method relies on the knowledge and expertise of the researcher who has the potential to bring bias to their coding, even when using careful and systematic procedures exist. Additionally, the observation tool was developed during the process of data collection, therefore scaled up use of the tool is needed for validation purposes in future research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the research design, including the instruments used for the study, the data collection procedures, as well as data analysis procedures. This case study uses a survey, an interview, and classroom observations. Limitations of the study are also discussed.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY FINDINGS

Data for three cases were collected in one Head Start program in New Mexico, one in Massachusetts, and one in Tennessee, during the fall of 2019. After a tour of each Head Start school, the researcher began by providing a hard-copy survey (see Appendix B) to the participants. Once the participants completed the survey, the researcher interviewed each participant (see Appendix E) and recorded their responses. The final step in the data collection process was the observation of each classroom (see Appendix C).

A within-case analysis and cross-case analysis of the data are presented in this chapter in relation to each of the research questions (Creswell, 2015; Patton, 2015).

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?
2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?
3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?
4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

Descriptions of each case are formed from multiple sources of data including the responses of participants to a survey and interview, in addition to observations of classrooms and hallways in each setting. Nine Reggio-inspired principles based on a study of related literature were the overarching themes for coding the observation and interview data (Edwards et al., 1998; Haigh, 2007, Hendrick, 1997; Malaguzzi, 1993; Wien, 2008). Themes that emerged from the data that describe teachers' perceptions in relation to the nine Reggio-inspired principles are listed below:

- Code: TEECE** – Teaching Experience in Early Childhood Education
- Code: OMP** – Open Mindedness to Other Educational Perspectives
- CODE: CCF** – Child-Centered Focus Curricula Planning
- Code: MCIM** – Mandatory Curricula Implementation or Mandates
- Code: IR** – Intentional Relationships: Child-Teacher-Parent, and/or community
- Code: PD** – Professional Development for Teacher/Child/Parent Education Observed
- Code: REA** – Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) Knowledge, Practices, Noted Need for Professional Development, and/or Visible in Head Start Classrooms from Principle 1-Principle 9.

The observation process was focused on the nine Reggio-inspired principles, each with suggestions of criteria as a starting point for the researcher to observe (Table 4) in an open-ended approach to identify relevant items. The researcher observed classrooms without children to learn more about what artifacts were used in the environment that were aligned with the Reggio-inspired principles. The data collected during observations inside classrooms were defined as primary areas, as these were not the only place artifacts were found by the researcher. In other more public areas of the school different artifacts were also revealed that align with the Reggio-inspired principles. It is for those reasons that secondary areas carried weight to this study as an aspect of the triangulation of data.

Table 5.

Suggestions of Criteria as Starting Points for Observation Process

1. The child as protagonist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of transcripts where children initiate conversations
2. The child as a collaborator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images of children working/exploring together
3. The child as communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s expressive work displayed in classroom (not rote work) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arts (drawing, painting, emerging writing) • Images of creative work that cannot be displayed 2-dimensionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photos of block structures and such
4. Environment as a third teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teacher professional development • Various and multiple use of aesthetic materials and qualities in classroom (e.g., plants, clean, well-organized cultural artifacts displayed from children and community) • Multiple ways of implementing the ideas and creative thinking of children and research (e.g., visible documentation of the processes of children’s learning through images, displays of artwork and drawings, graphic organizers). • Visual images and creations that represent the children and families in the classroom environment (e.g., photographs of children and their families, family-decorated cubbies).
5. Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teacher collaborations and engagement with children (e.g., images of activities, images of teachers guiding children in developmental milestones: physical, intellectual and social-emotional child development). • Documentation of teacher-child-family partnerships (e.g., images, illustrations, literacy efforts, materials exhibiting reflective teaching and strategies).
6. Teacher as researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of teaching strategies based on research from teacher and children’s ideas (e.g., projects, literacy artifacts).
7. Documentation as communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of the various ways children, teachers and families communicate information interdependently (e.g., documentation panels of children’s learning, documentation of questions and inquiry process children share with peers and school community).
8. The parent as partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of family-school-child-teacher collaborations and engagement. • Documentation of parent-fostered community efforts bridging school partnerships.
9. The community as a shared partner in child education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images and documentation of community-fostered and initiated educational and other partnerships. • Examples of community resources demonstrated through documentation in the school and or classroom.

The survey was designed to obtain responses from all participants. The survey findings address research questions 3, 4, and 5, which account for the perceptions of Head Start directors, Head Start education leaders; and Head Start teachers and serve as a form of triangulation

(Creswell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Therefore, each within-case analysis includes a separate section on the survey findings.

The following sections of this chapter include a presentation of the findings from each case (New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee) in a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis (Creswell 2015). Each of the three within-case analyses includes a description of observations of primary and secondary areas to address Research Question 1. Summaries of participant interviews are organized around each of the nine Reggio-inspired principles in response to Research Questions 2, 3, and 4, which refer to Head Start directors, Head Start education leaders, and Head Start teachers' reports of the demonstration or use of the principles in their school or classrooms. For each case, the summaries focused on the nine Reggio principles are followed by a section reporting the themes that emerged from the interview data. A final cross-case analysis section presents comparisons across the three cases in relation to each research question (Creswell, 2017).

Within-Case Analysis

Within-case analyses of the three cases in this study are represented in the following sections. In a section for each case (New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee) findings are provided in narrative form, photo documentation, and visual graphics in relation to each of the four research questions.

Within-Case Analysis - New Mexico

The within case analysis in this section centers on the Head Start program in New Mexico. The four research questions are presented with data from multiple sources including the observations of classrooms and hallways, responses of six participants to an interview, the themes as they emerged in this case, and the responses of six participants to the survey (Creswell, 2015/2017; Patton, 2015).

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

Three of the four classrooms represented in this case, New Mexico, were observed to have very similar learning environments. One classroom stood out as different, with more elements of alignment with Reggio-inspired principles. Therefore, the three similar classrooms are presented together, and the fourth is presented separately to describe the distinctions related to Reggio-inspired principles. The observations of secondary areas of the school provide more information on the overall sense of the school in relation to the Reggio Emilia principles and are presented following the sections on the classroom observations.

New Mexico Teachers 1, 2, and 4. These three classrooms in New Mexico demonstrated a good sense of awareness for meeting the needs of children in developmentally appropriate ways (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The overall environment of the classrooms, including the doorways, were designed for learning opportunities and cultural awareness. For example, the entranceway to one classroom (Figure 2) reflected inspirational words designed in many different forms, encouraging vocabulary development (Gunning, 2015; Newman & Dickinson, 2011). Additionally, cultural artifacts that are familiar in children's homes are displayed here to encourage the home and school relationship (Jones & Nimmo, 1998; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993).



Figure 2. New Mexico doorway with cultural artifacts

Many math, science, and cultural activities were observed throughout the three classrooms. There was an aesthetic sense of order and beauty in these classrooms that is reflected in many of the artifacts documenting ongoing learning experiences. For example, Figure 3 is a planter created by children engaged in an artistic experience of creating planters for air plants that were hung from the windows. This process supplements and integrates into their science learning that is related to the study of plants and plant growth.



Figure 3. Creative planter

Many learning activities in the classroom were organized around the children's culture. Manipulative materials like dried corn, stones, and traditional beads were sorted aesthetically in the art area. An emphasis seemed to be to include materials that might be useful for representing cultural artifacts specific to colors found in the Native art produced in that community. Clothing and footwear representative of the children's Native community were found in the dramatic play area. These were child-sized garments, similar to those that children would actually wear in their lived experience for a Pow Wow or feast day.

New Mexico Teacher 3. This teacher's classroom included the same elements as the other three, though she showed more awareness of Reggio-inspired intentionality in stating how she was connecting these influences into her provocations for children. For example, to represent the different birthdays of children, the teacher and children created a display (Figure 4). They used fabric backing the computer-generated text of each month of the year. These hung above branches they collected onto which they hung images of the children whose birthdays were celebrated in that month. This helps the children visualize the chronological flow of time according to concrete experiences (Piaget, 1953). Additionally, each child's photo has a numeral representing the day of the month of his or her birthday. When the researcher commented on the unique beauty of this

display, she said, “Actually, I have been training my co-teacher about Reggio Emilia, and she put that together.” She also informed the researcher that the co-teacher had no other training regarding the Reggio Emilia Approach.



Figure 4. Birthdays of children in artistic display

This image in Figure 5 demonstrates the intentional placement of cultural artifacts in the learning environment, like the cultural blanket. Additionally, in looking closely, one can see the images above the child-sized couch that are labeled with the native language of that community.



Figure 5. Cultural blanket in classroom below images with native language represented

Below, in Figure 6, is a handmade book bound by a key ring designed for children to explore the local animals living in the mountains in New Mexico. The primary language spoken in the home and native to most of the children in the school was highlighted in written text in the book as another way to introduce cultural aspects of the community. This example represents this teacher's value of cultural literacy activities. It demonstrates the intentional practice of connecting children's learning to what they are most familiar with, identifying what is already visible in their everyday life experiences (Jones & Nimmo, 1998; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993).

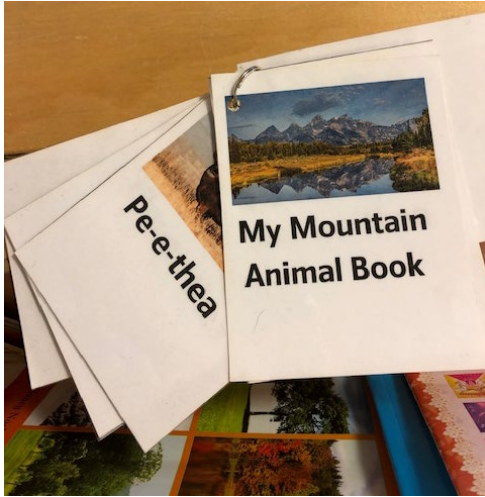


Figure 6. Book of local animals

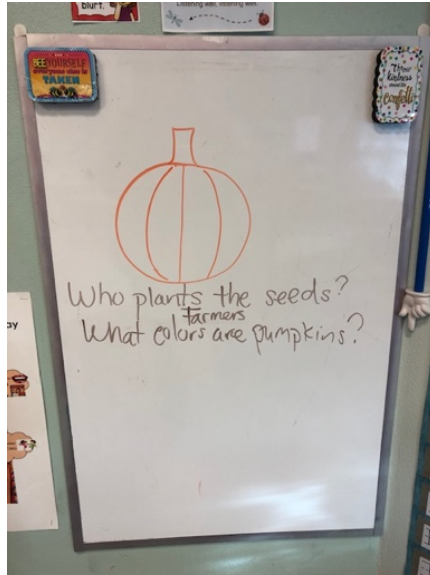


Figure 7. Pumpkin provocation

Figure 7, above is a simple example of a teacher-led provocation for mapping-out what children understand about a pumpkin. This form of literacy building is designed to learn about what children already know about pumpkins, and gauge what they know about the seeds, planting, and the color of a pumpkin. A Reggio Emilia-inspired classroom uses drawing and mapping as a visual aide to encourage children to express their thoughts and ideas (Jones & Nimmo, 1998). New vocabulary encourages connections to prior knowledge similar to the illustration in Figure 7 (Gunning, 2015; Hart & Risley, 2003; Newman & Dickinson, 2011).

New Mexico Teacher 3 sent fired clay tiles home with children and requested that the parents and child create a specific letter of the alphabet using any object they preferred. The result was an array of parent-child created alphabet letters affixed to tiles that were then hung along the wall inside the classroom. After the letter “Z”, New Mexico Teacher 3 included a tile she painted with the cultural symbol of a bear. A bear is often reflected in cultural artifacts the community where the school is located (Figure 8). This example demonstrates the continued inclusion of culture into the learning environment of the Head Start school.



Figure 8. Alphabet tile and cultural symbol tile

Secondary area observations. The researcher found several examples of cultural artifacts in secondary areas of the school, on the playground, along the hallways, and in the kitchen and foyer (see Figures 9-17). There were many paintings donated by parents (Figure 9) as a gesture of respect for the school mission, as told to the researcher by various staff present at the school. The Head Start program at this pueblo celebrated seasonal events with the children and displayed them all over the premises, such as the pumpkins in Figure 10.



Figure 9. Paintings donated by families



Figure 10. Representation of seasonal event

A common area was established for parents to continue self-directed inquiry about the learning curricula children are engaged in during school as well as information related to the daily life of families. There were books about cultural traditions within that specific pueblo, Creative Curriculum, the Reggio Emilia Approach, pregnancy, fatherhood, automotive repairs, cookbooks specific to health, and well-being, in addition to novels, history, fiction, and biographies (Figure 11). This example encourages the extension of literacy efforts to the families, and again, the diverse material considers the interests of a diverse range of people and their interests (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011; New, 1990).



Figure 11. Books available for families

Many other examples in the secondary areas included children's finger-painting taped to windows outside of the classrooms (Figure 12). Also, in a hallway there was a rendition of the 50-year celebration of the Head Start logo, designed for this school to include a cultural twist that includes corn and a handprint (Figure 13). It was painted by someone in the program, once again representing a connection of support from that pueblo's cultural connection to Head Start.



Figure 12. Finger painting display



Figure 13. 50-year celebration image

As an example of connections to other cultures, two chili ristras hang on either side of a doorway to the kitchen areas of the school (Figure 14). Chili ristras are typically found as Hispanic artifacts in New Mexico. This example demonstrates the schools' value of showcasing diversity representative of all cultures throughout the school, which goes beyond talk and makes this value visible for building family-child-school-community relationships. This example can be considered Reggio-inspired because it connects to a facet of child's lived experience (Jones & Nimmo, 1998; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993).



Figure 14. Chili ristras by school kitchen doorway

Just beyond the playground where children gather together and play outdoors is a traditional *horno*, or an outside oven, often found in pueblo cultures in New Mexico (Figure 15).

Retaining their native language is important to the people of this pueblo, as well as among the Native cultures across the country (Sparks, n.d.). The New Mexico teachers and staff in this school take part in studying the language spoken in this pueblo by meeting in a conference room and learning together in order to strengthen their use of the language and pass down the language to children in the classroom. This promotes literacy among the children that can be traditionally passed on generationally. An important aspect of language acquisition is that children learn English better when their primary language is spoken at home (Neuman & Dickinson, 2013).

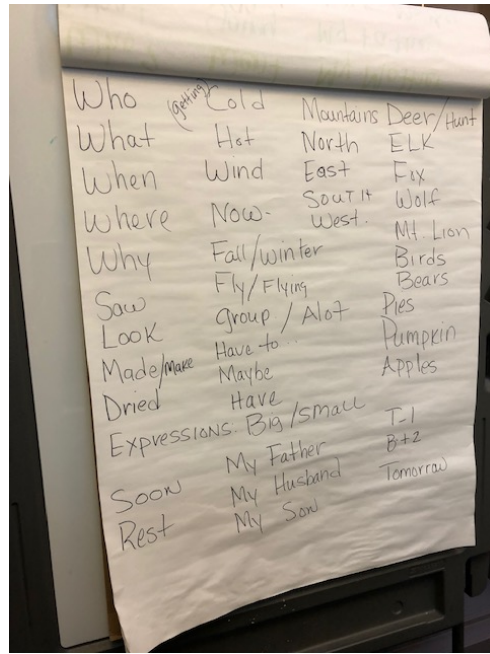


Figure 15. Horno (oven) seen in the play yard Figure 16. Chart for Native language study

The images of children currently enrolled at the Head Start program alongside historic images of ancestors in a hallway display (Figure 17) exemplifies the value of family and the connection to culture present and past. These visual representations are intended to insure

children are aware of their ancestors engaging in daily activities similar to their own in modern culture.

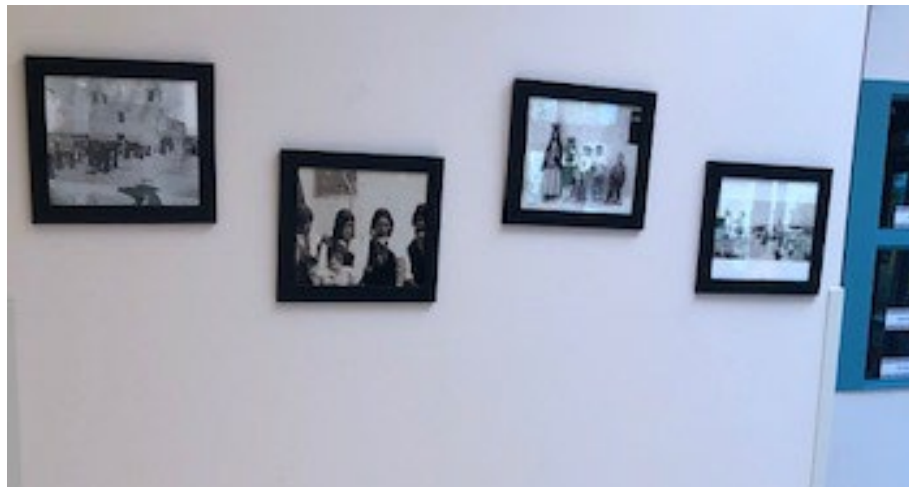


Figure 17. Images of children currently enrolled alongside images of ancestors

2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The New Mexico Education director was very open to the Reggio Emilia approach and integrating more into the school while still following the Head Start program model. She stated:

So, currently at the Head Start, we're working on doing play-base with assist, with traditional curriculum but with Reggio styles of probe in the classroom, as well as using creative curriculum main curriculum... A majority of the activities are play-based with... and they're structured to be where there's time for teacher-directed activities, child-directed activities, and as well as some other time where there's language being used in the classroom during mealtimes and the day... Reggio-inspired practices are more toward children-directed, nature-based learning using naturalistic environments, having the

children lead, and allowing the children to do activities, and increasing the activities that are in the best interest of what children are wanting to learn.

This represents an understanding and knowledge of basic Reggio-inspired practices. Additionally, her statements are supported by the many artifacts in primary and secondary areas in her school that represent Reggio inspirations.

She also stated that, “The child’s primary role is to lead in the activities and their interests is what the teachers work from in order to accomplish their interests and have them as leaders in the classroom.” Her use of the phrase ‘child’s primary role is to lead’ demonstrates that she is welcoming of the Reggio principle *Child as Protagonist* by stating:

We, in one of the units, teachers go through little stages. So, that way if they can learn like, what kind of questioning is effective so then it could lead the children into choosing their own activities and being that intentional role of the child.

This statement shows that she understands that teachers must be intentional in planning activities for children to gain knowledge and that she is interested in guiding teachers to encourage children to be protagonists. She stated the following:

...encouraging the children to collaborate, the teachers can give them back and forth exchanges, give them hints and scaffolding so that way they are able to increase their play or give back ideas for lessons and allowing certain questions to be used in the classroom. So, that way it encourages the children to be more in-depth in conversation versus just basic yes or no answers.

The language the participants uses shows that the New Mexico Education director understands the language of early childhood theory and a constructivist perspective because she

uses words such as *scaffolding*, and *back and forth exchanges*. These also align with the Reggio-inspired approach, which is grounded in constructivist theories.

The director also connects the mandates that Head Start values into her responses and states:

We use the, this year specifically we use the mentor, coach, and the education coordinator because they were both new, both have been in CLASS Training. So, that way they are able to encourage the teachers. But, coming this next summer, we're gonna probably work on getting the teachers that training so that way they can, there's certain things that they look for...

Her statements frame the various mandates in her programs and her intention of ensuring that they meet the standards.

While she holds tight to the mandated curriculum, she also sees opportunity to incorporate what she understands of Reggio-inspired practices. She says:

...the relation of the classroom environment as far as PD we allow the teachers to set up their environment. But it is also in relation to how creative curriculum is and I know we've gone back and forth and that's why we are saying that we're working on implementing more of the Reggio, cause with using Creative Curriculum, it seems to be a lot more structured in a way to where it has limitations for the classrooms. But we're working on implementing different techniques so that way it is more flexible for the learning of the children and then more flexible for the teachers as well.

These statements reflect the challenges directors face while trying to form programs that secure funding, meet the developmental needs of children appropriately, and take into consideration that children are impressionable and inquisitive.

The New Mexico director went on to say;

So I think being a lifelong learner is important in school settings. There's tons and tons of research that always comes up and always changes, and I think that's why every year, yes, we do, do, similar and the same trainings over and over. But there's certain trainings that we do adapt to what's coming up as far as the latest research. So, the teachers always have to keep an open mind that even though we finished school, we've done what all we needed to do to complete our coursework, that there's always more learning involved and that every day you learn something new.

Again, this reveals this director's openness to adapting the mandated curriculum based on what she learns that is new and valuable from current research, which according to her earlier comments can include Reggio inspirations.

Community involvement is obviously a value shared by the New Mexico director in relation to her Head Start program, and in relation to including other mandated curriculums to track parent engagement. ReadyRosie is a prescribed program through Teaching Strategies GOLD, which is a form of communicating with parents using technology. She noted:

So being a Head Start, the family and community collaboration piece, the family engagement is huge. So, the teachers receive training on our parenting curriculum which is ReadyRosie, and we also encourage them and remind them throughout the year to send videos to parents and encourage parents to use the parenting curriculum because it is not mandatory. It's something that is optional and then we also help teachers learn about ways to engage parents in different activities and get their input for their classroom.

She continued on to say,

So the community in itself is largely what is based on some of the things that are influenced at the school. We are a huge community-based school where we do partner with our local programs, and the local programs help with dental screenings, health screenings. They're also a great resource for parents, and we provide parents a community resource as well, and the teachers are able to work with our family service workers to help the parents find resources that they need too. So, at the beginning of the year, the teachers get, or actually the parents get a copy of our family resource guide.

These responses from the New Mexico director reflect a strong sense of following rules and regulations for maintaining Head Start grantee status, while also following the needs of children by researching current early childhood studies that includes the Reggio-inspired approach. She realizes the benefits and is not afraid to learn and include more to strengthen her school curriculum and adapt it to maintain the cultural, learning, and family needs of their community.

3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The New Mexico Education leader introduced herself and her philosophy very well as she shared the following:

So, I've been in Head Start for almost 20 years. I started out as a parent volunteer in my child's classroom. So, from there I went on to become an assistant teacher and then a teacher – obtained my CDA – my Associate's and then my Bachelor's in Early Childhood; So, now I am the education coordinator. My teaching philosophy, I always believed parents are the child's first teacher. We have various backgrounds that our children come from, and so I think we have to take in the whole child and really understand the family dynamics and where the child is coming from, and I think that's the basis of where it starts

and then from there we can help develop them further: social emotional, cognitive, all the other domains. But I firmly believe that I mean social emotional is by far the first thing that children need to learn because I feel like if children cannot, if children don't have the social skills to be in a classroom environment, they're not going to be able to learn and then also with that I mean, from my view, I go with the children's lead. So, what the children want, the child wants to do, then I go with their lead. If they want, it's not so much of a structure, of course you can have structure and planning in the classroom. But I believe if the children aren't interested in the environment, the materials, even of what you have planned in the curriculum, then it's not going to work, and so you have to take that into account.

This introduction demonstrates this New Mexico education leader as having a strong sense for the needs of the children and families that are enrolled in her program. She also reflects a constructivist perspective (Dewey, 1966) that is a foundational theory to the Reggio Emilia Approach with her understanding of the need for flexibility in the curriculum in relation to children's responses.

She continued expressing her understanding of developing curriculum from the context of children's needs using materials found in a variety of resources. She says:

...just go with what the children want to do, and sometimes it can turn into something awesome, great, that you didn't expect, just from maybe a conversation, maybe a little art project they're working on or just even their play. And so, the teachers go, and they are able to purchase recycled materials, just materials that you use every day that you wouldn't think could be used in the classroom...teachers also just bring in their own materials, we get materials donated by the families. Natural materials. Like we had a

grandmother come in and donate stalks of corn that could be used in the classroom. We had one of our teachers bring in, I guess, stumps, natural wooden stumps and so they are going to be used for a project as well. We've had children plant corn, chile, just natural things that are in our environment.

Her responses show value in the engaging activities and the effort the teachers in her school put forth on behalf of children and families. It shows a serious commitment, as in the values of the Reggio-inspired approach, to sharing artifacts and materials that are useful to some and may contribute to the greater good for all.

In terms of the New Mexico education leader's understanding about Reggio Emilia she shared:

What I do know is that it is child-driven and that in some of the material that I have seen and read, that the teachers do go by the child's lead. They provide just natural materials and natural environment to the children. They incorporate a lot of, just everyday materials. It's not a lot of, I guess, mass-produced materials that you would find sometimes in some of the classrooms where it's abc's, one, two, threes, all of that and just, I guess something you would see, like you could take a classroom in a magazine that's not, that wouldn't be a Reggio-inspired classroom.

This education leader's comments demonstrate an openness to the use of diverse materials that relate to the environment of children and their families as relevant for classroom curriculum.

This education leader understands that children are protagonists in their learning. She says:

I believe the role of the child in the classroom is just to give them a material-rich environment for them to explore, for them to problem-solve, for them to be creative in that

classroom, and I think as long as the teachers can provide the materials and the environment and just let the child explore...then I think that child will, will, blossom and they'll see amazing things come out of that child that you wouldn't think would be possible just because how creative children are...I think if you just give them time. Time is really big part of it. Give them time to let them really explore because some children can go hours into their play.

She goes on to add these rich statements that reveal her understanding that teachers need to build curriculum from what they know of children's interests and ideas. In her role as a mentor she has seen teachers taking notes on what children are saying. Her statements clearly show that she spends a good amount of time observing teachers. All of which is in alignment with practices in Reggio-inspired programs. She says:

Some of the classrooms, they do have like a circle time and so they introduced maybe a concept that they want to explore and so they do like a either a small group or a large group and so they kind of talk and discuss what their, what the concept is, and then they go ahead and do like a webbing or a mapping. I've seen that in the classrooms and they just kinda, just get ideas from the children of what they, what they like. Say pumpkin, for instance, introduce what is a pumpkin? How can we use it? What is it for? The color, just a variety of topics that can be covered on a pumpkin. What I have seen in the classroom is the children do discuss and say, 'I want to do this, or I would like to do this' or 'I would like to bake a pumpkin, or I would like to taste a pumpkin' and so, from there the teachers go ahead and just jot down their ideas and then they go ahead and implement that into their lesson plans ... So, I think it stems from the child's interest.

While pumpkins might be a focus for curriculum in a classroom that is developmentally appropriate and not particularly Reggio-inspired, this director's statement is emphasizing the close relationship of the curriculum in her school to what teachers recognize through observations as an interest of children. Using observation of children's interests does align, even if basically, with Reggio-inspired practices.

Her statements in response to the questions relating to teachers as partners were well-defined:

As far as families, my role is to be an advocate for those families and for the children of this community. Sorry, I get emotional. I see a lot of families that that struggle in this community, and I just want to be able to provide a program, a center, a space for these children to be here, to be safe, to earn the families' trust, knowing that their children are being taken care of well, being provided for ... (recording stops because she is sobbing). So, as far as being an advocate for parents, we do have a lot of resources out there in our community. So, just having that relationship with them, being able to communicate with them, earn their trust, and letting them know that we are here for them, and there is a struggle. I mean in various ways our families go through, and so we just need to provide that support to our families and our children.

Her responses show an understanding that for teachers to be partners with children, they need to partner with them in the ways that they partner with the parents and the community. This extension from the teacher to the community is the broad perspective of partnership and community that is shared with Reggio-inspired educators.

In response to teachers as researchers she stated:

I mean it's, some people kind of get stuck in their roles, in their ways, and I believe that I mean, you can continue, always continue to grow. There is so many people with different experiences that you can collaborate with, that you can learn from, and so I think just, I believe just interacting with various people, I mean, whether it be teachers, people from administration, even in our community like our tribal council, tribal leaders, we just need to all collaborate and come together and just, I guess learn from one another and what we can provide to our community.

These statements reflect the inspirations of the Reggio Emilia Approach in that they resonate with the idea that the identity of children develops through the purposeful modeling of communities and families as guides with children. Her statements as to how teachers document the learning of children were clear. She says, "Our teachers are fortunate to have iPads, cameras, video recorders, that they can use to document children's work in the classroom. What I have seen in the classroom is from there, then the teacher will either post the activity that the children are working on and then reflect back on it."

This response shows the commitment of this school to obtain these tools for teachers to document the many ways children learn and communicate. Not all Head Start programs have the resources for this type of equipment or use the equipment in these ways, to document children's learning. This focus shows a strong relationship to the values of the Reggio Emilia Approach without revealing a deeper understanding of the use of documentation to guide curricular planning.

Her explanation of her community partnerships stood out as aligned with Reggio-inspired principles. She reported:

So, I think now it's a strong relationship. We have had to work on building that relationship between the community and the school. We've had help from tribal officials. So, like from the governor, tribal council to promote our school. We've also done some self-promotion. So, we've hosted community events. So, one of the ones we hosted in May was a children's feast day, and so we invited other community programs to come into our school and just do various activities with our families, and so we did a bunch of games, different activities, we fed the families, we fed the community ... So, we did a lot of self-promotion. So, I think our relationship with the community is really strong. We get a lot of positive feedback about our program just from different programs, from different community members. We're always welcoming various community members into our school, just come in, tour the school, visit a classroom, have lunch. I think food is a big way to get people into your center ... And so, also in the community there are different events that are hosted like say, environmental fairs, health fairs, those types of events, and so, our program is always represented at those events. We just had a community Halloween Carnival, so our program put up a booth and did a booth there at the event... We are always trying to be in the mix just so that the community knows about our program.

Her responses are directly aligned with the Reggio-inspired approach which values strong visibility and interactions within the broader community.

4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

This section presents narratives describing the perceptions of the four teacher participants in the New Mexico Head Start. Quotes from the interviews are included to illustrate the way each participant's perceptions are or are not in alignment with Reggio-inspired principles.

New Mexico Teacher 1 Interview. The first teacher in New Mexico to be interviewed was actually an Early Head Start teacher. She responded to her philosophy by stating:

I am an Early Head Start teacher, and I have been here for quite some time. So, I have been through many curricula. This one is different, because it is all environment and natural settings, but it is like a learning process with the kids. I am getting used to it [we have] a lot of natural environment toys, like wood and blocks, we use a lot of leaves, branches bugs that we find out in our community, a lot of more doing work with the environment and getting the kids used to what is within our community.

Her responses show she is aware of the basic link of the new materials in relation to the natural environment, which are aligned with the Reggio approach.

She continued in response to the question of what she knows about the Reggio Emilia Approach by stating:

It's supposed to be an environment based around your community; it is a self-learning curriculum that children provide for themselves and that you follow along with them. So, I'm thinking, like, hunting is going on now, so a lot of kids are talking about hunting, so we prolong that until it wears out until their next interest comes along.

She is aware that the Reggio-inspired curriculum emerges from children and their lived experiences.

New Mexico Teacher 1 is less clear about the child as a protagonist or independent learner because she doesn't understand that even very young children are inquirers prior to entering preschool. She states:

It says in my classroom, as capable and independent learner and a problem-solver? I'm going to have to disagree at this time because half my children are younger than the others and half of them don't have language yet. So, they're just coming in, and they've never been at a formal setting before here.

This teacher thinks children come to school to gain these skills and that she has to provide them for the children. She has not had professional development or experiences that guide her to understand what it means for a child to be a problem-solver or a capable independent learner no matter what their age. She continued on to state, "So they're coming from home and they're not problem-solvers yet because others would do everything for them. So, I'm gonna say they're not there yet."

In her statement in response to children as communicators she said:

We do a lot of drawing, painting asking what they are doing. We have some children that have language and they tell us, they tell us all kind of things... like asking a lot of doing, why, going, so they're always asking us questions. So, I think we participate in the scaffolding with them. They ask us and then the younger ones ask them or they're using sign language – I want more – more crackers, juice, milk.

This statement reflects that children are using sign language to help non-verbal children with another form of communication and that understanding among children is important. She views the cultural dances and music as a form of communication based on this extension of her response to the child as a communicator question:

I am going to agree because we use a lot of music and a lot of it is culturally-based. So if we're playing our Native music some kids, you can tell who participates a lot traditionally cause they will participate with dances and the music or music materials in the classroom. So, when she sees a child's response to music, she considers this part of the way they are communicating what they know of and understand about music in their home and community. The connection she makes between culture and communication aligns with Reggio-inspired principles.

In her responses to the environment as the third teacher she said, "I think because I am from the community, so I use a lot of our cultural base stuff in the classroom – baskets, corn, whatever is in season. Whatever we're doing within our community, try putting it in there; and the language." These statements reflect that she understands the value, yet is not sure how to include the language to describe what she is trying to say in a Reggio-inspired framework.

This participant is certain about her role as a partner with parents. She stated, "I view my role as a role model because our community is small and you, participating out in the community, everybody knows everybody. So, you try to be that role model for that child and the family." Her next statements in relation to community partnerships demonstrate her view that she and other teachers in her program would benefit from some professional development. She said:

Sometimes, sometimes. I don't think it is enough because other teachers in our center are not from this community, and they may be doing something else in their community that our community doesn't approve of, you know what I mean? So, I can't say that everybody is getting the same kind of training because you know, being Native American is different than being Hispanic or Anglo so, or Black so I know everything is a little different, so...

These perspectives were shared or framed in similar thoughts among most participants who were teaching in the diverse Head Start programs. She was trying to find the most appropriate way to share that there are differences in culture depending on where you are teaching, that some aspects of culture can be shared, and some cannot and need to be respected.

Her perspective is culturally relevant to America, where multiple ethnic groups and races are represented and unlike Italy, where the Reggio Emilia Approach was cultivated, there is not one race or ethnicity as a predominant culture. That is exactly why in America there cannot be an exact duplicate of the Reggio Emilia Approach, because aspects of the culture of these schools in Italy cannot be shared in another culture (Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997). Instead schools incorporating Reggio principles in other countries should be referred to as inspired or influenced by the Reggio Emilia Approach. The cultural needs of a community have to be taken into consideration as far as the education of children, families, and the communities in which they reside.

Similar to the sentiments in her statement above, New Mexico Teacher I responded to the teacher as a researcher question with:

I think it's always going to be a lifelong learner because all our children are not fully from this community. They're from somewhere else another Native American community, a Black, half-white, you know, and there's different things that every culture believes in that's different. So, I try to know my families that way, if something comes up, then we are able to work around it or work together through it because I don't know everything ... it's always a learning process.

She sees her research goals in relation to learning deeply about the different cultures and contexts of the lives of the children in her classroom, which is one aspect of the Reggio principle

of Teacher as Researcher. Her response to documentation of children's learning was expressed like this:

We take a lot of pictures in our classroom because, our some of our children don't have language yet and our parents are always curious to know what their children are doing or learning. So, we provide documentation, like, we'll have an activity, we'll document it, we'll laminate it. We'll stick it on the wall so when parents are curious, they come, and they read, or they see and they end up like a certain amount of time. We send it home, you know, showing them that they learned this, they learned that, ask questions and answer them for the families.

This demonstrates that she is using documentation with a Reggio-inspired mindset of communicating children's learning with their families.

She had good alignment with the Reggio Approach for understanding of her role in partnering with families. She states:

The roles of my families, I try to get them involved. Sometimes it is hard because they're working and the hours they work don't match up with the hours of meeting them face-to-face, but then we have the grandparents so we include them, the babysitters, the uncles, the aunties, and we're always encouraging them to help out those families that can't come offer to do things for us at home, like we'll give them construction paper and they cut us out leaves or something for whatever our next project is.

She values the time parents do or don't have available and welcomes and uses every opportunity she can to help parents connect with the children and their classroom, which includes involving other family members or guardians.

Her responses to the school and community relationship was similar to the New Mexico education leader when she said:

I have been here for a long time, and I think we have gotten more partnerships with our community members to collaborate with each other recently. We have WIC, we have a language committee, we have the library, so we're more inclusive with what is going on within our community, and I think it is good for the kids to see, like, oh, this lady works over here or oh, this this lady is the nurse over here you know, so that they recognize them outside when they're not here. Cause if I go to Walmart and they saw me, they're like what are you doing here? I don't know, you're supposed to be at the school you, maybe stuck in the closet, you know, they are very curious like, you don't belong here so I think it is important for them to see other people in other places besides what they do.

This shows a solid understanding for how she sees herself in the community and in her role as a teacher. She demonstrated that she cares about what the children and families think about her and others outside of the school and within the community. She considers these connections and resources as important, and yet she didn't express thoughts about engaging children in learning projects with community members, which is a feature of Reggio-inspired programs that may be learned through more professional development.

New Mexico Teacher 2 interview. New Mexico Teacher 2 responded in this way about her teaching philosophy:

So I have been teaching for more than 20 years. I've worked in a Head Start for about 19 years, one month shy of 20. I went to the public schools for two yea, and I came back to the Head Start over here. And my teaching approach... I really feel working together with the families is important; collaborating letting them know that they are the children's first

teacher; and taking the child's lead in what I can do to implement in the classroom. I know we have a set curriculum and stuff but usually if we let the children kind of set the lead of what we're going to implement in the classroom, that really helps them get engaged.

When asked about her classroom and what an observer would see, she stated, "You would walk in, to children interacting in their centers, visiting them, talking amongst each other in developmental, age-appropriate activities; just having open-ended material for them to explore." She admitted that she was just learning about the Reggio Emilia Approach and what she knew as principles she felt that she could express in the following way:

I only know a few of them, I know it's, we, it tries to bring more of the natural learning into the classroom for the children to use, not so much teacher made or man-made material, and the child for me is the guide of what they want to learn or what they may need from us in the classroom.

Her ideas about the child as a collaborator were stated like this:

In the classroom, when they're in their in their interest areas, working together and trying to build the tree house that they have with the natural logs, just having them talk it out, listen to one another's ideas and things like that.

Her understanding of the need to promote children in collaborative processes and that they benefit from working together is in alignment with this Reggio-inspired principle.

Her responses about children as communicators reveal that she focuses more on verbal communications than on the many possible expressions that can occur through a wide variety of materials, like drawing, painting, construction, etc. Therefore, she lacks alignment with this Reggio-inspired principle. She stated that:

I always encourage them to verbalize their needs and wants, express how they are feeling with their words rather than with their hands and also to look at each other to see visualize their queues. You know, someone might be crying, something might be wrong, we could check on them.

New Mexico Teacher 2 is mentored by another peer in her school. She felt confident in expressing her ideas about the learning environment and her role as a partner with parents. She said:

I think this is an important part. You want, when the families or the children to come in, they want to feel welcomed, inviting, clean, neat, safe, for them to come in and learn. My role, I think it's a team player, cause I think it takes, it takes like a community to help raise children and teach them what they need. So, I believe we're just part of one big team community.

These statements reveal a good sense for how she sees the children in relation to her teaching in the classroom. She sees herself as a "team-player", an aspect of the Reggio-inspired approach that aligns with the concept of the teacher as a co-learner with children and families.

This teacher also thinks it's valuable to seek professional development and stated, "...teachers are natural learners. Teachers usually seek out trainings or professional development to enhance their skills or just bring in new ideas into the classroom." This is a concept that may be held by many teachers who are not Reggio-inspired but certainly is a value of a Reggio-inspired teacher.

She used Reggio-inspired language when she described documentation and a form of communication like this:

I think it can come from many different ways besides that, hard, concrete artifacts that they may take home you know...but if you walk in the classroom, maybe you might see some anchor charts that they have worked together on. Like what we know about a tree and what different things like that, so if you walk in, you'll see the theme maybe throughout the classroom of what they might be learning or interested in.

She used some traditional forms of documenting, like the anchor charts, but she also knows that showing the artifacts where children have drawn the different parts of a tree is a way to reflect the learning that is going on in the classroom. Making learning visible is a main goal of Reggio-inspired documentation.

Similar to teachers in Tennessee and Massachusetts, she did see her role as a partner with children and families and the community and used clearly defined language such as this:

Their role I think is very crucial in the classroom, they bring a lot of insight about the children to teachers. We encourage them to bring in any ideas from home, maybe traditions, culture into the classroom if they want to share and come and do it with the children.

And like the other participants in New Mexico, she used good examples of how partnerships with the community are formed by stating:

They collaborate a lot with, outside the program like with the rec center, the library, the health office, I think the elder care so they collaborate a lot together here in this area... it wasn't just our program it was community effort...elder care...and Head Start.

This is the first time that elder care was mentioned by a teacher and to concur with her statements the researcher saw examples of community services provided to the elderly that were documented in the secondary areas school, services individuals could volunteer for. The invitation to bring

culture into the classroom and to consider community outside the classroom are values that might be shared with other developmentally appropriate teachers that also do align with the Reggio-inspired principles. More Reggio-inspired professional development might guide this teacher to think about engaging in project work with family and community.

New Mexico Teacher 3 interview. New Mexico Teacher 3 described herself in this way:

I have been in the early childhood profession for about 20 years. I have worked with children from 3 all the way to first grade. My approach is definitely one that is, I'm beginning to, for the past 3 years, I have started doing the Reggio approach. Beforehand, I was very into the "how do I say?" primary rainbow glitter is better ... also, I liked to base my classroom's activity décor, everything according to the children, their likes and their community around them.

She stated that what you would see in her classroom would be:

A lot of, first, of natural resources in there as far as like sticks, stones, things like that, that. They can, something that ... reminds them of their home and their community. Also, a lot of activities that are children-led and that are something that they can be engaged in for a good amount of time and ... children – a lot of children-led activities, definitely. And something that is, whatever we are going to be discussing, that they have kind of very into that subject, will be implemented into some of the centers or the décor, things like that.

This statement represents this teacher's transformation from a more typical early childhood classroom environment to one where the ideas of the children, the curriculum they lead, is what will be represented in her classroom, which is more aligned with the learning environment of a Reggio-inspired classroom.

What stood out with New Mexico Teacher 3 were statements such as these:

Reggio is, first and foremost, a mindset. It is definitely a mindset, and it's something that you have to look, not just outside of the box but outside into your backyard. Into the children's backyard, into all of the resources that they have in their community and just bring that into the classroom, and also, again, it is definitely child-led, and it is what they want to learn about, not necessary [sic] what the teacher wants to teach, it's what they want to learn.

This focus on the children and the mindset of looking around one's natural environment for the learning opportunities shows a strong developing understanding of many aspects of the Reggio Emilia Approach (environment, community, child-led).

Her beliefs about children and their roles are that:

They're the heart of the classroom, that's what their role is. They are the ones who lead what our class is going to be. Again, what they want to engage in. Secondly, what they are – the community that they are going to create in the classroom. They're definitely one. All of them are that whole community but each child is definitely a huge part of it, cause we like, I like to create that family community, and we say it from the very beginning and it just grows and by the end of the school year, that community is the classroom. Because they begin to, as a whole, start thinking about how is my actions or non-actions gonna affect the person beside me or not affect the person beside me, and...anything that they do and that is something I totally kind of try to embed in them. Cause it is something that is going to last forever, forever. Definitely in formal trainings when we have mental health trainings or curriculum trainings things of that sort, it definitely, they start focusing on the child itself becoming the independent learner problem-solver. And one thing that I get a

lot from is our teacher meetings, and I feel they are a form of course, of PD and that's the time that we collaborate and talk about things, that, how can we do things differently? How can we, just the ideas just kind of floating around and when that happens, we are solely thinking about the children. Either as a single child or as a whole, and having them become that independent learner, that problem-solver. Being capable, being engaged, things of that sort.

This teacher communicates that she is facilitating development among the children in which they learn to empathize with one another, learning the ways they affect one another. Encouraging them to think for themselves and become aware of questions. These are meta-reflective and inquiry practices that are Reggio-inspired.

When asked about herself as a nurturer and a guide New Mexico Teacher 3 stated that: In each and every way, they first and foremost, well, of course, the first teacher is the parents, second, I think I am third, the second teacher are their peers because they learn so much from one another. Because they're someone they can truly relate to. Not only from their community but because of the standpoint of where they play with one another. They do everything together, so we try to encourage a lot of talking, a lot of small group, large group activities and you can definitely see it when they are playing in their centers. A lot of that collaboration of them going back and forth, 'No, maybe we should do this, or we can do this,' and we give them the tools so they can use that language to just kind of grow.

To be a nurturer and a guide she acknowledges that children's parents are their first teachers and that children teach each other. These ideas highlight elements that are central to the Reggio-inspired concept of teacher as a nurturer.

In relation to the environment being the third teacher she states that she uses the environment as a third teacher and considers it a third teacher. She says that:

Because I am bringing natural things into the classroom and they are so curious. I mean, it's amazing. Of course, the curiosity they have just to begin with, but then when you bring things that they see at an everyday basis, and ... and give them the tools, like a magnifying glass or show them that they can rub things on the paper and they can see the pattern that it makes, their curiosity just gets even bigger. So, with the help of my children every year, it allows me to think how I can excel my class for the following year. Yeah, they're, my kids are amazing. They teach me so much, I have a great bunch every year. Every year I have a great bunch. They teach me a lot. Again, it's a lot of what the children want to know but at the same time, Reggio aside, you have to also think of the children who have needs that, and then we have to do modifications, whether it is for the special services, behavioral, whatever it may be. We have to really take that in consideration cause not everything is going to come in packaged in a nice little brown leaf. So, we have to, whether it's moving our furniture around, making different types of schedules, a schedule for a specific child, what have you, we, that's what we start doing in the first few months – when you learn our children, we learn what they need and we go accordingly.

She understands the need to continuously shape the environment in relation to the children and their needs which could be interpreted as framed within a developmentally appropriate approach, yet perhaps somewhat linked to the flexible mindset of a Reggio-inspired teacher. More professional development might lead her to better understand the deeper connection of inquiry curriculum and learning in relation to the environment.

New Mexico Teacher 3 believes she is a partner with parents and families, which aligns with the Reggio principles. She tries to figure out ways to connect with parents and engage them in their children's learning. Her responses were reflected in this way:

I feel the children and families, I feel I am kind of the, how can I say it? I am the link between the two. I believe wholeheartedly and even more so now that I am a parent myself, that the parent is the first teacher. Always, no matter what. No matter what situation the parent may be in. So, my, my role at this age, is to not only show the children tools to be ready for kindergarten but to share those tools with the parents and that's during home visits, doing our newsletters, doing our conferences, doing any family activity even when we say 'hello' I can show them what we are doing and something that we, you can reinforce at home. And that, just not cognitively, it can be social emotionally cause first, I personally feel if you don't get the social emotional foundation, nothing else is going to be able to stack up, leveled. So that is my main focus. And I tell that to my parents, and I give them any information that they possibly could want or need, and then that kind of kind of rolls over into the classroom to the children. Cause you see that, you see that confidence in the child – like 'hey your mom did that or we did this activity and at home' so it just kind of gives them more of that confidence to learn even more.

New Mexico Teacher 3 stated that she taught herself a great deal about the Reggio Approach by reading. She views herself as a teacher researcher and said:

Oh, what ways, in the ways that my children are different every year. Not each child is the same, the children are not the same 5 years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. So, as long as I am in this profession, I will always be a lifelong learner. I have to be, if I want to do what is best for my kids, I have to. You're right, it does get a little emotional. Yes,

definitely. And we are given an opportunity to go to conferences out of state. So, that definitely helps, kind of widen our perspectives on different things.

It is clear that this teacher values her role as a learner in relation to better understanding of children as developmentally different over the years. She is open to the cultural shifts she recognizes in her work with children. Thus, her engagements with children and what they study intellectually in her classroom will differ from year to year within the context of the communities and experiences children bring with them to her classroom, which is in direct alignment with the Reggio-inspired principle of Teacher as Researcher.

Participant 3 believes in documenting the learning of children and she stated:

...we post things up inside and outside of the classroom. I like to take a lot of pictures. So, not only for the parents, cause the parents do like to see how they got from point A to point B. But my main focus for that is for the children, so they can remember how they got from point A to point B. Cause sometimes ... they are just doing and not realizing what they are doing. But if they see it in picture form, then they can see 'Ok, I remember building this structure and it kinda went like this, let me see if I can do that again,' and then they try to repeat that process. So, we do have a lot of pictures. I think that is pretty much the majority of it. Yes, we had a couple of trainings on Reggio, specifically, and also on our curriculum.

Recognizing that documentation can be a valuable learning tool for children is a concept that aligns with this Reggio principle, and goes beyond the use of communicating learning to family and community.

She stated that she see parents as partners because:

They are a constant role. There – when we first meet with them, before school starts, in our, during our home visits, we ask them what they would like. What goal they would like to set for their child, and I put those goals into a chart and try to not only meet the goals that my co-teacher and myself have set for them, but the goals that the parents set.

Much like the authentic Reggio-inspired practices she stated:

...we implement that into their, into the lesson plan, because... I want them to learn their ABCs, 123s, doesn't mean that the parent's idea of what they should know is not valid. If they want them to learn how to tie their shoe, or what have you, then that is something I am definitely going to do. So, it's very – it's a constant. It's a constant role. We receive some, not as much as I think we should; I mean sometimes this can be overlooked unfortunately. But our family service worker is definitely, I think is, trying to change that. And is focusing a lot more and we have a lot of extra-curricular activities that they can do, family nights, cultural nights – things of that sort that also help the parents become a constant role and helps the teachers as well – think of activities and ways to become that partner with the parent.

The consideration of learning about and incorporating the parents' expectations and goals is a practice within the Head Start model that strongly aligns with the Reggio principle of parents as partners.

New Mexico Teacher 3 described the relationship between the school and community in this way:

It's a strong relationship. Very strong. The community 110% supports this program, and they do so by participation, parent participation, community participation and different events, whether it be family events, cultural events, Halloween. We just had one that was

community that was department wide. So, that was really nice to see everyone from the community together supporting one another. They definitely like the fact that we reinforce the culture and the language so that's something that the, I'm trying to go around as far as, like, and don't know if I can say that the Governor and the tribal council come every so often just to meet with the children and just to see the cultural activities that we do. So, that in itself, their presence, kind of shows there – that they're really supporting us.

This statement reveals that the community is a presence in the mindset of the school and teachers and that their work with children is validated by the community. There is a strong and significant link from the classroom to the tribal council, all the way to the tribal governor that this teacher recognizes and values, which aligns her with the Reggio-inspired principle of the Community as a Partner.

New Mexico Teacher 4 interview. New Mexico Teacher 4 shared her philosophy by stating:

I would say the way I teach is more based on expectations and goals for the students. It's more I find my position as I am getting them ready for the next step. So, what rules and expectations they're going to need to have for elementary school is what I want to incorporate into my classroom as well. So, more of like a tough love teacher.

This response shows that she could use PD to understand more about Reggio Emilia Approach and how to include the mandates of Head Start, whose curricular goals are more responsive to children. Relative to what goes on in her classroom she clearly explained:

You would see a lot of happy faces. Of course, a lot of learning, a lot of art, a lot of the kids work up on the walls. I'm trying to think... Just a lot of tools to be able to support the

kids and their learning. Whether that's tools that they have made or posters or different material that we've done, and we've put up.

This statement demonstrates some developmentally appropriate use of materials without a clear indication of child-led processes. Her tough love statement and ideas about her goals, as opposed to children's goals, suggest a more teacher-directed approach than Reggio-inspired.

This teacher responded openly about what she knew regarding Reggio-inspired classrooms by stating:

My understanding about Reggio, kind of say it in a funny way, is I because I – my brain works different than most people – is a hippy kind of way. So, a lot about nature, natural – using the natural environment – as a tool for learning... I believe it is also based on the kids going with the kid's direction. So, say, like right now it would be Halloween but they don't want to do Halloween, they want to talk about dinosaurs, then we go more towards the dinosaurs aspect because that is what their interest – that's what they are really into right now. And so, I believe Reggio focuses more on the kids' interest and where they want to lead the lessons and their learning to go.

This statement reflects an understanding of a Reggio-inspired approach.

The participant spoke about the child as the protagonist in this way:

I see the role of the child as a sponge, in a sense, but also then as a leader. So, they're just a complete – they soak up everything that we do, and we say and everything, just in general, that is around them. But then also, as a leader and they get to make their own choices their little mini adults, and so, we kinda go their way as well.

This statement clearly demonstrates New Mexico Teacher 4 knows something about early childhood theory, yet in a Reggio-inspired perspective, children are not often considered "little

mini adults.” They are considered capable, competent and have their own ideas and interests that should be guided and encouraged by adults and their peers.

Her responses to the way children communicate and collaborate reveal that children have a say and are included in making decisions in the classroom, which is an aspect of Reggio-inspired schools. She stated:

...we, as teachers, me and my co-teacher, is like when we are picking activities for the next month or how to decorate our door or how to decorate our bulletin board – it’s completely off of what they kids wanted. Our door this month was completely off of the kids and it’s Olaf and so it’s, we were thinking of a big old giant spider, but the kids didn’t want to do a spider, they wanted to do Olaf. So, they found the pictures and they did a little bit of research with us and helped create that, as well as with the bulletin board. They were really into baby sharks, so we did baby shark ones. And so, they pick a lot of the activities and the different things that we do. So, we plan along with them. Kind of here and there, of course, not as a whole group always, but our classroom, we also do a ton of voting. We will give a bunch of different options even when it comes to like our field trip or what we – our classroom wanted to be for Halloween, and we vote on it. And we take tally marks and we narrow it down and then we vote again and narrow it even further down. So, for us, our kids have a say in pretty much everything that we do with each other. We really encourage, especially during areas, we keep track of where they go and so, and we encourage them to try a new area the next day and then Fridays is kind of a free for all cause it’s Friday. But then they are with different people and we can help ensure that they are playing with different people. So, they’re getting different learning styles off of each other with that. We encourage the kids to communicate in several different ways

of course, using their words. We will also sometimes do a little bit of sign language 'cause we do have several who have speech concerns, and then we also use their native language here as a support for it as well. So, we kind of do a little bit of all three and then for some others we will do more visual.

In these instances, again, similar to teachers in Massachusetts, and Tennessee, Teacher 4 in New Mexico may benefit from professional development about Reggio-inspired approaches because it is clear that basic early childhood practices and theory is understood, but the language and depth for how children develop knowledge is less identifiable. She includes children in decision making but she doesn't make the connect to children as a partner or to herself as a teacher and co-learner, which would be the premise of a Reggio-inspired perspective.

New Mexico Teacher 4 described the classroom environment like this:

I feel the environment is a huge part because, of course, there's 18 or however many of them and only two of us. So, we can't be there one-on-one with every single child. So, the environment is a huge encouragement. For example, we know a lot of our, especially our boys, are really into tools, and we do have some fine-motor concerns as well. So, we ended up buying a little set that is a motorcycle, a helicopter and a car I think, like a race car, and it has a drill with it and so they can build it, they can take it apart, they can rebuild it together, and they just absolutely love it.

This statement demonstrates that even the most experienced teacher may find it challenging to completely eliminate biases from relating interests of children to gender roles. It is important for all children's learning to foster collaboration and partnerships between them so they can learn from one another through hands-on activities that promote creative thinking, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills regardless of their gender.

New Mexico Teacher 4 made connections to the value of teachers as partners with children and guiding them by stating:

I, family was extremely important, we are the support group for our, not only the child, but the family and community as well. So, right now, with the kids being so little, they just, they really do feed off of everything that is done, that is said, attitudes, behavior, just everything in general. So, some kids, this may be the only place that they get a hug from, where others maybe they get hugs all day. This is the only place they get a little independency [sic]. But then also a support system for the families and especially for the community. Because I know like in a pueblo, the history will kind of get lost a little bit as does anybody's traditions and history and so, it's really important for me to learn that, and to know it myself.

This example demonstrates that the participant has a sense of the role culture plays in building relationships between children, families and teachers which is central to the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

In her response to what lifelong learning means, she said

I believe everybody, not just the teachers, are a lifelong learner. There's things in just an everyday life that anybody can learn; I think especially with children, they just have such a, such a way at looking at life that it doesn't matter what goes on in life, they will always make me smile or make my day better. So, I don't know, I try to look at life as if I was still a little kid and just always learning and soaking everything up as I can.

This shows that New Mexico Teacher 4 is comfortable with reflecting on who she was as a child to better understand children. This sort of reflection is facet of a Reggio-inspired approach.

She describes the ways she documents what children are learning by saying:

I find we represent it in so many different ways. As to the environment, them having their artwork or their pictures or their thoughts or ideas up on the walls. The, of course, the documentations that we do, their notes home and the communication with the families, whether it's during parent-teacher conferences, or it's a picture, we just send them randomly throughout the day showing them what their child is doing. I don't know, it is just so many, it just always shows everything that we are doing and that we are learning and how the kids are growing.

This demonstrates a familiarity with documenting children in general ways. Some further development in Reggio-inspired documentation might help her develop more clarity on making children's learning more visible.

What was apparent to New Mexico Teacher 4 was that families and teachers are instrumental to the ways by which she communicates and plans engagement activities with children. She stated:

Families are a huge role and a huge aspect to everything that we do. As a teacher, I make sure that I am available to my families 24/7. Whether I'm at home with my own family or about to go to sleep, my families have access to me at any point. And, I just want them to be able to feel comfortable because their children do end up being more with us than they are with them. So, I want them to feel comfortable and feel like we're in this together and because they are the first teachers. That's not us, it's them, it's the families as well. The communication and the thoughts and ideas and just having the openness with the families is extremely important with us for me. So all of my families this year I had last year, so, I know just how absolutely amazing they are and how just honest and upfront with us and comfortable with us that sometimes I'll take advantage of it and pick their brains a little

bit like, ‘as a family, as a parent, what do you think about this? What do you think about us doing it this way or this idea’ and just kind of pick their brains and open up on my world a little bit more to what their thoughts are as me as a teacher and as our classroom.

The depth of this connection to families in relation to what is going on in the classroom is directly related to Reggio philosophy.

New Mexico Teacher 4 responded to the community as a partner in this way:

The relationship here is amazing! It’s really, really good. We will have several volunteers come in and help cook or help us with the oven, help and teach the kids dances. Last year we had the animal control come and kinda show our classroom a little bit what they do, and then we had the shelter come and show like a step-by-step of with the animals and...brought my own dogs in...because we adopted them from there and gave them a home. So, we kinda wanted to show them a kind of step-by-step in that process and how it works with the community. Walking to the library or having the library come to read to the kids - just there’s so many different ways. I think one of the teachers is working on getting Smokey the Bear to come and see the kids.

This response shows that the community partnerships and connecting children to their community are an important aspect of the practice of New Mexico Teacher 4. Her comments indicate that she gives back to the community by adopting animals from the local shelter and tries to educate children about that process. This is also a form of teaching children compassion for other living animals in relation to themselves.

Themes as they emerged in New Mexico. Themes were developed around the number of instances the particular content emerged from the data. Though the researcher used a frequency count of responses based on each theme, the numbers do not reflect knowledge or understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach. It is the quality of participant responses that determined whether or not a response was aligned with Reggio-inspired language or principles. The patterns in this case reveal some similarities and differences among the different participants that are represented numerically.

All participants in New Mexico referenced their teaching experience only once.

The director and education leader had a lot of comments in relation to most of the themes due to the higher level of education of each that included study of the Reggio Emilia Approach in coursework.

It is interesting that Teacher 3, who is found to be the most Reggio-inspired, based on the quality of the observation of her classroom and her interview responses, is represented by fewer responses that fall into three of the thematic categories: open-mindedness to other educational perspectives, professional development (teacher/child/parent), and Reggio Emilia Approach knowledge. This is due to her comments, though few, being more aligned with the Reggio-inspired philosophy. She has a low number of statements regarding child-centered curriculum, a number in the range of Teacher 2 and Teacher 4, yet again, the quality of her responses are more Reggio-aligned.

Mandatory curricular planning is referenced the most by the directors, the education leaders, Teacher 1, and Teacher 3. The difference is that the director and the education leader reference the mandates in relation to what they need to do to keep the program up and running according the rules and regulations of the state and Head Start performance standards. Teacher

1's and Teacher 3's referencing of the mandates is in line with what they clearly understand to be the criteria around which they will be assessed.

The education leader, Teacher 3, and Teacher 4 commented the most regarding intentional relationships. This reveals the level of understanding of this principle is shared at the leadership level, which is significant for Teacher 3 who is providing a lot of guidance on the REA for the other three teachers. The leadership completely supports the teachers in their ongoing study of the REA.

Table 6.

Themes Emerged from the Data in New Mexico

Theme	ED	EL	T1	T2	T3	T4	Example Statement
Teaching Experience in Early Childhood Education (TEECE):	1	1	2	1	1	1	"So, I have been teaching for more than 20 years. I've worked in a Head Start for about 19 years, one-month shy of 20. I went to the public schools for two years and I came back to the Head Start over here."
Open Mindedness to Other (OMP) Educational Perspectives:	5	5	8	1	1	5	"Yes, we had a couple of trainings on Reggio, specifically, and also on our curriculum."
Child-Centered Focus (CCF) Curricula Planning:	10	4	17	4	5	4	"...the child for me is the guide of what they want to learn or what they may need from us in the classroom."
Mandatory Curricula Implementation or Mandates (MCIM):	16	18	10	5	10	6	"...this year specifically we use the mentor, coach, and the education coordinator because they were both new, both have been in CLASS training."
Intentional Relationships (IR): Child-Teacher-Parent, and/or community	9	14	7	9	15	11	"But then also a support system for the families and especially for the community. Because I know like in a pueblo, the history will kind of get lost a little bit as does anybody's traditions and history and so, it's really important for me to learn that, and to know it myself."
Professional Development (PD): Teacher/Child/Parent Education Observed	9	11	13	12	9	11	"...teachers are natural learners. Teachers usually seek out trainings or professional development to enhance their skills or just bring in new ideas into the classroom."

Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) Knowledge, Practices, Noted Need for Professional Development, and/or Visible in Head Start Classrooms from Principle Principle 9.	15	32	28	20	15	17	“My approach is definitely one that is, I’m beginning to, for the past 3 years, I have started doing the Reggio approach. Beforehand, I was very into the “how do I say?” primary rainbow glitter is better ...”
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Survey findings. New Mexico participants reported agree or strongly agree with most of the survey and Likert scale interview questions. Similar to Massachusetts and Tennessee, a small selection of responses reveal that there are some participants who do not have a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired principles. The observations in New Mexico found representations of each of the Reggio-inspired principles, but interviews and survey responses show discrepancies, which shows a lack of a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired approach overall. The discrepancies in the survey responses from participants in New Mexico are highlighted in this section.

On the first survey question, not all participants were in agreement that the child is a protagonist (Figure 18). Five participants were in agreement and one was not. On question 9, one participant was not in agreement that the teachers design centers around children’s thinking (Figure 19). In question 32, half of the respondents did not agree that children come to the classroom full of knowledge that is beyond expected developmental milestones (Figure 20). It is interesting that in this program, where more participants state that they value children as protagonists and plan around children, a high regard for the child as protagonist and for designing the learning environment around children’s thinking doesn’t align with the perspective that children come to the classroom full of knowledge. An important feature of the Reggio-inspired philosophy is that children have competence in all aspects of the thinking and learning that they bring to the classroom and that it is the teacher’s role to extend this knowledge; a perspective that is not clearly present throughout this Head Start program.

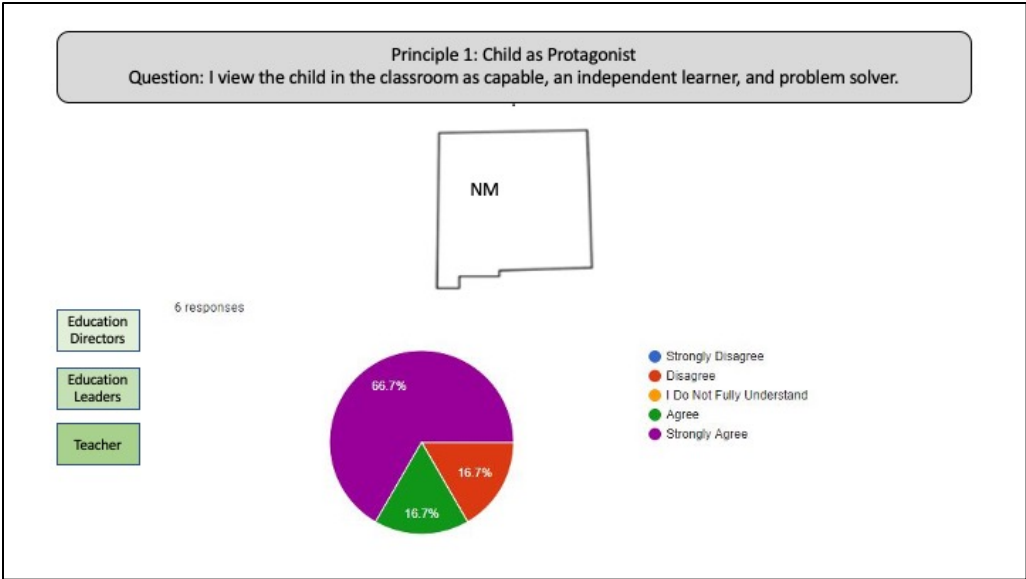


Figure 18. Survey results of NM child as protagonist question

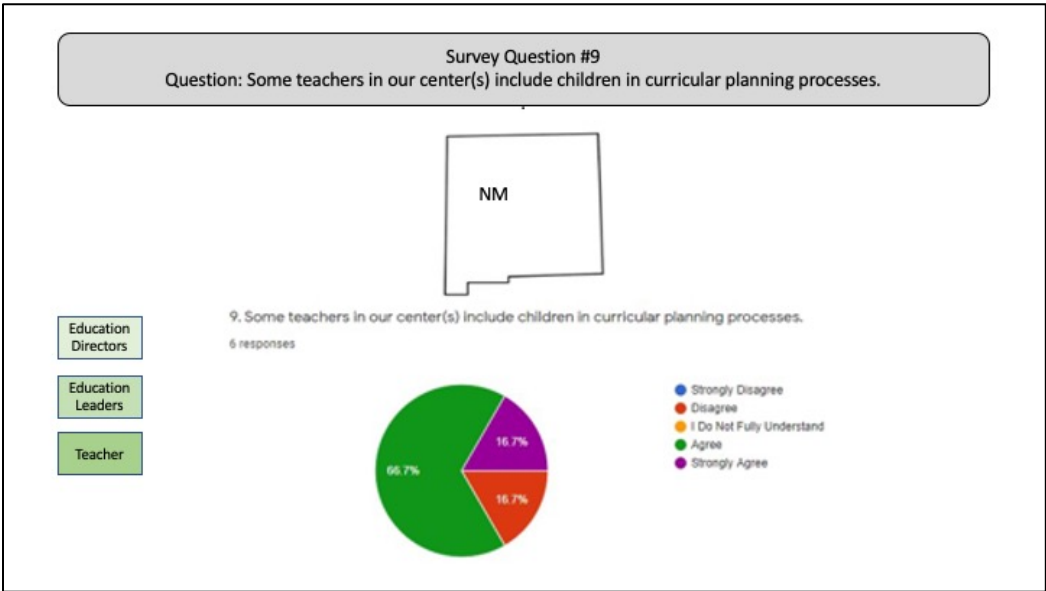


Figure 19. Survey results of NM question 9

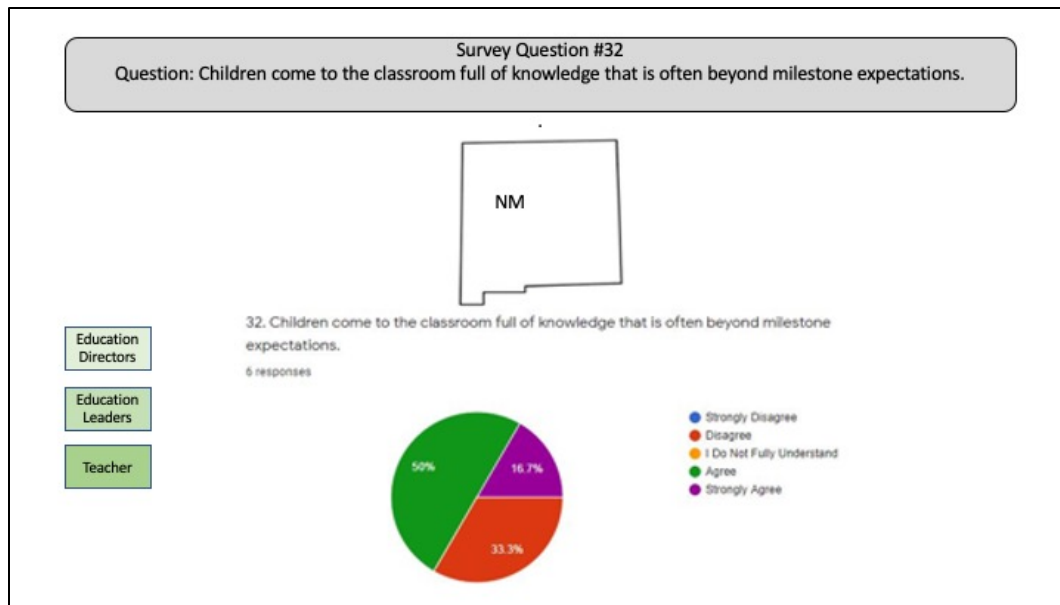


Figure 20. Survey results of NM question 32

Within-Case Analysis - Massachusetts

The within-case analysis in this section centers on the Head Start program in Massachusetts. The four research questions are presented with data from multiple sources including the observations of classrooms and hallways, interview responses of six participants, the themes as they emerged in Massachusetts, and survey responses of the six participants (Creswell, 2015, 2017; Patton, 2015).

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

Similar to the school in New Mexico, three of the classrooms represented in this case, Massachusetts, were observed to have very similar learning environments. One classroom stood out as different, with more elements of alignment with Reggio-inspired principles. Therefore, the three similar classrooms are presented together and the fourth is presented separately to describe the distinctions related to Reggio-inspired principles.

Massachusetts Teachers 1, 3, and 4. The classrooms demonstrate a good sense of developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), with some elements that align with a Reggio-inspired approach. Overall, walking into these three classrooms the researcher found that each was very similar. Work on the walls in each classroom was similar, no matter the theme. There were images of snowmen throughout, created by all the children, all using the same types of materials with little variety. The DAP items included chairs and tools that were child-sized and developmentally appropriate. The materials, furniture, and any images on the walls were at the child's eye level.

Items that stood out as elements of Reggio-inspired practices include images of children sharing and building together and pictures of the children's artwork with dictations of what the children said they represented. While these are forms of documentation and sharing the work of children, they don't reflect children's conversations in the context of long-term project work. They are more isolated instances of children engaged in different experiences which may be found in many high quality developmentally appropriate preschools.

The use of solid color carpeting was valuable in that children can focus on their work and play in the learning centers without distraction from busy colored carpets with lots of symbol imagery.

There were many examples of communicating messages using visually graphic materials that included maps, instructional diagrams using arrows or bullets, and labeling. There were many examples focusing on math concepts. One example is a series of photos of children engaged in math and science processes (Figure 21) that were accompanied by documents with simple instructional language, like "stop, touch, observe, proceed (Figure 23)." Diagrams using bullets or

arrows included language like, “follow the arrow,” or “go to the second bullet,” and “this is step one (1), this is step two (2), and this is step three (3) and you are finished,” as seen in Figure 22.



Figure 21. Photos of children engaged



Figure 22. Diagram illustrating procedural steps



Figure 23. Instructional signage

Massachusetts Teacher 2. This teacher’s classroom contained all the elements that teachers 1, 3, and 4 demonstrated in their classrooms. What stood out as more representative of Reggio-inspired practices in this classroom is that this teacher used many ways to document children’s discoveries, and she set up provocations in the classroom to ignite children’s inquiry. For example, in a learning center with paint, she had a prompt that asked, “What does an owl look like?” She used open-ended prompts, like “What do you think is going on in this picture?” These sorts of statements provoke children’s decision-making processes and individual perspectives.

Child-driven activities were visible everywhere, for example, children wrote their own names on their cubbies. There were natural materials brought in from outdoors for exploration in

every area of the classroom. Branches were used in a tree project that was a collaborative investigation. The classroom felt organized and welcoming. Everything in the classroom had a purpose and was being used by the children. There were no spaces that were not for children.

She also set up many different ways for children to reflect on what they had done previously. An example of this reflective process is the hand-held photograph books, no bigger than the length of your hand; each with photos of children focusing on the chronological process of one particular long-term project. In that classroom the teacher had lots of different graphic organizers showing children’s thinking and ideas, which diverges from the more instructional sorts of organizers in the other three classrooms. Images below reflect the open-ended approach to a drawing experience (Figure 24), a provocation for exploring natural materials that includes informational textbooks (Figure 25), and documentation of a family picture process that describes the goal and introduces the standards met (Figure 26).



Figure 24. Open-ended approach to drawing



Figure 25. Provocation with natural materials and informational text

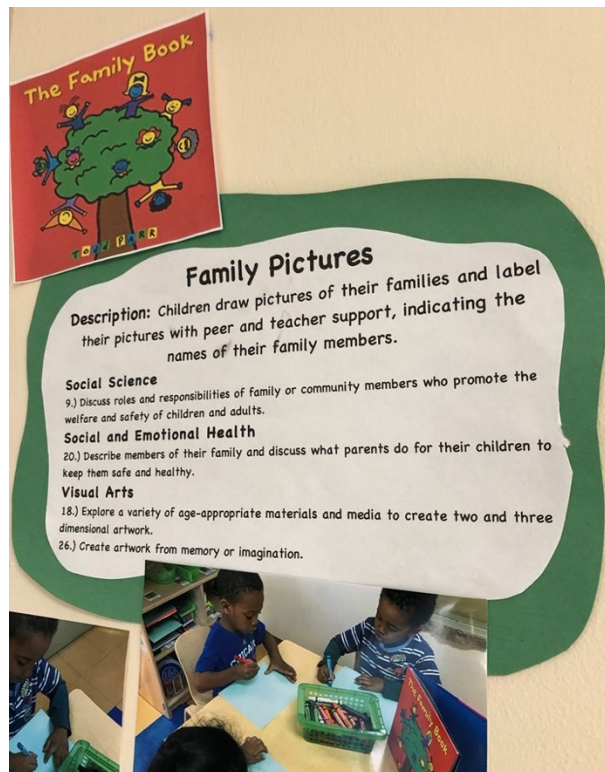


Figure 26. Documentation of a family picture project

Secondary area observations. The researcher found limited examples of Reggio-inspired principles, likely due to the design of the building, which was mostly comprised of very narrow stairways and narrow hallways. There wasn't a lot of wall space that one could practically view at a distance. The kinds of information on the walls were for parent education, like a networking book on parenting entitled *Boston Parents Paper* with activities and ideas for interests to support children. Some of the items on the walls were mass-produced reproductions (public relations imagery) of Head Start children and families but very few examples of images or work of currently enrolled children and their families. There were lots of networking flyers for parents, and there was a teacher lounge that was filled with posters providing inspirational messaging for teachers and information for continuing their education.

The value of teachers was demonstrated by the provision of individual lockers. There were plants and natural lighting in the entranceway downstairs. There was a reception area where the researcher witnessed each child and parent who entered being greeted by name with a question related to their personal home experience. This authentic communication by the Head Start representatives was the area in the school that most demonstrated the strength of the home and school relationship that aligns well with Reggio-inspired practices.

2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The director in Massachusetts responded to the introductory questions by stating:

I have been with the company since 2013. I have specifically worked in a HS setting for 10 years; with that being said, I am very open-ended in my teaching. I like it to be child-directed; however, it is structured around a scope-and-sequence curriculum.

When asked about what an observer would see in the classrooms, she responded by saying:

You would see a play-based model, that is open-ended and geared through the children and built off of their knowledge that they bring to the classroom. So, with that it would be guided with a unit of study that then connects with the scope and sequence and the objectives but then it is also child-directed.

These responses reflect clear understanding of early childhood development and practices, but similar to the director in Tennessee, her responses were primarily focused on the program mandates and state standards for operating childcare facilities.

The Massachusetts director responded to the question related to describing what she knew about Reggio-inspired practices by stating "...geared towards the children. It's open to their interpretation and free to choices." She responded in a similar way to the director in Tennessee with open-ended language and vocabulary, using words like *interpretation* and *free*. These terms align with Reggio-inspired vocabulary yet lack the clarity of being linked to specific curricular projects.

With response to the question of Child as a Communicator, the Massachusetts director demonstrated a good sense of the child needing to communicate in more than one way. She is more descriptive with this question than the education leader in Tennessee. She stated

A variety of ways, uhm we use a lot of visuals, script, we model, you know and just for a lot of our children now that we are seeing English as a second language, so, us as educators, we now need to learn to communicate in their home language the best that we can to then immerse them into the classroom and then start to support them with English language learning... Well again, just allowing the children to, use open-ended questions and the teacher respond to the open-ended questions with more questions.

The regard for the home language and a variety of ways to support children's communication aligns with Reggio-inspired principles, yet she is not linking this concept to the child's intellectual development as would a Reggio-inspired educator.

When asked whether the teachers receive professional development, the Massachusetts director stated

...that is a more in-house, however, we do uhm use tools such as QRIS, we use ECERS. And ECERS really, you know, supports us with the classroom arrangement of the environment, uhm, to make sure there's enough materials, the environment meets the needs of children either with a disability, identified or not identified, but then we do that once a year; and then we also share that data and my education supervisor would build necessary trainings. Either individually for each classroom or as a whole for all the teachers.

Notably the Massachusetts director is following policy and procedure from the guidance of state mandates and Office of HS to extend the best learning opportunities for children. With focus on state mandates and boxed curriculum, teachers are less likely to become introduced to other approaches or curriculum if there is little professional development outside of "in-house" options to guide them into including other learning models to meet the diverse needs of the children in their classrooms.

For example, the Massachusetts director stated multiple times and in different ways:

...we provide that, again, would be in-house... We do provide professional development that is geared toward the classroom... Again, yes...that is a more in-house, however, we do uhm use tools such as QRIS, we use ECERS... I am going to revert back to CLASS... It is right in our Head Start Regulations and Guidelines...again I feel the PD will support

both teachers and my family service staff just because we both have the HS Performance Standards...one of the tools that we use is CLASS. We have observers come in at the beginning of the year to kind of assess the classroom with the CLASS tool. And from there we take that data that's received and then we kind of share it back to the classroom using the domains from CLASS to support the teachers to expand, uhm, on the concepts and questioning of children... One of the things that we do to support the teachers, is, we use Teaching Strategies GOLD...they have to become a reliable rater per se.

Though this director's responses reveal expert knowledge of child development, most of her responses related to professional development in her Head Start program and maintained a focus on the Head Start mandates.

3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The Massachusetts education leader responded to the introductory questions by providing some insight about her qualifications and philosophy. She stated:

...my current role is preschool education coordinator, so I oversee educational programming for all of our HS programs. I was a preschool teacher for 10 years... children build knowledge through social interactions, scaffolding, things of that nature. And, I've been in my current role for about a year, and so I have really tried to enhance the curriculum, put more of that social aspect in just to make sure that we are providing children with everything that we need.

When asked the question or what an observer would see in the classrooms, the Massachusetts education leader responded by stating:

You will see a lot of small-group activities going on, independent, where you have a group of 2-4 children engaging in a center in an activity. More uhm, teacher supported activities going on. Basically, we are doing observations constantly in the classroom, so we can determine what level each child is in all of the different domains, and then we will tailor the activities to meet those levels. So, there may be some groups where they'll need a bit more teacher intervention whereas others can be completely independent.

This reveals alignment with DAP more so than a Reggio-inspired approach in which project work might be a focus.

The Massachusetts education leader responded to the question about what she knew of Reggio-inspired practices by saying:

When I think of Reggio, the first thing that comes to mind is art...but I know it is very child centered – they have the hundred languages of children – and just that they can express themselves in just a multitude of ways and there isn't just one way of learning and teaching and expressing yourself.

Similar to the education leader in Tennessee and New Mexico, the Massachusetts education leader reported a strong sense of understanding the needs of children, families, and child development, revealing some alignment with Reggio-inspired practices.

When asked the question about the Child as the Protagonist, the Massachusetts education leader responded by stating:

...when I was a teacher, I never considered the classroom 'my classroom.' It was everyone's classroom. The children, the teacher, because the children are just as much in charge of what goes on in there and what direction we take during an activity. Actually, more so than the teacher is...because if children are interested and engaged and you are

following their lead, they are going to learn way more than if you are trying to dictate what they are doing. So, I see all the children as the leaders of the classroom.

Her response directly reflects a view in alignment with Reggio-inspired principles.

One of the quotes from the Massachusetts education leader's response was similar to the response from the director in Tennessee in how she chose to highlight the value of the community in the eyes of the children. She stated:

If we start now with even, simple as community helpers and getting them to meet firefighters or police officers or you know, even the person that works at the deli counter at Stop-N-Shop uhm, you know, it is helping to build that positive uhm, image of the community, and so it is all about just building the relationships and kind of being that bridge.

This represents a shared value among leadership at this Massachusetts Head Start program for bringing children closer to the communities they are from.

4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

Massachusetts Teacher 1 interview. Massachusetts Teacher 1 responded to the question about her experience and teaching philosophy by stating:

I've been a teacher for over 10 years working preschool, and, uhm, my philosophy has really been, you know, like uhm, to just be nurturing to children. I know children learn through play, and I know that my job is to facilitate their play... Every day I come to work excited about coming and teaching them new stuff and facilitating their learning...children are exploring in the classroom.

When asked about her understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach, Massachusetts Teacher 1 stated, “I am not familiar with, right with that.” This response indicates that professional development on this type of early childhood approach has not been available to this teacher and exposure may be useful for teachers to apply new ideas and constructs into their mandatory curricular planning.

Massachusetts Teacher 1 responded to the Principle 1: Child as Protagonist by stating:

So I believe when the children come into the classroom, that this is like, this is their space, their learning space, uhm, and they come in and they should feel very comfortable, they should feel uhm, welcome, they should feel nurtured, and they should feel like it’s a place where they can explore and learn.

This type of response reveals the way that Head Start practices can directly align with the Reggio-inspired perspective, where teachers can hold the belief that the classroom is the space in which the child initiates exploration and learning.

Her response to the Child as a Collaborator principle is grounded in a child’s connection to their emotions, interests, and community. She stated:

...we do a lot of activities around sharing...getting them to, uhm, talk a lot about their feelings, talk a lot about their interests in the classroom, and uhm, especially when we do morning meetings; the children, they get the opportunity to you know to talk about, you know, things happening at home or things that’s happening in their neighborhoods or things that they see. So, it’s always an opportunity for them to share.

Coupled with her statements about how children collaborate, she stated that teachers guide children to communicate in multiple ways:

...we ask open-ended questions in the classroom...when they're, uhm, doing a drawing or doing any activity we ask them so many questions about it, like, "What can you tell me about your picture? Can you tell me what you are building?" ...Even the social-emotional aspect of it, it's like, if they are having a hard day, can you tell me how you are feeling? Do you know why you are feeling that way? So just getting them to communicate with the teachers in the classroom.

Both these comments show a sense of caring about children's expression, which in a very general way can align with Reggio principles. Yet, linking the possible ways children express through multiple means is not specific enough to reveal that she understands how to encourage deep and reflective expressions in ways that a Reggio-inspired teacher might facilitate.

Massachusetts Teacher 1 noted that the environment in the classroom:

...is very important, because you want to make sure that in order for children ah, for us to facilitate their learning that everything that they're going to be learning is already incorporated in the environment...and then everything is at the children's eye level – we make sure that you know, areas are uhm labeled so children know what the areas are...how many children can play in that area at a certain time, so, it is like the environment is always – the furniture is safe for them and uhm, all that is important.

The participant's response suggests that while she has a clear understanding of child development theory and best practices, there is some lack of connection to how the environment shapes a child's learning experiences by the ways she uses language to describe aspects of the environment related to mandates and expectations from curricula (numbers allowed in an area at one time and safety) that drives data. All are important, yet Reggio-inspired schools define the environment as

the third teacher, closely connecting the learning children experience from an environment that piques their interest and encourages provocations.

Massachusetts Teacher 1 responded to the teachers and parents as partner questions in a way that reveals her belief that these relationships are based on trust. She states:

...they trust us with their children. So, we have to make sure that the communication is constant with the family; and with the community as well, like sharing resources and everything with the community they share with us, we share with them, and that's important.

Trust is important when developing relationships with families, yet a Reggio-inspired approach would go deeper to engage families in the curricular processes taking place in the classroom.

Her perspective on nurturing the learning process for children and herself was communicated in response to the Teacher as Researcher question with statements such as this:

...we learn every single day... we learn from the children as they learn from us... we explore together ... you didn't even know what can happen and sometimes kids teach you more than you, even though you know. So, definitely, we are all researchers in the classroom.

This doesn't reflect a clear vision of engagement in inquiry processes with children that is the backbone of this Reggio-inspired principle.

The response to the documentation of children's learning process was phrased like this: "...of course their artwork is always hung up in the classroom so, so we know what they are doing, and then we do lots of uhm, observations... observations guide our curriculum." Her last three statements reflect similar responses to the New Mexico Teacher 3, Tennessee Teacher 4, and Massachusetts Teacher 2 in that they are similar to responses one might hear from Reggio-

inspired educators. They represent a child-directed, child-focused, and child as the protagonist perspective.

Similar to other teachers across the three states, Massachusetts, New Mexico and Tennessee, Massachusetts Teacher 1 responded to the relationship between the school and the community question in a way that does not support the potentiality of the community being considered as a strong support for the school. Her response reflected that:

...they definitely provide us resources, so uhm, like the collaborations we have with like different partners in the community like library for example; like you know, you know can always take the children out to the library, listen to story time, and you know, like, we have like these resources available ... or taking children to the zoo and all these different things in the community and which helps to foster the children's learning.

The sorts of community experiences this teacher presents are typical of many developmentally appropriate classrooms. There are many opportunities in Massachusetts for this school and community to collaborate which may be able to develop with the support of professional development.

Massachusetts Teacher 2 interview. Massachusetts Teacher 2 stated:

My teaching philosophy is most definitely focused on the social-emotional development of children because I see that as the foundation for them to build on as they move forward. I'm not so much uhm, interested in their academic performance at this stage. So, if you have social-emotional skills, then at any point in time you would be able to learn and move forward, problem solve and succeed in life and in school. So, I am driven, I am driven by... that. I think that is my most important focus ... I think some people are not, not guided by best practices...for whatever reason that may be; uhm, I think I mentioned

that to you earlier today; ...I think some people are either, this is not the field for them or they're tired and they need to be re-energized again; uhm, but some people lose sight of that, that we are supposed to provide care for children with that best practices in mind at all times.

Over the course of this part of her conversation, these ideas reflect a deep connection to what is best for children without reference to Head Start mandates or curriculum. As such, this sort of response is in closer alignment to the Reggio-inspired philosophy.

In response to her knowledge about the Reggio Emilia Approach Massachusetts Teacher 2 says:

Just a lot of natural elements in the environment providing those elements for children to explore and to observe and get to know and extend their learning through those, those, different things in the environment uhm, it is, the environment is and I do believe that the environment is a teacher in the classroom, or is that how it's, that's ... Because if the environment is not uhh, uhh you know a welcoming environment not set up and organized, you really, the children can't learn. They have to have an environment where they feel safe, they feel nurtured, they feel they can explore, they can touch, they can do anything in that they will be recognized for what they are doing, that they will be encouraged to ask questions and to move forward.

This response shows that this teacher focuses more on what is best for children, for the ways that children learn, as opposed to what a teacher or mandate prescribes, which aligns well with DAP and in a general way with Reggio-inspired philosophy.

Her beliefs about the Child as Protagonist are clearly expressed by her statements:

So I believe when the children come into the classroom, that this is like this is their space, their learning space; uhm, and they come in and they should feel very comfortable, they should feel uhm, welcome. They should feel nurtured and they should feel like it's a place where they can explore and learn.

This is very similar to what Teacher 3 in New Mexico and Teacher 4 in Tennessee, where each sees children as capable and independent learners. That children need the type of environment to feel good and comfortable in, where they have a right to explore, which is in alignment with Reggio-inspired principles.

What Massachusetts Teacher 2 says about the child as a collaborator is that children: ...bring in their ideas, to share their ideas with each other with us, uhm, often, asking them questions, of you know, open-ended questions and just taking that information and moving with it; uhm, watching what they do, how they respond to what I bring into the environment.

She understands that children need to communicate in many ways and that teachers need to observe closely to understand. She stated that children communicate:

...in any possible way that they can; sometimes it is just as simple as a gesture. Sometimes it is using a storyboard, uhm, sometimes it's verbally, if we are lucky... A lot of times, you just have to kind of watch and that's how you, you can understand what they are trying to tell you.

The inclusion of observation as criteria for understanding children shows this teacher is open to what children have to express. These statements reveal her background in which she has had some education focused on Reggio-inspired practices.

In relation to the environment question Massachusetts Teacher 2 says:

I think the role of the classroom environment is one of the most important roles. Because, as I already said, if the environment isn't welcoming, it's not nurturing, it doesn't feel safe to the children, they are not going to be able to learn; you have to provide that environment for them...and then, they flourish. So, I think I have to agree. That definitely is the environment is the third teacher.

This builds on her Reggio-inspired belief that the child is protagonist, as an independent learner, as stated in earlier interview responses.

Massachusetts Teacher 2 sees herself not only as a partner with children, but as a partner with all the adults with whom a child interacts. She says:

It's an important role. Uhm, I'll have to, I guess if I don't take my role serious, if I don't portray myself in a certain way, then it would really not benefit the children, not benefit the families. So, uhm, let me just count how is it that I respond? It's another, you know, like another adult just because families are the, as we say, the first teachers, but just another adult who they're able to come together and share their ideas and learn from you and even just come in sometimes. You know, it's just they need a hug that day, they need to be loved and that's what some children need every day. They don't need, you know, to be taught how to write their name or something like that.

She is saying, you need to meet the children where they are at, with the best you can do for them that day. She empowers other adults and children with the right to be expressive and share their needs and knowledge with one another. She continues along these lines by saying that it is so important to keep in close communication with families to really understand children's needs in relation to what is going on in their lives outside of school. She says:

uhm, and with families, I think in this type of a program, you have to build strong relationships. So that way, you can understand what the family is going through at that point in time, because that directly affects the children; and you may think it's a behavioral issue or something is going on. But, in fact, it may be homelessness or trauma and so, I think first and foremost, that's why we do home visits, is to start with a home visit, meet the families, meet the children in their environment and then take it from there. The more information you have, the better off you are.

While this last statement is very much the overall philosophy of Head Start and may be the philosophy of many quality preschools, when coupled with this teacher's view of partnership, she sees the two as very connected in a way that is aligned with Reggio practices.

Already Massachusetts Teacher 2 has identified herself as a partner with parents in her response to her view of herself as a partner with children. Of parents as partners she says:

They have a very important role. I think ... like I've said, if you don't have a relationship with your families, you really are at a disadvantage. So, it's to your best interest, my best interest to, to, forge those relationships and try to make them feel comfortable even if they don't speak your language. Or if for some reason they are apprehensive because of a situation they may be in. But you just have to really reach out and try to find something to, to, let them feel that you are there to help them. You're there to help their children and provide resources for them.

Early on in her experience as a teacher in this residential area in this school, Massachusetts Teacher 2 said there was a strong relationship with the community. But those connections have been lost over the years as people have moved in and out of the residences here, and the school pulled more within. She says:

It doesn't feel as, that, you know, would be welcomed, more or less, and there's really not that much, uhm, to go out there into the community, and, we're restricted at times where we're not allowed to be in the community outside of our grounds. We, in this area, we don't have a relationship in the community, uhm, I feel a little bit disconnected... I've had a, a deeper connection to the community uhm, here it just seems as though we're just removed.

During the observation of her classroom Massachusetts Teacher 2 did say to the researcher that one connection in the community still exists, and this with the woman who donates pumpkins to the school every fall because she feels that children should understand about fall and harvest seasons. The pumpkins are visible in the secondary area observations for this school.

This teacher expressed an interest in continuing her education and going on to a doctoral program. In relation to learning as a researcher in the classroom she said, "I can, I can honestly say, I probably leave here every day and I can tell you I learned something new, whether it's from my colleagues, or from the children." This open perspective is reflective of a Reggio-inspired educator.

She uses language Reggio-inspired educators would use when talking about documentation. She says, "I learn every day...through their work, through, I do, I do a lot of photographs uhm through narratives, uhm, I make up photo albums and put them out. I call them showcases of learning." She had beautiful albums of the children engaged in learning. She respects the environment as a place that also serves as documentation, so that when someone enters, they can see what is engaging children, through her documentation and the materials set up in the classroom. She says, "So, I try to have, the environment rich in that, so that way, anyone,

the children themselves see it, and then, anyone who comes into the room can see exactly what they do on a daily basis.”

Massachusetts Teacher 3 interview. Teacher 3 in Massachusetts spoke candidly about her philosophy by stating:

My teaching philosophy is...the right environment and the right person, any child can learn, any child can learn, whether it's something major and every child has the capability to learn as long as they are given the opportunity and given the right tools to do it...all you have to do is be positive about it. Always be positive. Even when it's, you have that child...that has that hard day and they're like 'I can't do it' my line is, my motto is: Nothing beats *I can't* versus *a try*. A try can beat anything. Even if you fail, you learn something from it – try again. Try, try, try. That's basically where I am with everything. Try. Try it once. If you fail, oh well, try it again. If you just learned something from your try, from your failure so, keep trying.

This teacher is very comfortable with encouraging children so that they don't give up on themselves, to help them try and accomplish, which builds self-esteem. This seems a personal attribute and important value that is not necessarily related to a Reggio-inspired principle.

With reference to the question posed about what an observer would see in her classroom she responded:

...well, I haven't visited *everyone's* classrooms but when I have had the opportunity to, I see compassionate, independent learning happening. I see compassionate teachers who are putting in the work and the hours to make sure that they, children, are exposed to various, various, uhm, things and ideas and I see thinking happening. I see aha moments. I see play happening, but very thoughtful play, and thoughtful learning. Uhm, what else do I see? I

see culture embedded in their learning a little bit. Uhm, I see – I see some, some amazing things happening. I see some things that aren't quite amazing, but I mean I see, I see learning happening. I see a lot of learning happening, uhm, at different capacities.

This teacher shows a deep appreciation for the processes of how children make connections. She notices their “aha” moments. She is an observer who sees children thinking, respects those processes and their connection to culture, all of which is closely linked to a Reggio Emilia philosophy.

When asked the question regarding what Massachusetts Teacher 3 knew about Reggio Emilia, she stated:

If I believe...I am correct, Reggio believes that there are, there's a teacher, there's a student, and there's the environment, and they all play a part in the learning process that teachers learn as well as, uhm, the student learns. They learn together and they learn together through the environment and it's independent learning styles, where they learn independently with the teachers is like an aide, or like a tool, but they're learning independently in the classroom from the environment, not only just from the things, like the environment as a whole is another form of another teaching tool. For, if I am correct, I believe...it's all about community and it's put into the learning environment. Because I believe it was, he [Malaguzzi] used everything, they use everything, they use the outside, the inside, they use parents, they use culture, they use all of it to implement to help within the learning. So, the learning process wasn't just the child learning, it was the child learning and teaching other children and collaborating with children. It was the teacher learning and learning how to collaborate with the child. It was, it is a beautiful thing.

These statements reflect the connection this teacher is making to what she is learning from Teacher 2, who is mentoring the other teachers in this school to learn about and implement a Reggio-inspired approach.

Massachusetts Teacher 3 responded to the question about the child as a protagonist in this way:

The child in our classroom, I feel, is a sponge. He is a sponge. He is absorbing everything. He is, let me rephrase that, he's not a sponge, or she is not a sponge. They're a used sponge. So, I feel like they have these experiences that they have sucked up and they've used, and they use those experiences to absorb, figure out how they are going to absorb or how they are going to learn something new, or utilize something that they just learned. So, based on not only what they have experienced but using those same experiences from outside of the classroom, using those experiences inside the classroom to navigate the environment that they're learning, that they're in and learning based on those experiences as well as other experiences that they are getting. So, it is like taking a used sponge and putting that used sponge in some nasty, cruddy, water and then having them absorb it and then them learning from it and then squeezing it out and then putting them in some other water or let me rephrase that, taking that after they have all of that nasty that they have absorbed and putting them in a brand new bucket and then taking it, all that messiness, and just squeezing it out and now you see all of the stuff that they've learned. Yes, it is a messy collage of things but it's, in its own self, it's beautiful and it's an amazing thing. It's kinda like a big mish mash... of things that they've experienced and that they are going to continue to experience. Until that water is nice and messy and cruddy, but that's what they have learned. It's a lot of stuff that they are going to learn throughout life and

over time it's gonna just be in that big messy sponge. You don't throw it away. You, eventually you will, but you've learned from it. You've thrown it away and then you learn. Oh, I need a new sponge! So, now I am going to use another part and then you use that other part of their brain, but they use, they got that experience from doing all of those other things.

Such a rich perspective on the child as the agent in their learning is clearly aligned with this Reggio-inspired principle that the child is a protagonist.

In reference to the child as a collaborator, Massachusetts Teacher 3 stated:

I tell my children in the classroom... "You guys are all leaders", and some of our friends need help because even as a leader, you need help. So, I need you to work. Can you do me a favor and can you work with such and such and show him how you did this, and can you show him how this works? And can you show me, cause sometimes I play, 'I don't know'... Can you help me do this? But I can't do it and I'll play stupid. I play the stupid role. I'll play the kid role all day, every day. 'I just don't know how to. Can you tell me what I need to do first?' Oh, you know miss teacher, you know what you need to do... I'm like 'I don't know what I need to do.' First you have to do this... 'Oh, I forgot - and then what do I need to do? I need to do this, Oh, now I remember.' So giving them the opportunity to be a leader in the classroom and giving them the opportunity to feel like, oh, even amongst their peers, like you can do this you can, can you show this one? Giving them those opportunities is a must and that's basically how we, as I know in our classroom, and I'm sure they do it in other classrooms where they uhm, use the children as collaborators in the classroom. Because the classroom isn't just, like I tell them it's not my class it's our class. So, I can't do it all, these aren't my toys. These are our toys. So, if you

break the toys there's no more toys for no one to play with and I like to play with toys. Don't you like to play with toys? Or, I like to play with this, or I love playing with this, or if a child is like I don't know how to draw this. Well, ask such and such. She's great at it. Try. Can you show me how to make this? C'mon and I'm like, don't do it. Say to the child don't do it for them, tell them how to do it. You mean tell them? Yes, tell them how to do it. OK. So, first you gotta make a circle. This is what I did, and then you gotta do this. So, using those skills and then, I mean it feels good for the kids, for the child because they're like, I know how to do something that somebody else, but it also feels sometimes it comes off better from another child versus coming off from a teacher. They like that stuff. They love that stuff.

Her approach almost needs no explanation. She knows how to guide children to communicate with one another and support each other. Her approach shows her belief in children as capable and able to collaborate and think for themselves, which clearly aligns with a Reggio-inspired approach.

The participant's response to Child as Communicator was interesting because she stated she uses open-ended questions to encourage communication with children and their peers such as:

I ask as many questions, open-ended questions, so they, that they have to communicate, and for the ones that are not able to communicate, uhm, who are like English language learners, or, or have, uhm, issues or complications with their speech, I, for those I might ask like yes or no questions. But I play like I said, I play like I don't know anything, and I ask as many questions as, and they're like, but you know this, you know that. I'm like, no I don't. You just taught me something. I'm not a teacher, you're the teacher. That's what I get. I'm like, but sometimes teachers don't know everything. So, we have to ask questions

too. So, having those types of, uhm, those type, using those, using that, or using, what can I do with this? Can I just do this? Or as far as tools and materials, what do I do with this? I don't know, what should I do first? And seeing what they know before I, we even, use it. When we are doing structures or we're painting or we're building or, what is this? What are we using? Why, why do we use this? Cause you said we have to use this, but why? Hmm and sometimes they get frustrated...And out of the blue sometimes they'll come up with these things and I'm like, you know what? I didn't think of that, and I'll throw that into my little toolkit of things that I didn't know I could use these tools for. And then I'll try it out. So, I mean, like I said, we all learn from each other.

Similar to her view of the child as a collaborator, Massachusetts Teacher 3 uses strategies that encourage children to communicate their ideas about how to accomplish the many things they encounter throughout the day in ways that support themselves and their peers. This is authentic connection to the Reggio-inspired principle of the child as a communicator.

In relation to the classroom environment and learning this teacher said:

The classroom environment plays a major role in our learning environment. Uhm, having the placement of it ... the areas in the classroom are important because you don't want, for instance, a very loud area with a very quiet area where children need to, like actually think about and wanta, like painting and/or listening area. You don't want that next to your dramatic play where everything is like AAAYYYY... and they're acting out how they, so environment plays a major role in how they learn, what they learn and what they're capable of learning. Because if based on how you arrange your classroom, greatness can happen, or you can have a big flop; and you can have chaos. So, that, the environment plays, ahh, is like a like it says, a third teacher in that classroom. If your environment isn't

set up correctly, it can, one, trigger children. It can cause chaos. It can mess up with the management of the classroom. It can disrupt the schedule in the classroom because of so many different things that can happen if your classroom is not set up correctly. If your science area and your, and your manipulatives aren't next, cause throughout the whole classroom there's math. So, you can have quiet areas near loud areas where, where, where, mixed with areas where like your quiet area and your writing area are near each other because your library is near each other because they, they need that quiet if they're going to look at books. They need that quiet if they're going to be writing on and they're gonna have those conversations. You want the manipulatives in a moderate area where you can have conversations, your science where you can ask lots of questions and be loud if you want to. If you see things are gonna crash or boom it's not gonna startle everybody up. Who are in the quiet area because it is already in that area where it is kind of loud. So, the kids are learning and they're a window where they can look out and see things that are in their environment. So, again, you don't want your, for instance, your science in a little corner somewhere with, there's no light and it's no way for them to look out the window and see their environment around them. Cause that's an important, important aspect of them learning about their environment about science about everything by looking at their environment outside the window or seeing sunlight or being exposed to nature at, in its, in its natural state by just looking out the window. Looking out the window you can learn so much about so many things. And, I mean, kids are awesome and amazing and they, they want to ask those questions and you want to be able to provide them and run out. Look, why is this snow coming down like that? The reason snow comes down is because of, and answering those questions and then eventually scaffolding it to be something else or

talking about the environment, talking about the seasons. This is because it is wintertime and when water molecules are actually ice and then when they come down it gets a little hot and they, some pop up like popcorn and that's why we have snowflakes. So, and no snowflake is the same and then you go, that extends from that science area to that art area and talk about the mathematics in that, like I don't know what it looks like. That's ok because no snowflake is the same, and then, extending that to manipulatives or expanding it to writing where you're making and drawing and writing the word snowflake or what it, or having books in there. Like all of that is extenuating in the environment and how you set up that environment because if you set it up the right way it can go from something as looking out the window at snowflakes to an activity that you are doing in the art to bringing in snow from outside to put in your water table to putting, uhm, people with boots or other things in the sand table or to reading books about snowflakes to writing words about snowflakes, to building a box of full of paper snowflakes in the block area. So, and then going into housekeeping and talking about, oh, what did we do? We were out in the snow. So, it, that one, that all happens based on your environment and being able to set it up the right way makes it happen.

Her statements show that she has solid experience setting up a classroom based on ECERS, early childhood theory and following mandates. Her comments also show her openness to include other perspectives in her curriculum and basic understanding about the Reggio Emilia approach. Yet, some clarity about how to further extend children's learning based on the Reggio Emilia approach could be formed with more professional development.

This participant responded to the teacher as a guide question in this way:

I am the glue. I am the one who basically works with the child, then who also works when you're, well dealing with children. You're not just dealing with the child you're dealing with the whole family. It's like a wrap-around so you're dealing with the families, you're dealing with your colleagues, you're dealing with the community based on whether it's not up front but maybe vicariously, because you have to deal with, you have to deal with the environment and the experiences that the children are coming from. So, you have to be the glue that puts it all together. Figure out how you're gonna mesh it so that this child is, wherever they come from, whatever they're coming from, build that child up and build that foundation for them to learn based on the, and provide them with educational opportunities so that they're capable of learning even after you're they move on to the next level. So, making sure that the parents and everybody else is on the same page so that they are ready because when a child learns, they don't just, it doesn't just stop with that child in the classroom. It continues because, they all, education isn't just about the child, it's about the whole family. Because if the child can put in the work, but they're gonna need that family too, for that support when they're putting that work in...

This shows a strong sense of teacher as a guide. She understands that everyone needs to be on the page with the child and in that way sees herself as a co-learner with children, which is a perspective in alignment with Reggio-inspired philosophy.

Her response to the teacher as a researcher was insightful as she stated:

I feel like I am always learning something new. Whether it is from a child, or from something that I watch, or something that I have learned from teachers or fellow classmates, uhm, in school, uhh, uhh, I'm always looking up new ways and trying to figure out new techniques to, uhm, to techniques for teaching and how, different ways that

people are, are teaching because conventional, what sets the teaching is something that constantly evolves. Because children constantly evolve there's no everybody's like, there's no such thing as a normal child, cause no child is the same. They're like ever evolving children, ever evolving beings. So, there's never like, oh, this child learns this way, this child learns this way and this child learns this way. That might happen for today and tomorrow it'll be, I don't get it this way, I want it this way. So, you always have to be researching or learning new things, new ways and new things. New, let me rephrase that, new, you always have to be prepared to learn new more innovative ways because children are exposed to technology and technology as much as it is a godsend, it is the worst thing in the world because children are exposed to it and then they're like, "oh, this is what it," and everything they're exposed to is not the truth. So, you have to be that teacher or that person who uses and communicates and finds ideas and tells, teaches them, "ok, yeah, that's, that's something that we learn but this is how it really happens and this is what you can do and this is what we can do and this is how we can do it," and showing them and other than just speaking to them, let's do it through dance, let's do it by, uhm, moving and see another way we can do it, like always having those new ways to show them.

These statements reveal an understanding that children's learning is not specific at all times. It can be transitional. Sometimes teachers are so ready to identify children as having specific learning styles, directing teaching based on what might be labeled as a visual learner or a kinesthetic learner. She doesn't do that. She sees children as being able to learn in different ways and different contexts that are not limited. Her perspective aligns with the Reggio-inspired philosophy.

Massachusetts Teacher 3 responded to the question about documenting what children were learning by stating:

...documentation but also using sometimes using that documentation...when we're planning or what we are doing next week, like, oh, I noticed that such and such wasn't able to do this. So, why don't we figure out a way to make him successful and completing this task. Maybe it is not on the same level as the other children, but having him have those little tiny successes to build up to that big success, which is meeting that goal that we already have set for him...they have us do, uhm, Teaching Strategies. They have a whole PD on Teaching Strategies, how to use it, what if you need activities extra activities.

This statement shows that the participant is familiar with basic processes of documenting children's learning, yet limited within the context of assessment processes within the prescribed curriculum offered in the professional development at her school, which is not aligned with a Reggio-inspired approach.

Her statements about partnering with parents were revealing:

...parents are...the very first teachers, and you're getting whatever you, whatever you want from that child. If you want more, you're gonna have to go through that parent so they need to be your partner. You want that parent to be part of that classroom. Let that parent know what they are learning. Let that parent, if they can volunteer, come and volunteer. You wanna see? If they're sitting, even for 10 minutes, in there playing with their child and they're asking questions or they're seeing what they are learning, and they go home and they ask, 'oh, what did you learn today?' Like, and then the parent goes, 'Yeah, he came home, or she came home, and she told us such and such.' That's amazing

for me cause I'm like, oh, so, obviously we did something right because they are going home, and they are talking about it and they really liked that activity. Maybe we can do it again. So, then we will do it again and they be like, "Oh my God, he just loves this game. What is it?" And then you tell that parent and then they go home, and they do it and maybe that sparks something where they're like, 'Oh, he really liked doing art this way.' So, maybe that might encourage that parent to take him to an art museum and then who knows what that sparks. Maybe that child later on becomes an artist or maybe we did something in science and they end up going to the, uhm, museum at that at MIT and later on in life they get so wrapped-up into, its them playing with Legos and they decide that they want to do engineering, or they want to do something else, and, that all happened because a parent was in the classroom or the parent heard about some activity we were doing and it sparked interest in that child and now this child is so into it that it that they, they, outside of school they, uhm, gravitated to something that they really liked and now it's become part of who that child is and how that child is going to learn and it could turn into a career at some point...

Clearly communicating with parents about what children are interested in, learning and doing is important to this teacher. She makes the connection between their current interests and who they might become. She wants parents to be able to participate in the real learning within the classroom and to be able to transfer that to experiences at home. Her vision aligns with the respect for children and parents within a Reggio-inspired approach.

What was most interesting was the way in which Massachusetts Teacher 3 responded to the question about the relationship between the school and the community. She shared that:

Uhm, yeah, we're in the community, we're part of the community. I mean we have, I'm sure we have many collaborations with other things outside of the community. But again, me being a teacher in the classroom, uhmhm...but again that is somebody else's job as far as what we, what partnerships and supports our outreach things that we deal with.

This statement represents similar comments from teacher participants in Tennessee. Possibly professional development in this area would be useful to guide teachers to understanding that Reggio-inspired schools do not solely expect one administrative person to establish partnerships between schools and the communities in which they reside, but see it as a responsibility of individual teachers, administration and collective partnerships to share in that role.

Massachusetts Teacher 4 interview. Massachusetts Teacher 4 expressed to the researcher that she was learning English and some of the questions she may need repeated. In Head Start programs and many other early childhood programs, the diversity of children and families is often reflected in teaching staff. In her introduction, she stated:

...first of all, well, in my opinion, I feel, you know, I can't complain about, you know, the Head Start. It is very helpful for me, I feel, you know, to work with, uhh, my co-workers. I feel comfortable. I like to work with all the co-workers whether, you know, the people, the co-workers they...to put me to work with...I feel comfortable to work with anybody, whoever...new people...and also you know to, to guide them to help them, whenever, you know, they need help. They need all, you know, some, some more, some advance. I help them...if they decide you know to ask me, I make them feel free, you know, don't be afraid, to ask a question. You can ask a question. If I, if I do something wrong, please feel free to tell me because I am learning to, by you ...I am learning by everybody...I learn a lot about the Head Start and also uhm, I am fortunate to, you know, to be able to have a

conversation to communicate with the parents, with the child, the children and also, whether the parents come, you know, even though you know they coming in or they see the complete change, I say, uhm, uhm, that's not my parents you know... please can I see a smile on your face, and I understand, you know, sometimes ...something happened at the house ... on the road and then, you know, they make complaint [may complain]. You know, change but when they are coming over to me, I always make them comfortable. You know, be comfortable, talk to them. Before a when I first came here, I'm kind of a little shy, because that's not my language. I speak French and then you know, you meet a, different kind of people. Different, you know, culture, and then, you know, they make you comfortable too. You know, even your language kind of, you know, different. You know, they don't understand, but, you know, sometimes, you know, they want to know, to understand, to speak my language. I say, oh yeah, sure. I can help you too if you ... looking for some words...I can help you, please feel free to ask me...

The culture of children is important, and this teacher recognizes that the culture of the teachers are also important in developing relationships with children and parents. One strategy she uses is to make herself approachable to people. She feels comfortable if she needs to share her language, and she is comfortable asking for the words necessary to speak the language of the families she encounters. This value of culture is central to the Reggio Emilia philosophy where partnerships with families is important.

When Massachusetts Teacher 4 was asked what she knew about Reggio-inspired practices she stated, "Amelia...that is a state?" Her response showed that she had not yet been exposed to or learned about Reggio-inspired practices and professional development may inform her teaching practices to benefit the processes of how children learn.

Her response to questions continued in this way:

...the first thing, you know...watching, you know, first of all, watching the environment, you know, it's the key one, and then, you know, the way...they engage with the children that's very important. But, that's the reason...I usually, you know, get down with them...

Many of her responses weren't specific and lacked clarity due to the language barrier.

When asked about the role of the child in the classroom, she responded by saying,

The role for the child in the classroom, in my opinion...you know, to...to have the conversation, and don't be afraid, and also...inquires them, you know, whenever, you know...some of the kids they like to be independent...that's a their style. But, you know, in my opinion...the children, the role from the children, they be able, you know, to ask... question ... to, don't be afraid, come over and say, teacher so, so...

She shows an openness to fostering relationships with children without being specific enough to dig deeper into her philosophy.

Massachusetts Teacher 4 responded to the children as collaborators question by sharing, "...but when I encourage them, I talk to him, to be collaborate with him, with each other... I said before, you are role models for the kids." She sees herself as a role model for children representative of a developmentally appropriate teacher without clearly being Reggio-inspired.

When asked about how she encourages children to communicate in her classroom she stated:

Uhm, first of all, in my opinion, what I learn at my school...to communicate with a soft voice because if, as a teacher, I encourage them, you know, to use a soft voice as example

and then me, and then I say, ‘Oh, you know very loud,’ then they say, ‘Oh...teacher... I, soft voices’...I...communicate with them, you know, smiling, I love to be smiling...’

This teacher recognizes that children need to see that peers and teachers are models for learning ways to communicate. In line with her first statements about French as her primary language, it is clear that she is open to sharing her language with children and families, which is an important impetus for children to understand the diverse ways that people communicate. This perspective aligns with the cultural focus of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

It was the response about the environment that was interesting as she stated:

You know, might come and say ok, I would like to read a book about, you know, my culture. I would like to do this one, to do this one, you know, uhm for the environment you say is it the third teacher? On that part, I agree. You say the parents come first...the environment is another teacher... If I learn from you.

This response indicates that Massachusetts Teacher 4 learned through the language of the question in the interview that the environment is a form of teaching. She states, “I learn from you... Now I learn something new, from you.”

Her response to teacher as a partner, nurturer and guide states that, “My role to support...the parents the way you said the parents you know, come first... So first teachers...I agree perfectly...my role to be involved...to...guide the parents too.” This reiterates what she stated in her first comments, that those connections to children and families are significant to her teaching practice, which is in alignment with this Reggio-inspired principle. Professional development centered on the Reggio Emilia Approach could help this teacher better understand and work within the context of this principle.

Massachusetts Teacher 4 responded to the teacher as a researcher question by stating:

My ways is...you know to go and do some research...I say that to everybody. I say OK, I am a teacher. Everybody is a teacher in the classroom...I am going to, you know, share with you, you know...to find more detailed, more stuff for the children to guide them, to work with them and then to push them, you know, go forward.

She understands the need to reach outside the classroom, to research in order to help children learn, which reflects an understanding of the premise of this Reggio-inspired principle.

The participant's response to how she documents children's learning was:

Different ways, it could be, you know, by you know visual...by flash card, it could be, you know, they like, you know, to see the pictures...you know, another study here you know, I can do it, you know, by scaffolding. You know I do it, you know, step-by-step.

This reflects her idea that documentation is assessment, which is not in alignment with the Reggio-inspired philosophy.

With regard to the question about parents as a partner Massachusetts Teacher 4 responded:

"... the parents...in my classroom come...you know - how is my child doing? ... my role as a teacher... I always, you know, praise them...the homework that you do, put it in your mailbox, make sure you show mommy what did you do today? And then to make more progress. And then I watch...I make them feel...comfortable to come over and ask some questions..."

This is more typical of a traditional preschool classroom teacher mindset that has not been exposed to the ideas of the Reggio Emilia Approach in substantial ways.

Again, similar to her teaching peers and peers across other two states she responded with less assurance to the question of the role the community plays in relation to the school by her statements:

I like, you know, to go to for a walk with the kids. You know, to show them especially...safety, we talk to them about, you know, and the community helpers, and then whatever, you know, they are doing and then we took the children – you know come visit...they help to make the garden grow.

This response demonstrates a lack of clarity about the question or role the community plays in relation to the school and that this teacher would benefit from more professional development.

Themes as they emerged in Massachusetts. Themes were developed around the number of instances the particular content emerged from the data. Though the researcher used a frequency count of responses based on each theme, the numbers do not reflect knowledge or understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach. It is the quality of participant responses that determined whether or not a response was aligned with Reggio-inspired language or principles. The patterns in this case reveal some similarities and differences among the different participants.

Four participants in Massachusetts mentioned their educational background only once. The director commented three times and Teacher 4 had seven comments, yet her background didn't provide training suitable for understanding and implementing a Reggio-inspired approach.

Five participants' statements referenced open-mindedness to other educational perspectives, with the education leader, Teacher 2, and Teacher 4 commenting the most in this regard. There seems to be a strong interest in learning more about the Reggio Emilia Approach at this school, which is supported by this data. Teacher 1 referenced this only once, which likely implies the concept of REA professional development isn't being promoted through the program. It is being introduced and facilitated by Teacher 2.

A child-centered approach is referenced many times by four participants, including the education leader and the teacher with more Reggio-inspired experience (Teacher 2). It is not clear

that these responses reveal more of a strong connection to developmentally appropriate practices that are grounded in play and child-centered learning, except for the quality of the responses of Teacher 2.

The mandatory curriculum and requirements were noted a lot by all participants, mostly by the director, the education leader, and Teacher 3. This reveals a clear understanding of the expectations from Head Start throughout the program. It is not clear why Teacher 4 focused on the mandatory aspects of curriculum.

Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 commented the most about intentional relationships. The responses of Teacher 2 were in line with her Reggio-inspired study and the responses of Teacher 4 are directly related to her international background.

All participants in Massachusetts commented a lot on professional development. These were primarily in relation to the training directed by Head Start and that they had limited opportunities for learning about approaches outside of the Head Start and the current Creative Curriculum model.

Four participants commented the most about Reggio Emilia Approach knowledge that were in alignment with the principles, which is consistent with the education background of the education leader, the personal study of REA by Teacher 2, and the openness of Teacher 4 to new ideas.

Table 7.

Instances of themes as they emerged in Massachusetts

Theme	ED	EL	T1	T2	T3	T4	Example Statement
Teaching Experience in Early Childhood Education (TEECE):	2	1	1	1	1	7	"...I was a preschool teacher for 10 years... children build knowledge through social interactions, scaffolding, things of that nature. And, I've been in my current role for about a year, and so I have really tried to enhance the curriculum, put more of that social aspect in just

							to make sure that we are providing children with everything that we need.”
Open Mindedness to Other (OMP) Educational Perspectives:	5	12	1	11	6	13	“...we learn from the children as they learn from us; and uhm, so, I mean there is so much to learn especially in the classroom sometimes it’s things that we explore together that you didn’t even know what can happen and sometimes kids teach you more than you even thought you know...”
Child-Centered Focus (CCF) Curricula Planning:	8	20	5	10	20	53	“Or as far as tools and materials, what do I do with this? I don’t know, what should I do first? And seeing what they know before I, we even, use it. When we are doing structures or we’re painting or we’re building ...”
Mandatory Curricula Implementation or Mandates (MCIM):	10	12	7	9	17	9	“You would see a play-based model, that is open-ended and geared through the children and built off of their knowledge that they bring to the classroom. So, with that it would be guided with a unit of study that then connects with the scope and sequence and the objectives but then it is also child-directed.”
Intentional Relationships (IR): Child-Teacher-Parent, and/or community	6	8	5	22	7	42	“...with families, I think in this type of a program, you have to build strong relationships. So that way, you can understand what they family is going through at that point in time, because that directly affects the children; and you may think it’s a behavioral issue or something is going on. But, in fact, it may be homelessness or trauma and so, I think first and foremost, that’s why we do home visits, is to start with a home visit, meet the families, meet the children in their environment and then take it from there.”
Professional Development (PD): Teacher/Child/Parent Education Observed	14	21	15	38	35	61	“...So, there’s never like, oh, this child learns this way, this child learns this way and this child learns this way. That might happen for today and tomorrow it’ll be, I don’t get it this way, I want it this way. So, you always have to be researching or learning new things, new ways and new things. New, let me rephrase that, new, you always have to be prepared to learn new more innovative ways...”
Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) Knowledge, Practices, Noted Need for Professional Development, and/or Visible in Head Start Classrooms from Principle 1-Principle 9.	7	21	10	22	15	26	“I learn every day ... through their work, through, I do, I do a lot of photographs uhm through narratives, uhm, I make up photo albums and put them out. I call them showcases of learning.”

Survey findings. Massachusetts participants reported agree or strongly agree with most of the survey and Likert-scale interview questions. Like New Mexico and Tennessee, a small selection of responses reveal that there are some participants who do not have a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired principles. In particular, one teacher in Massachusetts specifically stated that she didn't understand several questions.

Clearly in the school in Massachusetts, the observation tool found representations of each of the Reggio-inspired principles, but interviews and survey responses show discrepancies, which shows a lack of a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired approach. For example, on the first question, all the participants agreed the child is a protagonist. However, on the second question, not all participants were in agreement that the child is a collaborator (Figure 27). On question 9, not all participants agreed that teachers include children in curricular planning (Figure 28) even though many stated that the child is a protagonist, and the children play a role in the processes within the classroom. In question 32, half of the respondents did not agree that children come to the classroom full of knowledge that is beyond milestones (Figure 29), which is somewhat out of context in relation to the many statements saying the teachers learn from children and that children can learn from each other.

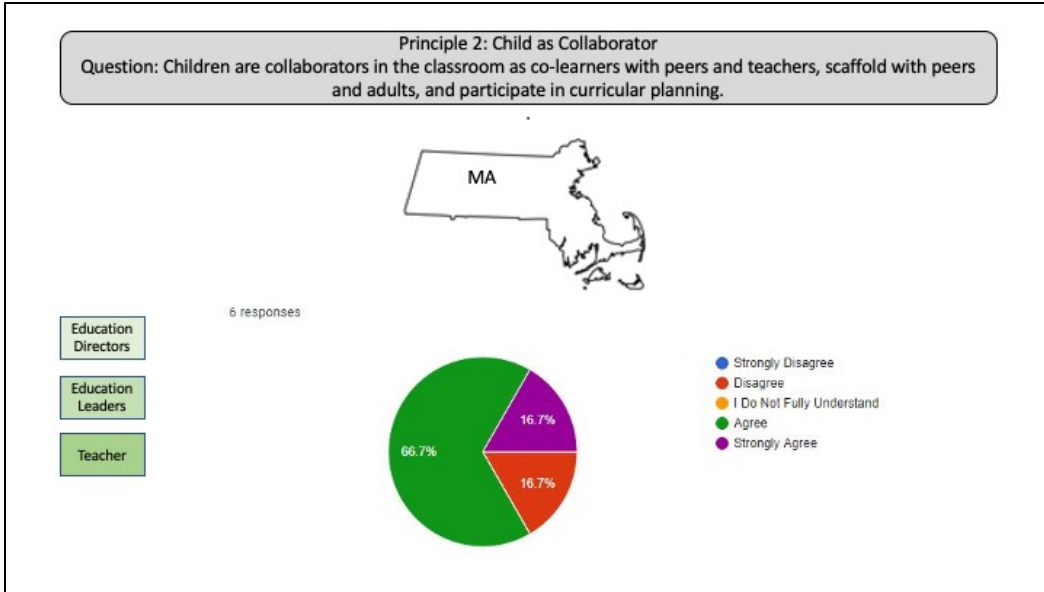


Figure 27. Survey responses to child as collaborator question

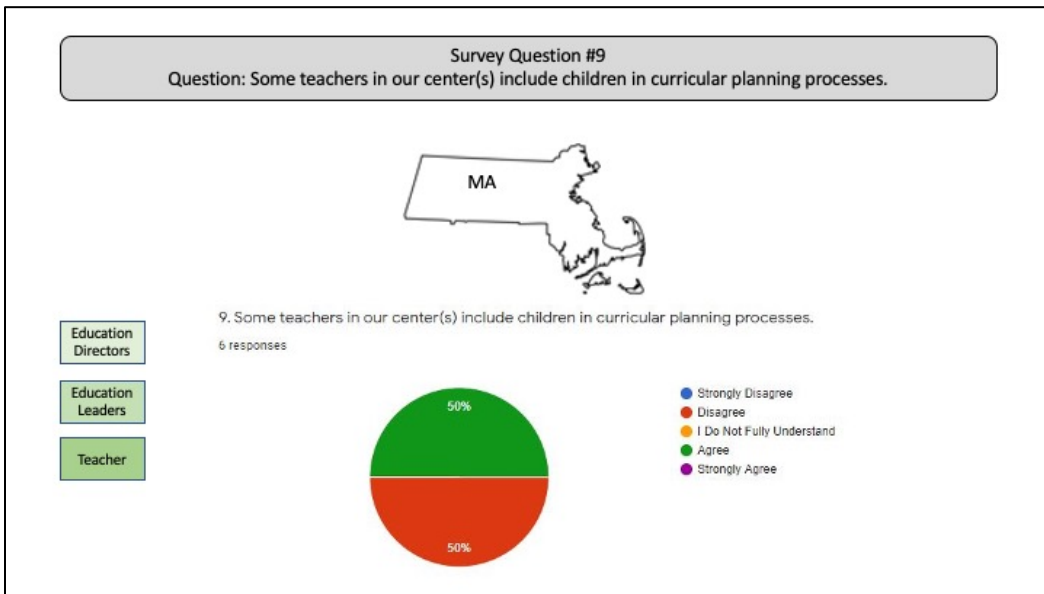


Figure 28. Survey responses to question 9

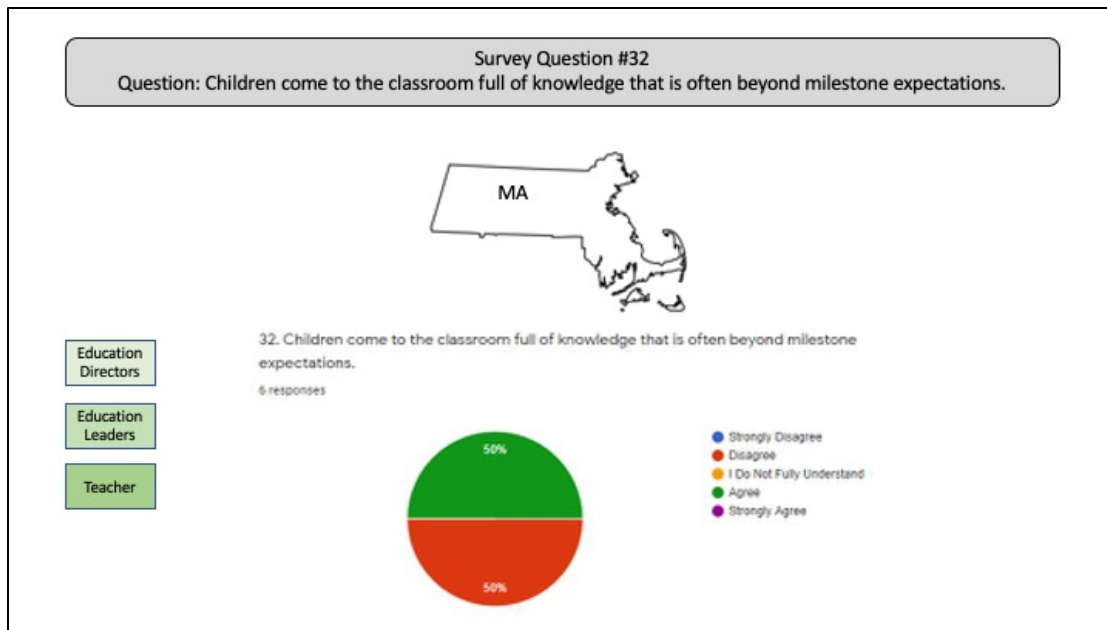


Figure 29. Survey responses to question 32

Within-Case Analysis Tennessee

The within case analysis in this section centers on the Head Start program in Tennessee. The four research questions are presented with data from multiple sources including the observations of classrooms and hallways, responses of six participants to an interview, the themes as they emerged in Tennessee, in addition to the participants responses to the survey (Creswell, 2015, 2017; Patton, 2015).

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

Similar to the schools in New Mexico and Massachusetts, three of the classrooms represented in this case, Tennessee, were observed to have very similar learning environments. One classroom stood out as different, with more elements of alignment with Reggio-inspired principles. Therefore, the three similar classrooms are presented together, and the fourth is presented separately to describe the distinctions related to Reggio-inspired principles.

Teachers 1, 2, and 3. As in the other two schools visited by the researcher, the Head Start school in Tennessee had three teachers whose classrooms were quite similar. Most every area of the hallway contained children's work, which is valuable for children to see themselves represented in the school (Jones & Nimmo, 1998, LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993). There were a lot of theme-oriented and seasonal work samples that revealed the sorts of activities in which children were all directed by the teacher to accomplish tasks with a teacher-intended outcome. In this location following directions seems to be an emphasis for guiding children toward school readiness. For example, in Figure 30 below, the shapes used for the artwork were already cut. And stamps, a more controlled activity, was used for the images beneath the cutout art. Documentation of children's meaning for this work is not visible.



Figure 30. Work using precut shapes and stamps

Figure 31 shows that these teachers valued the inclusion of nature, which is aligned with Reggio-inspired principles, yet the intention of the task for children with these materials was unclear making it less aligned with a Reggio-inspired philosophy. To the right below (Figure 32),

is a good example of documentation of children writing above a series of works by children that appear to be stamped or traced.



Figure 31. Natural materials



Figure 32. Documentation of children writing

The image below is an attempt at teaching about the life cycle of a pumpkin (Figure 33). All children were provided the same materials, and the final products all look the same. There is no representation of individual stages of the life cycle and no representation of the diverse ideas of children in an investigative process. Also, many classrooms had plants that bring life and nature into the classroom (Figure 34), yet there was no representation of children engaging with these plants, as one would see in a Reggio-inspired environment. A Reggio-inspired environment would have the thinking of children as a part of the project and thus, a part of the documentation representing the project.



Figure 33. Life cycle of pumpkin work



Figure 34. Natural Materials

Teacher 4. This teacher had artifacts in her room that clearly encouraged children to express their ideas. The examples in Figures 35 and 36 represent her thinking in the form of provocations to generate children's ideas about two different topics. The mapping out of children's knowledge of nocturnal animals (Figure 35) in relation to group discussion encourages children to use their imagination while linking their ideas to written language (Edwards et al., 1998; Neuman & Dickinson, 2011). This image of the apple (Figure 36) is a visual that was developed during discussion with children, using children's ideas and theories to create the diagram.

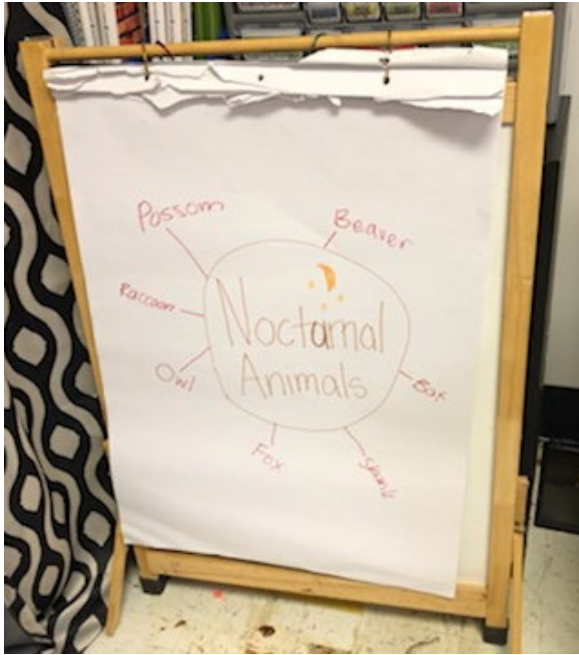


Figure 35. Nocturnal animal provocation

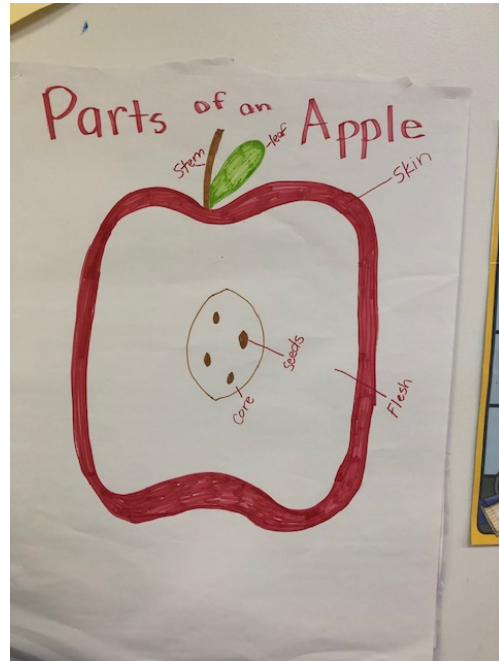


Figure 36. Parts of an apple provocation

An interesting series of drawings illustrates the value of family and diversity of expression. In many Reggio-inspired classrooms, including images of family is said to help the children feel that connection to home (DeVries et al., 2000; Edwards et al., 1998; New, 1990). In this classroom a unique twist on this was to invite children to illustrate their version of their family by drawing, which provides their perspective of this very important aspect of their lives (Figure 37).

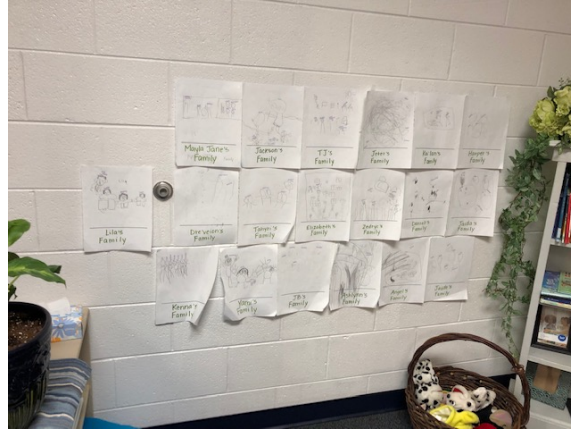


Figure 37. Children's representations of their families

The job wheel below was designed in a way that included all children. Some of the jobs are pledge leader, caboose, ball carrier, and song helper. This process values so many components of children's lived experiences in the classroom as designed by children based on their daily experiences. Within the context of this process the teacher facilitates extension of children's language with new language, like giving the term *botanist* to the children's term of "watering the plants." Extending children's language is important for mitigating the 30-million-word gap (Hart & Risley, 2003; Newman & Dickinson, 2011). This process also affirms the Reggio-inspired principle that children are capable and communicators.



Figure 38. Job chart

Secondary area observations. In secondary areas of the school there were countless examples of children’s work covering the hallway walls. Many of the works by children were based on the instructions from the Creative Curriculum investigative studies telling teachers explicitly how to complete the activities with children. For example, there were children’s paper-doll-like cutouts on the hallway walls, and each of the paper images was inscribed with a child’s name. Each of the cutout images was intended to be a self-portrait. All were taped to the wall outside of the classroom. There were different fabrics used for the clothing on each cutout. The uniqueness of the activity depended on the fabrics and material used to make hair and facial marks to symbolize facial features. The shape of each cut-out was the same, which was more specific to teacher-driven processes in the activity and is not aligned with the Reggio-inspired practices of promoting children’s individual and group learning and creativity through constructivist autonomy (DeVries et al., 2000; Vygotsky, 1978).

Themes representing seasonal celebrations also donned the walls. Other secondary area depictions of children’s work were very similar from wall to wall, demonstrating a value of showcasing the work of children, leaving no one to guess what children were working on. Each

classroom had the same themes that were basically generated in the same way. There were few examples of children's work beyond teacher-directed activities.

2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The director in Tennessee outlined her qualifications as completing a MEd, and being a highly qualified teacher, licensed and certified in pre-K through 8th grades in the state of Tennessee, and K-6th grades in the state of North Carolina. She taught grades K-5th with the exception of first grade for 15 years in Louisburg, NC. She is also a PhD Candidate in Early Childhood Education and has completed some coursework focused on the Reggio Emilia Approach. She described her work in Head Start by stating, "...we build a lot with social-emotional [health] and we integrate academics within our social-emotional component."

When asked the introductory question relating to what an observer would see upon visiting a classroom at the school, the Tennessee Education Director stated that:

...we are heavy on ECERS, so the environment should be set up to make each child successful. It would be, it's diverse, and we have special – children with needs so the classroom is set up so every child can be a success.

This statement reflects program standards and curricula based on mandates and does not include the language typically used in Reggio-inspired programs. Though this education director did reveal practical understanding of schools that are Reggio-inspired "...what the child is interested in and that the child guides your lesson plans. Very child-centered."

As questions were posed to the participant during the interview regarding the Reggio-inspired principles, she did state that, "what I know is not a lot," but she included some language

often expressed to define the value of children in relation to how they are viewed as learners. She lacked some clarity in responses, such as this:

...we do not have PD as much as I would like. We do follow the principle or the idea that the children are independent learners, uhm, but ...because I don't live in a diverse community, we need to work on being culturally responsive.

Terms and language which identifies the need to view children as independent learners and the learning environment as culturally responsive are directly related to Reggio-inspired schools. The lack of clarity stems from this education director not linking these sorts of statements to the specific ways these might be implemented in alignment with Reggio-inspired practices.

Community, family, and child engagement is a significant aspect of the Head Start program in Tennessee and indicative of the Head Start program model. The Tennessee Education Director has expert understanding of Head Start but limited understanding of other early childhood models as seen in this statement,

... we are big on the community; we have family engagement specialists, we have family engagement activities – field trips so, we are very much involved in the children and their families. That is one of the goals of Head Start is to better the family, not just the child.

What is clear is that the education director has experiences and an understanding of early childhood teaching practices and philosophies that are different than those of teachers and the education leader in her school, with her experience teaching in public education in two different states, both completely different models of education and inclusivity, and working with children with different levels of disabilities programs. Given the State of Tennessee Childcare Licensing Rules and Regulations and Head Start Performance Standards as the overarching guiding

principles for programs, responses are understandably geared towards meeting those goals and objectives.

3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The Head Start education leader in Tennessee has over 16 years of classroom teaching experience. The education leader has more education and experiences than the teaching staff. Her responses demonstrate a strong understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, as well as the needs of teachers to support children. Yet, most of her current early childhood practice is guided by mentoring and coaching through the Creative Curriculum and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS), which is a tool developed to measure teacher behaviors and engagement with children as a predictor of successful student learning outcomes. Creative Curriculum and CLASS are a mandated curriculum and assessment in Head Start throughout Tennessee. One of the elements of CLASS is for teachers to be questioning children in relation to the child's current focus in the classroom, which is different from a Reggio-inspired process of engaging groups of children in conversations about long-term projects stemming from the children's questions. She expressed that teaching staff are trying to engage with children by stating:

We have really, really worked hard on having our teaching staff uhm, just more capable of asking those open-ended questions, asking those how and why questions and scaffolding their learning because I mean, CLASS is asking for that...

Additionally, she said she is encouraging teachers to use many strategies for asking quality questions. She said, "If you are doing a story, have sticky notes all over your story that

have open-ended questions and just things that you know that are gonna help uhm, guide the children's learning and engage them.”

When asked about teacher as researcher, this education leader responded more in a general sense about current early childhood education research as opposed to responding in a Reggio-inspired way, with statements showing an understanding of how teachers research the ideas and interests of children to guide and plan activities in the classroom. Along these lines she said:

We are seeing, coming out of homes with an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) background and a high ACES score, how do you – how do you work with those children because they, they sometime have a lot of back issues that you've got to be prepared for and you've got to be able to, to uhm, to support them the best way that you can... just constantly learning new techniques in and even new ways to setup the classroom to help uhm, make sure that you're, you're doing the best for the children and families that you serve. There's probably not specific training again for that either.

Specifically, in terms of being asked about the Reggio Emilia Principle 4: Environment as the Third Teacher, she responded, “I think it has to be very, I am trying to think of the word for it, intentional...” The education leader stated more than once in relation to the training questions and probes in the interview, “there's probably not specific training again for that either.”

Beyond the expectations of CLASS and Creative Curriculum the education leader did show an interest in teachers' inclusion of creativity and natural elements, which are aspects of Reggio-inspired classrooms that are easily incorporated into many early childhood classrooms. Of the teachers she mentors she said, “I know that they [teachers] are very nature-inspired and they have a lot of natural elements involved and a lot of – allowing a lot of artistic, uhm, and creativity and those types of things.”

4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

This section presents narratives describing the perceptions of the four teacher participants in the Tennessee Head Start. Quotes from the interviews are included to illustrate the way each participant's perceptions are or are not in alignment with Reggio-inspired principles.

Tennessee Teacher 1 interview. Teacher 1 had almost three decades of teaching experience in early childhood and a bachelor's degree. She said that her classroom was organized around centers following the design of the Early Childhood Environment Ratings Scale (ECERS) (Cryer, Clifford, & Harris, 2015). Though Teacher 1 demonstrated clear understanding of the foundations of early childhood practices, her overall responses demonstrated a lack of understanding for many of the Reggio-inspired principles. Of note, she lacked understanding of Principle 4: *Environment as the Third Teacher*. The following quote demonstrates Teacher 1 is planning the classroom environment around ECERS rather than emphasizing a focus on the interests of the child, "The classroom, like I stated earlier, is setup based on the ECERS environmental rating scale; which is, you try to keep quiet centers with quiet centers and loud with loud; to promote the best learning environment possible..."

Tennessee Teacher 1 had a clear understanding of the need to develop relationships with parents as volunteers for the school, and that parents play an important role as children's first teachers. Even with that belief, many of the responses from Teacher 1 followed a pattern similar to other teachers in the school, where she relies on other staff who hold the responsibility to provide parent engagement and resources to families, rather than developing those relationships herself. Particular staff in Head Start Programs are identified as resources for parents, which represents the need for clarity for understanding the RE approach in a Head Start community.

Contrary to teachers in Reggio-inspired programs, who work in direct relationships with families, Tennessee Teacher 1 doesn't demonstrate the same value: "We have lots of resources, and since we are housed together, our family engagement specialists always know all of the resources... Share ideas, cause we don't, we don't always get to do that..."

Tennessee Teacher 1 agrees that children's interests should be taken into account and that they should be problems solvers, yet in relation to these ideas she referenced packaged curriculum as opposed to authentic inquiry of children. The following quotes represent this thinking:

Whenever we go to the workshops, there's usually a workshop specifically geared toward Creative Curriculum; almost always, which is the, you know, the curriculum that we use in the classroom. So, therefore we can bring it back and hopefully add some things...one in particular that I can remember is the FLIPIT training for social-emotional development. She was not able to recall what the acronym FLIPIT stands for.

Tennessee Teacher 2 interview. When asked about her teaching philosophy, Teacher 2 responded:

I started with Head Start about 23 years ago – my youngest son was in the program for two years, spent the first year in homebased; second year, in a center; which allowed me to go to school. While he was at school, and he did really, really well, I volunteered all the time. Absolutely fell in love with the program and the kids.

She demonstrates in her interview some understanding about the Reggio Emilia Approach in a broad sense; specifically, identifying objects she used in the classroom for a painting project with the children stating:

...a big part in Reggio in the environment is to just let them experiment with the different paints, and different mediums, different textures in the paint and in what, we have a lot of

natural things like rocks, feathers and pine cones, whatever is in the season, leaves, for that time period and like, yesterday, the children today, they were using paint brushes but yesterday they were using coffee filters to paint with. So, they had crumbled them, they were actually sorting pom poms; and so when they, when they got finished they were just crumbling up their coffee filters and I said, well they just kind of like a little ball, so why don't we try painting with these today? They had a blast.

Tennessee Teacher 2 specifically discussed her perspective on the role of *play* in relation to how children learn by stating:

Through play, they can, they choose what center and what area that they want to explore that day, and investigate that day. They do a lot of investigating in all of the different centers so if they come in and they want to be a mom that day, they put on dress clothes, and they get out the babies. They cook, they want to sometimes they'll be cooking pancakes for breakfast for other kids, for the other children in the classroom. They have the ability in the centers to read whenever they feel like it. They can pull a book out, they can listen to a book on CD, they can use the computers or the tablets or the SMART Board to add to that learning. We have a little STEM area that we do incorporate with the children so that they not only learn the science but the math and the literacy in that as well; and we incorporate, we incorporate all of those areas, dramatic play, blocks, math and science, manipulatives and, and the literacy in our in all of the areas in the classroom so they get a well-rounded education as a whole child not just bits and pieces.

Tennessee Teacher 2 also stated about her knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach, "Reggio-inspired practices are more nature, they're natural activities and they're a more, using a more natural material rather than a store-bought material." Overall, Teacher 2 reported a solid

understanding for early childhood development and some theory similar to Teacher 1, in a broad context of child development within the framework of mandatory curriculum and assessments. Tennessee Teacher 2 also expressed distinguishable sensitivity to the challenging experiences children live with daily and family dynamics, when she stated:

And I want them, and I want them to learn. I want the families to feel safe with their children here I want the children to feel safe while they are here. I want them to go out of here feeling better about themselves. And the parents feeling better themselves as well.

Overall, Tennessee Teacher 2 shared similar awareness and responses to the interview questions as Tennessee Teacher 1. For example, when asked about Principle One: Child as Protagonist, Teacher 2 responded:

...and that's one of the things they learned while they're in centers, is, it's not, there are a few things that are teacher-directed but it's mainly child-created rather than us telling them what to do. They're building it and showing us what they have done.

This response demonstrates some understanding for how children need opportunities to make decisions and choices about what they want to build or create. Her language demonstrates an understanding that children need to be free to play independently yet she didn't reference ideas that Reggio-inspired teachers use, that children are capable, are problem solvers and with purposeful focus that can be tapped into to develop long-term projects. Overall, Tennessee Teacher 2 shared a more traditional view of children and how they learn, guided by the boxed curriculum implemented in their school.

Tennessee Teacher 3 interview. Teacher 3 responded in ways that demonstrated she had more exposure to Reggio-inspired approaches as reflected in her responses. For example, when asked about her teaching philosophy she indicated:

I've been teaching pre-K for 9 years. What guides my instruction, I'm a huge relationship person and that's what I do first. I have to develop a relationship and then I go on their [the children] interest and that's what guides my instruction.

The response from Teacher 3 shows clear understanding about the value adults place on children's abilities that are shared by educators inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. An aspect of the approach promotes adults and children developing meaningful and intentional relationships based on the adult's view of the child as a protagonist, and again, a capable human being with ideas and thoughts that are guided by the adult.

Tennessee Teacher 3 showed another level of understanding something about Reggio-inspired approach when responding to introductory question, "Can you please share what you know about Reggio-inspired practices?" Her response was, "Basically it is based upon the child's interest, their learning styles, and how they engage with each other and myself." This shows a good practical understanding, a sense that relationships and knowing children is meaningful to her as a teacher, which is a very basic alignment with Reggio-inspired practices.

In other areas, Tennessee Teacher 3 responded with pause or less clarity. For example, when asked about Principle 3: Child as a Communicator; how she encourages children to communicate in her classroom, she said:

There's, that's basically what we do is communicate, communicate, communicate. We talk everything out. I like to let them see me think out loud; I wonder what would happen if this, well, I wrote this, what else could I write? Or I drew this, what else can I do?

This response demonstrates that Tennessee Teacher 3 believes that she is guiding children by modeling a lot of her thinking and actions with a talk-aloud method, rather than using her communication skills to draw out the knowledge of children, which would be more aligned with

Reggio-inspired practices. Thus, more professional development may be necessary for Tennessee Teacher 3 to fully grasp the concept of principle 3. As with her teaching peers, Tennessee Teacher 1, and Tennessee Teacher 2, Tennessee Teacher 3 demonstrated a need for more clarity of the Reggio Emilia Approach in relation to developing the many ways children communicate their thoughts, ideas and expressions about what they know and want to learn more about.

Tennessee Teacher 4 interview. Tennessee Teacher 4 presented more responses that were closely in relation to the Reggio Emilia Approach in terms of her understanding, openness to incorporate the practices that she had learned while attending college, and from taking specific college courses that included Reggio-inspired practices during undergraduate work. Some of her responses to introductory questions are noted below.

When asked the first open question of the interview, “Could you please share about yourself and describe your teaching philosophy that guides your work within Head Start?”

Tennessee Teacher 4 responded with:

I do draw a lot of my philosophy and teaching theory from Reggio practices; as well as some Montessori, and sometimes that’s difficult to do in kind of a public education setting. So, there are some other curriculum materials that I have to use so I would just say, in any sort of emergent and constructivist learning, those are the theories that I mostly align with.

When asked by the researcher, “If I were to visit classrooms in your center(s) what would I see in relation to best practices for children’s learning and development?” Tennessee Teacher 4 stated:

So for most of our classrooms, you would find that materials are accessible, that we try to, at least for myself, make sure that it is a comfy, cozy place for students to be because they

learn best when they are comfortable. So, with accessible materials that are organized they can get what they need. They know where things belong, and they really have a sense of ownership of the space.

This statement reflects the autonomy that a Reggio-inspired educator would consider as essential within the learning environment. Yet, this response aligns more with developmentally appropriate practices than Reggio-inspired practices where a teacher would describe the sorts of investigations taking place in the classroom:

I guess kind of, to sum it up as a whole, Reggio practice focuses mostly on children's interests, desires, questions and building education from, in a child-directed manner. That means that making sure the environment is its own teacher so that they can use the materials in there to do their own learning and construct their own knowledge, less teacher-guided, less giving knowledge, more, more about the process of learning.

In her response to what she knows about Reggio-inspired practices she references the concept that the environment is a teacher, which is aligned with Reggio-inspired practices, yet she is not clearly stating how the environment guides learning or thinking.

In relation to the Principle 3: Child as Communicator question Tennessee Teacher 4 responded by saying:

Well I question and communicate with students a lot...eventually they're going to have to answer and kinda expand, and get down to it more. We also have our writing time and in that, they select what they want to write about or if something has happened, they come up, they want to tell me about it. So, we use writing and our pictures and storytelling as a form of communication also in art and their drawing, things like that. But I feel like my students, this year at least, are very, very vocal. There's, it's always so loud cause so many

people are talking, and I think that's great. I just think it helps them to see how communications work and actually be able to practice that with each other and with the teachers.

The references to various ways children can express themselves that include many nonverbal processes shows a sensitivity of this teacher's practice that aligns with the Reggio-inspired principle of the child as a communicator.

Tennessee Teacher 4 responded to the question for Principle 5: Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide, in a way that represents her deeper understanding of the connection between families, children, and the community. The question posed was, "How do you view your role in relation to children, families, and community?" She said:

For children, I believe my role is to be a facilitator and encourager of their learning, that takes many different forms. Sometimes it is explicit instruction, just teacher-directed, sometimes it has to be that, but I try as most often as I can to be encouraging them to build their own knowledge through using the things in our centers, through questioning, through research. You know, they're little but they're not going to be little forever, so we've got to prepare them to be big and so, we are doing those things and using those words, like research and things like that... That's my role as a teacher with children, okay. For families and colleagues, and even the community, I just think that partnership, you know, being a partner is my role in a way that we all have the same desired outcome and that's success, and you know, the best lives for our students. So, I would also say being an advocate, letting people know what is going on and how smart and how brilliant and how capable these young learners are. For families, being able to have those conversations of

this is where they are, these are our goals for this child, these are their strengths, we have some areas of improvement, you know just being an open communicator and partner.

The teacher comes close to aligning with the Reggio Emilia Approach which views the child as not solely part of their biological family, but part of a larger community as a partner in their school, as a co-learner with peers and adults, and in connection to their greater community.

Tennessee Teacher 4 stated in relation to her relationship with children and families, “I am learning with you too. Let’s figure this out together.” Her statement summarizes an important quality of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Given the breadth of exposure, understanding and practice, Tennessee Teacher 4 still demonstrated the need for further professional development or training in the Reggio Emilia Approach in terms of including examples in her classroom. The mandatory boxed curriculum the program uses in the preschool leaves little room for teacher exploration and incorporation of other early childhood education models.

Themes as they emerged in Tennessee. Themes were developed around the number of instances the particular content emerged from the data. Though the researcher used a frequency count of responses based on each theme, the numbers do not reflect knowledge or understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach. It is the quality of participant responses that determined whether or not a response was aligned with Reggio-inspired language or principles. The patterns in this case reveal some similarities and differences among the different participants.

Two participants, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, commented only slightly more than the other participants in Tennessee about their background experience. The comments by Teacher 1 focused on her pride in her experience. Teacher 1 also commented the most regarding open-

mindedness to other educational perspectives, yet her classroom and the quality of her responses were the most traditional.

Teacher 3 commented the most about the child-centered focus. She was learning a lot from Teacher 4, who had more knowledge of the Reggio-inspired practices, and she had a strong early childhood education background. These data, in relation to the quality of responses, relates more to alignment with developmentally appropriate practices than the Reggio Emilia approach.

All referenced professional development a lot, and the content of the responses focused on the mandatory training opportunities provided by Head Start. Teacher 1 commented the most about intentional relationships and the quality of her responses relate to a strong early childhood background, with understanding of theory and best, developmentally appropriate practices. All participants commented a lot in relation to knowledge of the Reggio Emilia approach. These comments relate to all wanting more professional development opportunities focused on the approach.

Table 8.

Instances of Themes as they Emerged in Tennessee

Theme	ED	EL	T1	T2	T3	T4	Example Statement
Teaching Experience in Early Childhood Education (TEECE):	1	1	4	2	1	1	"I started with Head Start about 23 years ago – my youngest son was in the program for two years, spent the first year in homebased; second year, in a center; which allowed me to go to school. While he was at school, and he did really, really well, I volunteered all the time. Absolutely fell in love with the program and the kids."
Open Mindedness to Other (OMP) Educational Perspectives:	4	5	15	3	2	3	"...then they have other choices in the classroom – they do not always have to be right there with everyone else"
Child-Centered Focus (CCF) Curricula Planning:	1	7	7	4	13	4	"...I try as most often as I can to be encouraging them to build their own knowledge through using the things in our centers, through questioning,

							through research. You know, they're little, but they're not going to be little forever, so we've got to prepare them to be big and so, we are doing those things and using those words, like research and things like that ... That's my role as a teacher with children..."
Mandatory Curricula Implementation or Mandates (MCIM):	14	12	22	8	3	5	"We have really, really worked hard on having our teaching staff uhm, just more capable of asking those open-ended questions, asking those how and why questions and scaffolding their learning because I mean, CLASS is asking for that..."
Intentional Relationships (IR): Child-Teacher-Parent, and/or community	6	3	12	3	7	8	"...and kind of be if needed, a mentor to teachers to parents..."
Professional Development (PD): Teacher/Child/Parent Education Observed	12	10	11	11	8	11	"...I don't know that there is specific, uhm, training that we do with that..."
Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) Knowledge, Practices, Noted Need for Professional Development, and/or Visible In Head Start Classroom From Principle 1-Principle 9.	15	20	21	16	17	20	"...I think that's the biggest thing is that we do try to focus on children's interest..."

Survey findings. Tennessee participants reported agree or strongly agree with most of the survey and Likert-scale interview questions. Similar to Massachusetts and New Mexico, a small selection of responses reveal that there are some participants who do not have a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired principles.

The observations in Tennessee found representations of each of the Reggio-inspired principles, but interviews and survey responses show discrepancies, which shows a lack of a clear understanding of the Reggio-inspired approach. On the first question, not all participants were in agreement that the child is a protagonist (Figure 39), though in relation to their interview responses and the classroom observations it is not clear that participants understood this question. On question 7, two participants were not in agreement that they design centers around children's thinking (Figure 40), which is an interesting discrepancy from the focus on mandated Creative

Curriculum activities the researcher observed in most classrooms. In question 32, half of the respondents did not agree that children come to the classroom full of knowledge that is beyond milestones (Figure 41), which does reveal the overall mindset of these teachers whose curriculum is less child-centered or individualized as a result of following the mandated curriculum.

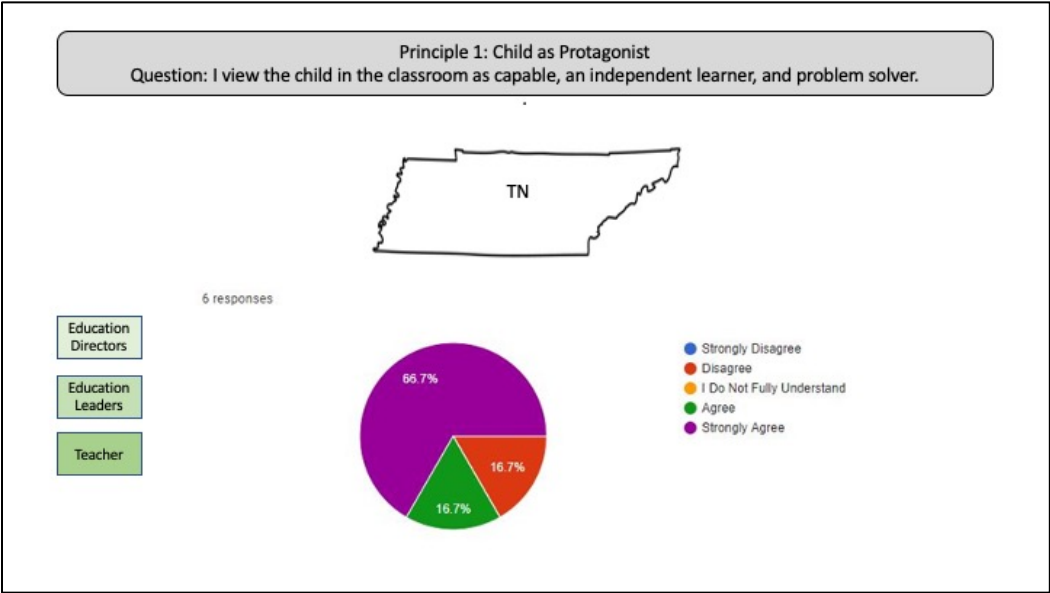


Figure 39. Survey responses to child as protagonist question

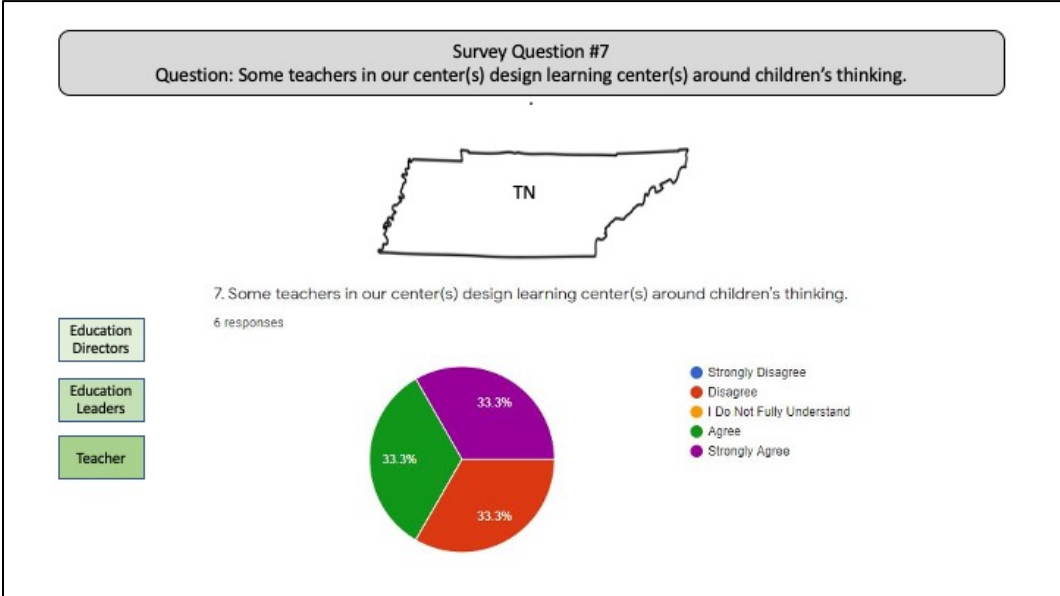


Figure 40. Survey responses to learning centers question

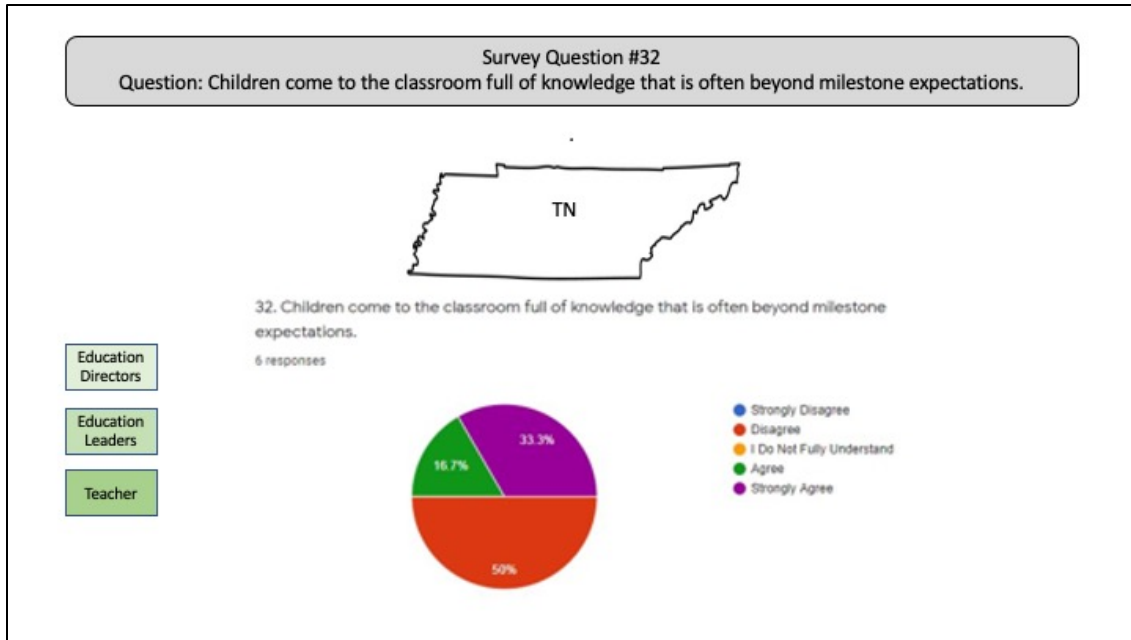


Figure 41. Survey responses to question 32

Cross-Case Analysis

In this study, the researcher needed to develop multiple tools to compile factual evidence for these case studies including survey data, interviews, and an observation tool. Based on research questions that were specifically designed to gather a diverse range of information from each participant group, the cross-case analysis was performed with integrity and used to triangulate the data in multiple formats (Creswell, 2015; Patton, 2002). Triangulation of the data is used in this study with rigor, and as a form of establishing how the responses were analyzed to fidelity. The analysis was designed to gather various types of participant perspectives based on the responses from the survey, interviews and observations of classrooms with no children present to determine whether observations in classrooms would associate with participants' interview responses. Observations were also collected in secondary areas of the schools and used to support the findings.

Overall, while all participants revealed alignment with all Reggio-inspired principles to some degree, there are certain principles that were more pronounced than others in each location as illustrated in Table 9. In New Mexico, principle 1, principle 4, principles 6, 7, 8 and 9 were more of the focus in relation to the Reggio-inspired principles. The principles found to be more prevalent in Massachusetts are principle 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8. In Tennessee there were fewer principles represented. They include principle 3, 5, and 8.

Table 9.

Table of Principles Most Prominent in Each Location

Principle	New Mexico	Massachusetts	Tennessee
Principle 1: The child as protagonist			
Principle 2: The child as collaborator			
Principle 3: The child as communicator			
Principle 4: Environment as third teacher			
Principle 5: Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide			
Principle 6: Teacher as researcher			
Principle 7: Documentation as communication			
Principle 8: The parent as a partner			
Principle 9: The community as a shared partner in child education			
Key: Solid blue filler indicates the prominent themes in each location			

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

The chart below (Figures 42 – 44) is descriptive of some of the findings of observable artifacts that align with the REA principles from state to state. Images were either listed under primary, or secondary areas, to define the location where they were observed. The suggested

evidence column, based on the researched practices found in Reggio-inspired schools and literature, includes types of artifacts the researcher might expect to find when observing in classrooms, as a starting point for using the tool. The observed evidence was noted by the researcher and inserted into a chart where the categories are the nine Reggio-inspired principles outlined by the researcher (Appendix C). These examples serve as an aspect of triangulation of the data.

Noted below, there was approximately one example selected of children's work, family created and donated art, artifacts donated from other Native communities in the country for each principle of Reggio-inspired practices. This simply demonstrates that each Reggio-inspired principle was represented by artifact in the classrooms and secondary areas across all three states.

Tennessee. In Tennessee, what stood out the most about the artifacts that were observed in the primary and secondary areas was that the images represented depictions of the seasons, current holiday celebrations, and children's perceptions of family. Images of the work initiated by children were attractively displayed throughout the primary areas, secondary areas, and the common spaces where everyone freely walked. There were few visible areas where there was not a display of artifacts created by children. The chart simply provides information that each school had representation of each REA principle, and doesn't include the detailed description recorded for the within-case analysis section of this paper. Not all observed artifacts relate to the overall culture of this school, of strong family values, which is clear from the many drawings, photographs of families performing activities together, even spiritual events observed across every classroom and area of the school. Many examples of artifacts created by children revealed teacher-driven activities based on the school's curriculum mandates. For example, children

drawing themselves all in a pretty similar way to accommodate a clothing study, where the only individualization would be with the options for choice of fabrics.

New Mexico. The observations the researcher found in New Mexico were predominantly structured around learning in relation to the culture of the community. One could observe throughout the school the historical representations of culture, connections to community, and value for children to understand their identity displayed in numerous examples and depictions in the school.

With an emphasis on culture, the learning environment in the primary areas and secondary areas included beautiful images of artifacts donated from community members, parents, and other Native American communities from across the country. In every area of each classroom there was a display of a woven rug, blanket, or painting, uniquely arranged.

The secondary areas of the school creatively displayed cultural artifacts. For example, there was a very large needlepoint wall hanging above near the ceiling and positioned under a skylight with names of children who had been part of the first graduating class neatly hand-stitched in rows in a linear pattern. The children's names were large enough to read and organized in such a way that anyone entering the building could see it clearly. The history behind that piece drew a connection from the closing of the old school to the students moving over to a newly designed Head Start preschool and Early Head Start building. The needlepoint was meant to represent progress and a new beginning. A parent created the piece and donated it to be hung in the new building to remind all of the children who had graduated and made the transition. The receptionist at the front desk noticed the researcher admiring the needlepoint and shared the history behind the piece.

There was a rotunda, or a meeting area, where books and information about every imaginable subject matter were carefully placed on the half-circular base in the rotunda for parents to take freely to help them with parenting, careers, and even books about the school's designated curriculum, Creative Curriculum. Just above in the rotunda were panoramic pictures organized all around the rotunda in a circle, of children dressed in traditional attire that may have been taken during a holiday event. One employee passing by stopped and shared stories with the researcher and pointed and named at least two dozen children and identified which families they belonged to as she spoke with a smile and cheer in her voice.

In the kitchen area, cooking staff had their pictures hung on the walls just outside the kitchen and their names were written and their own personal and inspirational quotes to the children and families were clearly posted as a form of documentation. Cooking staff socialized with families as they passed by, warm greetings and kind reminders about upcoming events were freely shared. There was a strong sense of community from all staff the researcher came in contact with at the school. Staff introduced themselves and actually shared who they were and their role at the school – unprompted, but just as a sign of respect and courtesy.

In addition, throughout the school the researcher observed documentation of children's presence and of their work presented in hand-carved wooden frames to reflect the learning that was taking place. In New Mexico participants reported that they were using intentional practices to observe children when they are at play and learning, in addition to the practices of modeling for children their sense of belonging to family, school, and their community in efforts to educate them about how they are reflected in the world.

Massachusetts. In the schools in Massachusetts, math, language and literacy, and science were major focuses. The researcher observed documentation of processes related to math and

literacy primarily in the classrooms, or primary areas, and a few examples in the secondary areas of the school.

In every classroom there was a variety of signage including directions, maps, diagrams and illustrations with images for children to understand and enhance their pre-reading skills. An example of the emphasis on literacy is found in an example from one classroom, where the reading area had a sign demonstrating the process for how a child should hold and read a book. Affixed to the wall, there was an image drawn, in a developmentally appropriate manner, of a child holding the book in the correct way, showing how to look at it, interpret the front cover, and open the book by the page corners. There were several graphic organizers on the walls of the classrooms diagramming the kinds of thinking strategies children could use with relevant vocabulary, like the language provided to preservice teachers in higher education programs.

Examples in this library center included graphic organizers recommending predicting and making connections from pictures to texts to help make sense of the meaning in the book. The researcher observed teachers and children using the vocabulary in these graphic organizers, their presence serving as reminders for children and teachers of these critical-thinking skills that children were developing.













#	REA Principle	Suggested Evidence Those noted are only some suggestions of what might be observed	Observed Evidence Note observed items that are suggested and others that relate to the principle	New Mexico Y=Yes;N=No	Tennessee Y=Yes;N=No	Massachusetts Y=Yes;N=No
1	The child as protagonist	•Documentation of transcripts where children initiate conversations	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, parent/bulletin boards. Examples of languages and expressions directly quoted from children: Artwork with descriptions/identification of images, mobiles hung from ceiling, doorways; classroom rules, feeling/emotion charts.	Y 	Y 	Y 
2	The child as a collaborator	•Images of children working/exploring together	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images of children in peer-to-peer engagement working on projects, building structures in small & large-groups. Photograph book categorized and labeled.	Y 	Y 	Y 
3	The child as communicator	• Children's expressive work displayed in classroom (not rote work) o Arts (drawing, painting, emerging writing)	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows, large-group circle areas, Examples of drawings, clay, projects between family and children in efforts for projects for classroom to showcase (alphabet tiles, counting projects).	Y 	Y 	Y 
		• Images of creative work that cannot be displayed 2-dimensionally o Photos of block structures and such	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Tabletop and on top of shelves within reach of children photograph book categorized and labeled	Y 	Y 	Y 

Figure 42. Observation Chart for RE inspired principles 1-3



















4	Environment as a third teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Documentation of teacher professional development 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Various and multiple use of esthetic materials and qualities in classroom (i. e., plants, clean, well-organized cultural artifacts displayed from children and community) 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Multiple ways of implementing the ideas and creative thinking of children and research (i. e., visible documentation of the processes of children's learning through images, displays of artwork and drawings, graphic organizers). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Visual images and creations that represent the children and families in the classroom environment (i. e., photographs of children and their families, family decorated cubbies). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
5	Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Documentation of teacher collaborations and engagement with children (i. e., images of activities, images of teachers guiding children in developmental milestones (physical, intellectual and social-emotional child development). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Documentation of teacher-child-family partnerships (i. e., images, illustrations, literacy efforts, materials exhibiting reflective teaching and strategies). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 

Figure 43. Observation Chart for RE inspired principles 4 & 5




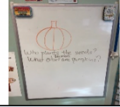










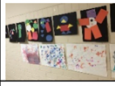




6	Teacher as researcher	•Documentation of teaching strategies based on research from teacher and children's ideas (i. e., projects, literacy artifacts).	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
7	Documentation as communication	•Documentation of the various ways children, teachers and families communicate information interdependently (i. e., documentation panels of children's learning, documentation of questions and inquiry process children share with peers and school community).	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
8	The parent as partner	•Documentation of family, school-child- teacher collaborations and engagement.	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
		•Documentation of parent fostered community efforts bridging school partnerships.	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
9	The community as a shared partner in child education	•Images and documentation of community fostered and initiated educational and other partnerships.	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
		•Examples of community resources demonstrated through documentation in the school and or classroom.	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 

Figure 44. Observation Chart for RE inspired principles 6-9

2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The Head Start directors in each case knew more about early childhood theory and practices, and the Reggio Emilia Approach than the other participants at each school. They all reported having been taught about the Reggio Emilia Approach in coursework in their college training and professional development. Their experience with Reggio-inspired principles and philosophy was greater than a majority of the teachers. All were concerned with meeting the mandates for Head Start, for promoting the best outcomes for children and families, and showed a commitment to the Head Start mission. They all encouraged their teaching staff to include

Reggio-inspired practices, though they were not involved in the training or pushing this learning, as they were more directly focused on assuring the Head Start mandates were adhered to.

The chart below provides examples of statements by education directors in each location. The Massachusetts education director responds with more alignment to the Reggio Emilia Approach as seen in her statement that focuses on the culture, environment, and the interests of children, and the relevance of observation. The New Mexico education director is also welcoming of the approach, and clearly addresses constructivist learning theory with reference to scaffolding. Her mention of conversations as relevant for learning and her connection to constructivist theory reveal an alignment with Reggio-inspired philosophy. The Tennessee director emphasizes the Head Start curriculum mandates, referencing a specific tool, KWL process, which aligns more with traditional classroom practices. These simple responses presented in Figure 45 represent the overall character of the responses from each of the education directors.

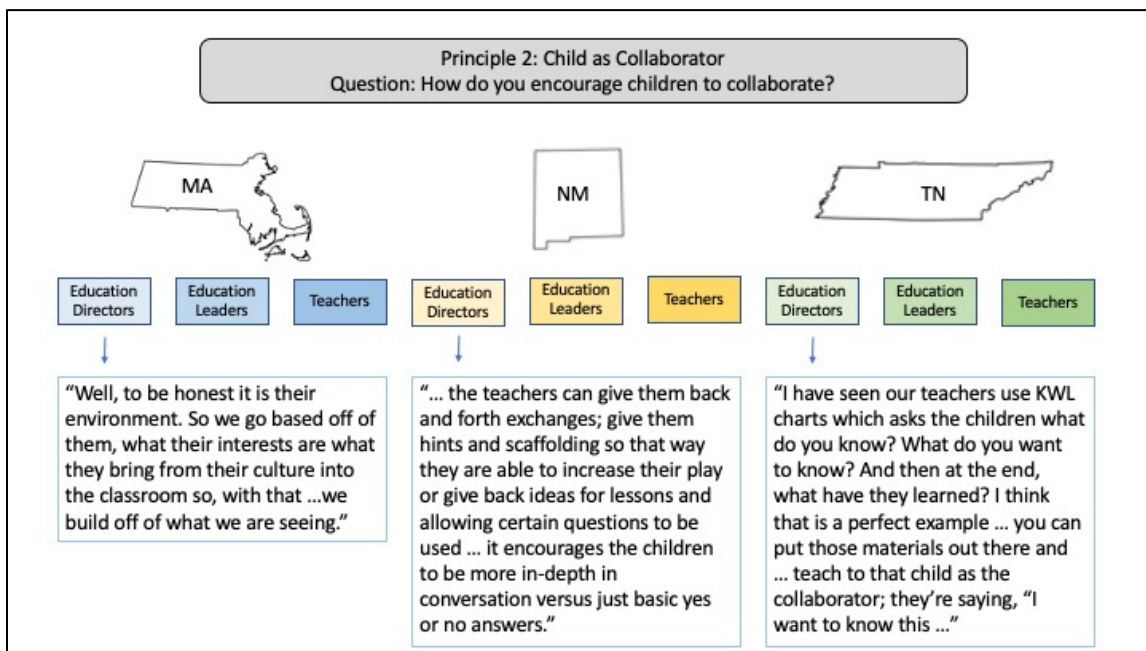


Figure 45. Example education directors’ responses to child as protagonist question

3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

Head Start education leaders across all three states typically responded in similar ways demonstrating a strong sense of basic theory, practices, and understanding for performance standards and state mandates. Given that the Head Start program model supports teacher education and higher education for all staff, the qualifications for coordinators, education leaders, and directors are outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards. This means that the education leaders must have a strong background and degree in early childhood education. Due to their education, the education leader participant sample demonstrated a solid sense of awareness for the Reggio Emilia approach. All answered the child as a protagonist question with a clear understanding, which is illustrated in their responses in Figure 46. Yet, the Massachusetts and Tennessee education leaders overall lack of clarity of alignment with REA principles as seen in the following examples.

MA Education Leader:

You will see a lot of small-group activities going on, independent, where you have a group of 2-4 children engaging in a center in an activity. More uhm, teacher-supported activities going on. Basically, we are doing observations constantly in the classroom, so we can determine what level each child is in all of the different domains, and then we will tailor the activities to meet those levels. So, there may be some groups where they'll need a bit more teacher intervention whereas others can be completely independent.

TN Education Leader:

We are seeing, coming out of homes with an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) background and a high ACES score, how do you – how do you work with those children

because they, they sometime have a lot of back issues that you've got to be prepared for and you've got to be able to, to uhm, to support them the best way that you can... just constantly learning new techniques in and even new ways to setup the classroom to help uhm, make sure that you're, you're doing the best for the children and families that you serve.

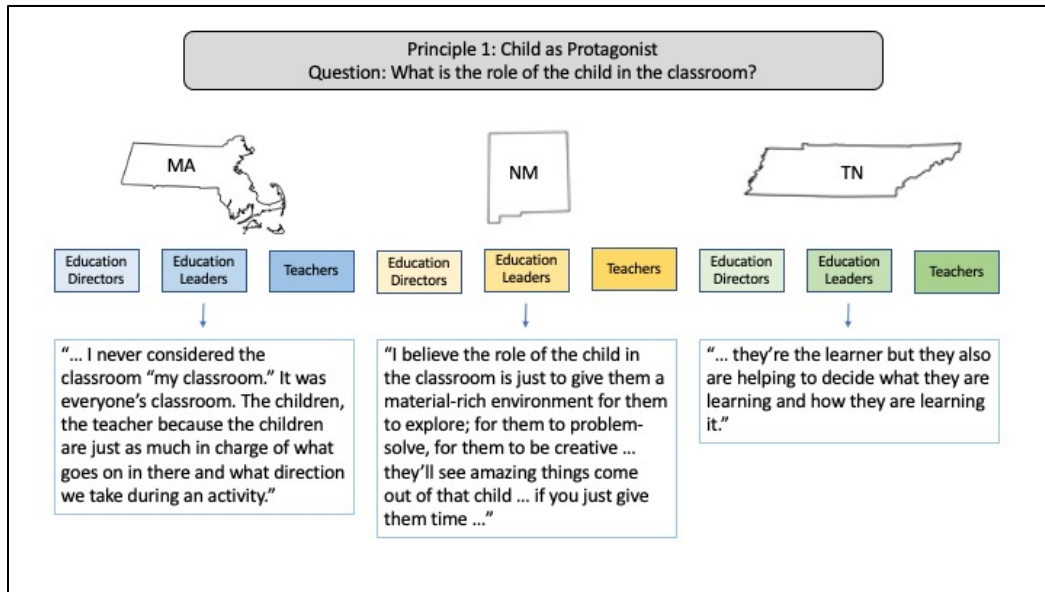


Figure 46. Example of education leaders' responses to child as protagonist question

The New Mexico education leader was more aligned with REA principles than the other two education leaders as noted in the following statement:

What I do know is that it is child-driven and that in some of the material that I have seen and read, that the teachers do go by the child's lead. They provide just natural materials and natural environment to the children. They incorporate a lot of, just everyday materials.

4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

In this section all the teacher participants from across the three locations (New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Tennessee) will be referenced in relation to one another. It is important to remember that there is a teacher 1, a teacher 2, a teacher 3, and a teacher 4 from each location, and one education director and one education leader. In the following sections details are provided to highlight the similarities and differences in teacher reports related to each principle. Additionally, some sections contain slides from randomly selected participants groups (education director, education leader, teachers 1, 2, 3 and 4) to demonstrate variations in their responses.

The level of teacher professional development, training and experience using and implementing the approach was not found to be consistent across all states. At least one teacher participant in all three states indicated that they had experienced some form of training or exposure to the Reggio Emilia Approach: Teacher 3 in New Mexico, Teacher 2 in Massachusetts, and Teacher 4 in Tennessee. Each of these three teachers stated they were comfortable implementing the principles in their classroom as important tools to increase children's learning. They specifically noted wanting to learn more about the Reggio Emilia Approach and sought more professional development to satisfy their curiosity through research. In particular, New Mexico Teacher 3 stated that she understands the approach well enough to teach it to her peers through encouraging them to read, experience, and expand their knowledge-base to include it in their classrooms stating, "... for the past 3 years, I have started doing the Reggio approach. Beforehand, I was very into the "how do I say?" primary rainbow glitter is better..."

Teacher responses across all three states demonstrated that while there were REA principles being implemented, it was notably unsubstantiated in their responses if the quality or

intensity of the Reggio-inspired practices they included were enough to make a difference in student outcomes and learning opportunities. It could not be determined if there was consistency, depth, or complete teacher understanding of the principles among all these teachers. The researcher questions whether teacher understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach, even among those three teachers who claim to be more Reggio-inspired, is understood at a level where they could argue that REA practices would make a difference in child outcomes. Their main consideration for curriculum is still guided by the Creative Curriculum and mandates in these Head Start programs. For the reasons stated above, it could not be determined if how teachers responded are aspects of the approach or from other curricula models utilized in the Head Start program model. The overall pattern found across the data was that the three teachers, one in each state, who had training related to the Reggio Emilia Approach were in more alignment with the nine principles than the remaining nine participants.

Child as protagonist. While all participants strongly believed in the child as the focus, or protagonist, it wasn't clear that most understood the meaning of the term in relation to the Reggio Emilia Approach. Second, some teachers were not aware that the teaching methods they were facilitating to develop relationships with children and their ideas or inquiry were aspects of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

For example, one teacher participant responded in this way, "...whatever you know they want, you know to do ..." which demonstrates a few possibilities; that she did not fully understand the question, lacked clarity of the question, had not been exposed to the term before in relation to a child in a classroom learning environment, or had never experienced professional development that guided her awareness for understanding what it means to view the child as a protagonist. The participant response was not in alignment with the Reggio principle.

The three more Reggio-inspired teachers did reveal a better understanding of this principle as noted in the following example. Quotes from the three Reggio-inspired participant teachers across all states are noted below:

Massachusetts Teacher 2: "...to bring in their ideas, to share their ideas with each other...they can do anything in that they will be recognized for what they are doing, that they will be encouraged to ask questions and to move forward."

Tennessee Teacher 4: "...the role of a child in a classroom would be to be a learner, to be someone who wonders and to be someone who wants to experiment and try new things and different ways..."

New Mexico Teacher 3:

They're the heart of the classroom, that's what their role is. They are the ones who lead ... they want to engage...secondly, what they are – the community that they are going to create in the classroom , they're definitely one – all of them are that whole community but each child is definitely a huge part of it... I like to create that family community, and we say it from the very beginning, and it just grows and by the end of the school year, that community is the classroom because they begin to, as a whole, start thinking about how is my actions or non-actions gonna affect the person beside me or not affect the person beside me...and anything that they do and that is something I totally kind of try to embed in them cause it is something that is going to last forever...the child itself becoming the independent learner problem-solver...

Child as collaborator. Not all the teachers responded to the question in terms of a Reggio Emilia perspective. Nine participants considered behaviors like sharing as collaboration, whereas a Reggio-inspired approach would draw out examples of children problem solving

together, making predictions together and solving conflicts, or reconfiguring and reinterpreting ideas in the context of long-term projects. For example, a teacher participant responded to child as collaborator by stating, "...we try getting our verbal kids paired up with our non-verbal kids to help them get words..." Though modeling and pairing children together is definitely part of the collaboration process, her process is focused a developmental skill as opposed to facilitating a child-led process of sharing ideas, exploring, and problem-solving in the context of long-term projects. Her statement is not aligned with a Reggio-inspired perspective, as children do not "get words" but rather develop the skills based on the theories of language development and social interactions with peers and adults as they manipulate, play, and explore opportunities that extend language development.

The three more Reggio-inspired teachers provided responses that revealed a deeper understanding of collaboration as perhaps related to community connections with peers rather than inquiry-oriented project work.

Massachusetts Teacher 2:

...to bring in their ideas, to share their ideas with each other with us, uhm, often, asking them questions, of you know, open-ended questions and just taking that information and moving with it; uhm, watching what they do, how they respond to what I bring into the environment.

Tennessee Teacher 4:

...small groups and so in some of the different learning games... during that time they are also collaborating with other students whether that's building or reading books together, or drawing and writing for each other in different centers and we, the teachers encourage that

by going and facilitating conversations, helping solve any disagreements or disputes things like that – so, it’s a lot of modeling and a lot of small-group time together...

New Mexico Teacher 3: She believes parents are children’s first teacher and that:

...the second teacher [for children] are their peers because they learn so much from one another because they’re someone they can truly relate to – not only from their community but because of the standpoint of where they play with one another – they do everything together; so we try to encourage a lot of talking, a lot of small-group, large-group activities and you can definitely see it when they are playing in their centers – a lot of that collaboration of them going back and forth, ‘No, maybe we should do this or we can do this,’ and we give them the tools so they can use that language to just kind of grow.

These quotes show a range of participant understanding of Principle 2, Child as Collaborator. Some participants use the language influenced by Reggio inspiration and can define it easier than other participants. Three participants are more familiar and have more exposure to the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Child as communicator. Overall, nine teachers responded with less clarity in relation to the Reggio Emilia Approach. Three teachers, one teacher in each location, responded more closely in alignment with this principle and these were the three more Reggio-inspired teachers. Three examples of responses from a randomly selected participant group (teacher 1 participants) are more typical of the nine teachers with less clarity on this principle are reflected in Figure 47. Note the participants understanding of the question is based on their lack of awareness or exposure to the principle of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Their foundation for relating children’s communication abilities are all in the form of how the teacher asks questions to provoke a response, yet in the Reggio Emilia, children are already assumed to be communicators and do so

in multiple ways, including using gestures, drawing, writing, painting, and through their engagements with their peers and adults.

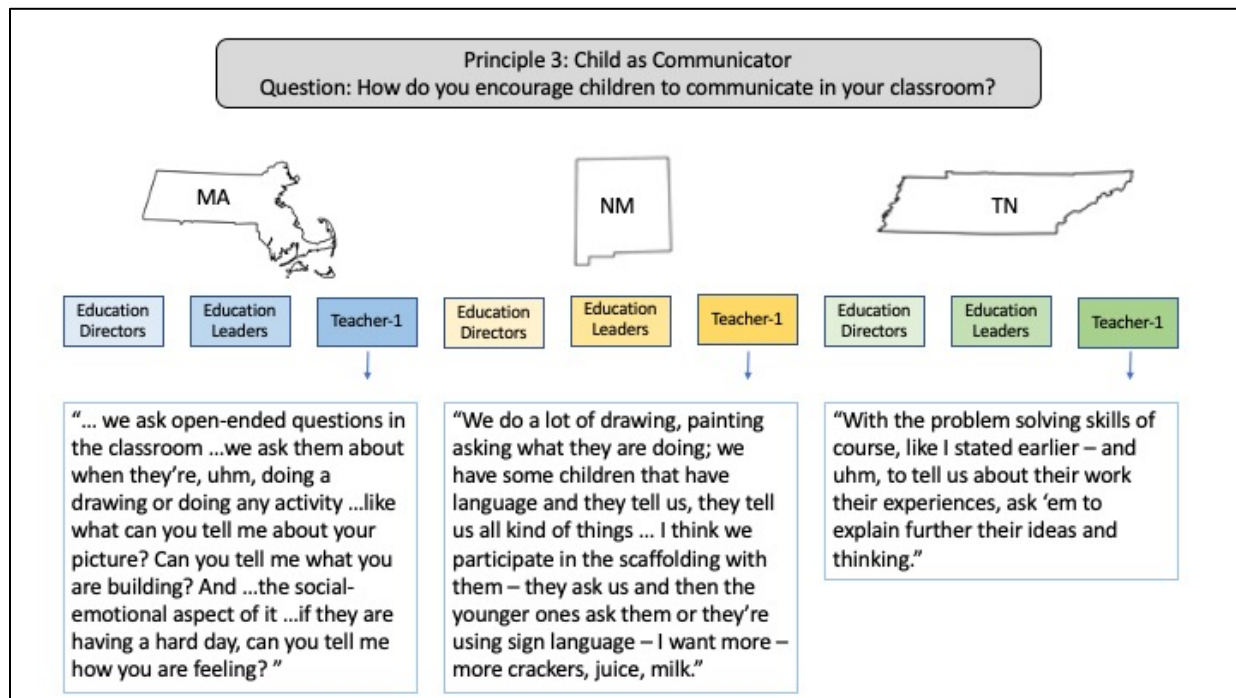


Figure 47. Example of Teachers' responses to child as communicator question

Learning environment. There were distinct differences in the overall culture of each school which were made apparent through the researcher's observations of the classrooms and secondary areas. One of the researcher's observations that relates to the learning environment but falls outside of the observation tool designed for the study is that the makeup of the teacher and leadership population becomes a strong feature to consider. For example, in New Mexico, teachers and leadership were predominantly Native American, and children were predominantly Native American. In Massachusetts, teachers and leadership reflected the very diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial representations of children and families in the school (African American, Caucasian American, Dominican Republic, Haitian, Hispanic). In Tennessee, the teachers were

predominantly White females, with the exception of one education leader, and the children were predominantly White. While there were children who were African American and Hispanic in Tennessee, there were no teachers that were representative of their culture. All teachers referred to the need for the families to be welcome and for the children to feel comfortable in the classroom in order to learn.

In New Mexico the many examples of artifacts revealed a strong relationship to the culture of the children and families within the school and community. These include artwork donated by families and the Native community, the Native language written onto documentation and signage, and the use of traditional materials children might see in their home and community, like growing corn for projects, using Native clothing in the dramatic play area, or Native woven blankets in the library area.

The observations in Massachusetts revealed a culture that valued literacy, math, and science. Words that preschool children might not be expected to know were used throughout all the classrooms. These high-quality vocabulary words were used in contexts that would be meaningful to children, which could inspire children to relate the words to the processes they were engaged in. There were many examples of instructional signage that guided literacy, math, and science processes. Images of children, families, teachers and leadership in this school were representative of a population as diverse as the community surrounding the school.

In Tennessee the researcher observed a strong sense of family and family values depicted in the various drawings and representations of children's families and holidays.

Another example of how participants responded to the principle regarding the environment as the third teacher are outlined in Figure 48, as represented by the random selection of a participant group response (all teacher 2 participants) and demonstrate the varied

understanding for what the question means. Teacher 2 in Massachusetts was most clearly aligned with the Reggio-inspired principle as revealed in her quote.

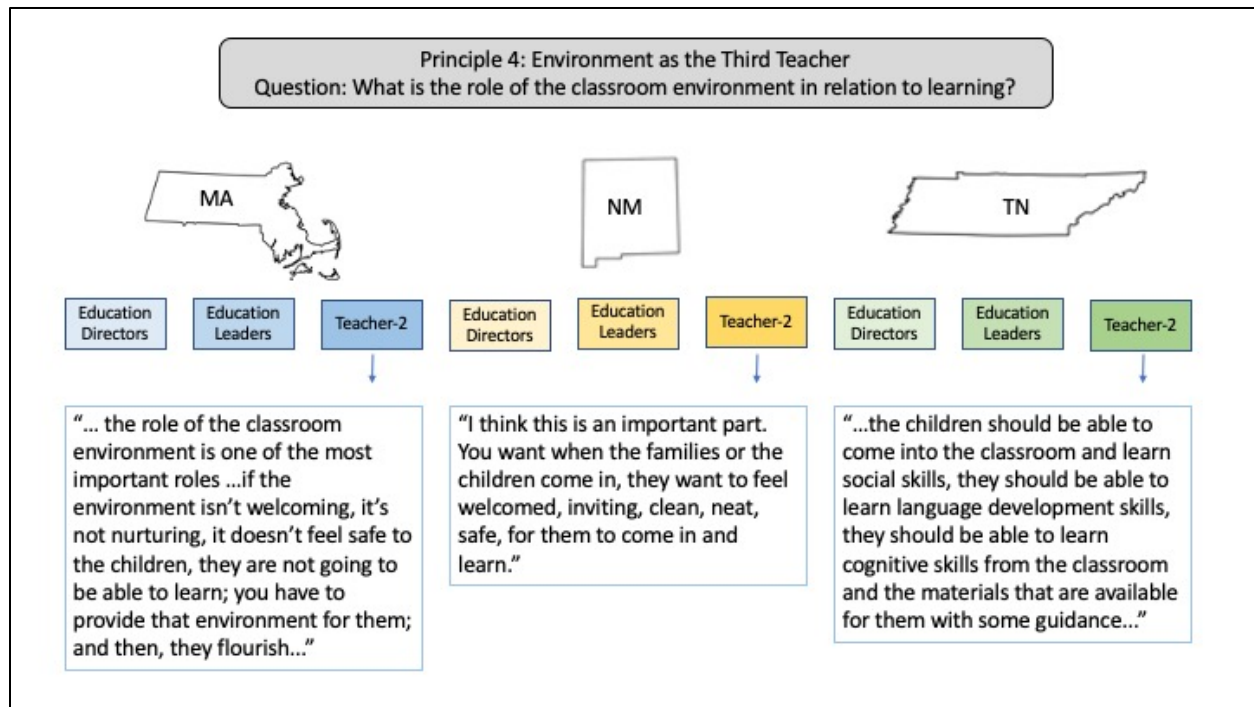


Figure 48. Teacher 2 Participant responses about the environment as the third teacher

Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide.

Again, nine of the twelve teachers were less clear in their responses related to the principle of Teacher as Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer and Guide. Three teachers, one in each location who is more Reggio-inspired, demonstrated better understanding of this principle. Three examples of participant responses from a randomly selected participant group (teacher 3 participants) reveal a variety of responses, as reflected in Figure 47. Teacher 3 in New Mexico reveals more Reggio-inspired alignment.

The responses from Teacher 3 from across all three states represents variations in how the responses can be considered in alignment with Reggio-inspired preschool program philosophy.

While all three teachers emphasize relationships in their responses (Figure 49). Teacher 3 in Massachusetts and Teacher 3 in New Mexico had a similarity in considering themselves as an active link for the children in the process of learning. Teacher 3 from Massachusetts stated that she views herself as “the glue that makes it happen” and in a similar way, Teacher 3 in New Mexico stated that, “I am the link...” Though these two teachers have this similarity, Teacher 3 in New Mexico reveals the actions she takes to be that link, which demonstrates a clearer understanding of this Reggio-inspired principle. All responses are aligned with the Reggio-inspired approach, yet with REA professional development could bring more awareness and openness to include the Approach in preschool learning environments.

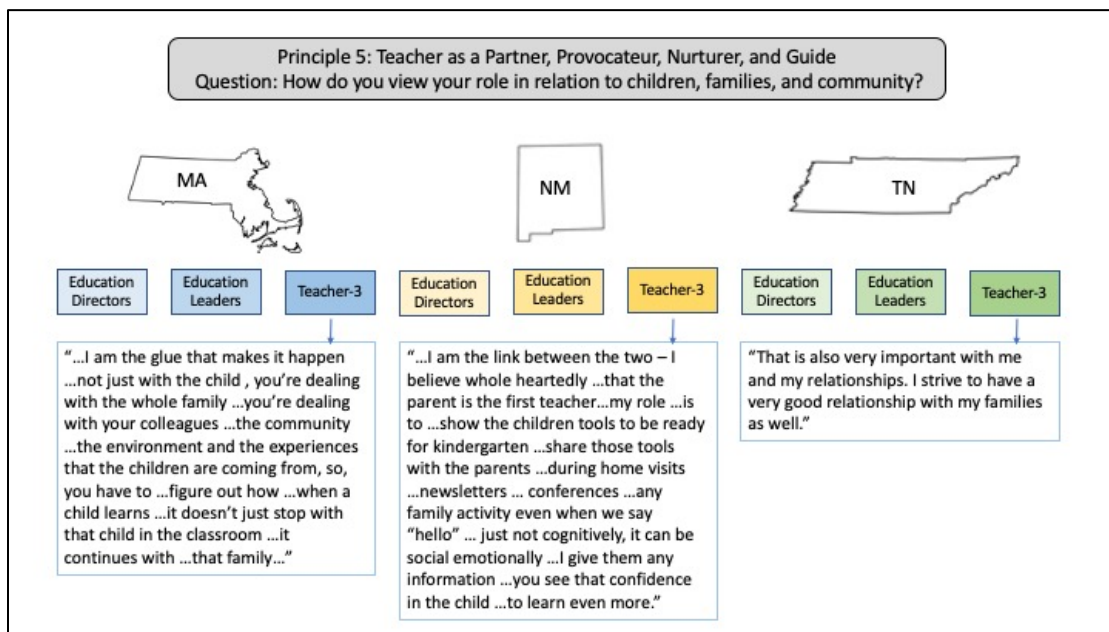


Figure 49. Teacher 3 Participant responses for teacher as a partner provocateur, nurturer, and guide

Teacher as researcher. Teachers’ understanding about their role as a researcher to guide the questions children pose and extend learning opportunities through provocations and children’s interests was not always primary. The mandated curriculum implemented in each center across

every state in the study determined the ideas, goals, and direction of learning that teachers included in their teaching practices. The Creative Curriculum is organized as a form of data-driven assessment that is used to track the progress and gains of children.

Nine teachers' ideas about teacher as researcher are more related to their own professional development, and less related to the principle of Teacher as Researcher. The randomly selected participant group (teacher 4 participants) chosen to highlight a variation in responses across cases for this principle includes one more Reggio-inspired teacher (Tennessee) and two with less Reggio-inspired alignment, as demonstrated in Figure 50. There is similarity across the states in relation to this principle, in that professional development is a form of teacher research, so there is partial alignment with this Reggio-inspired principle overall. Again, the more Reggio-aligned teachers acknowledged their partnership with children and that they are learners along with the children, as in the example of the statement by Teacher 4 in Tennessee below, which demonstrates a closer alignment with REA philosophy.

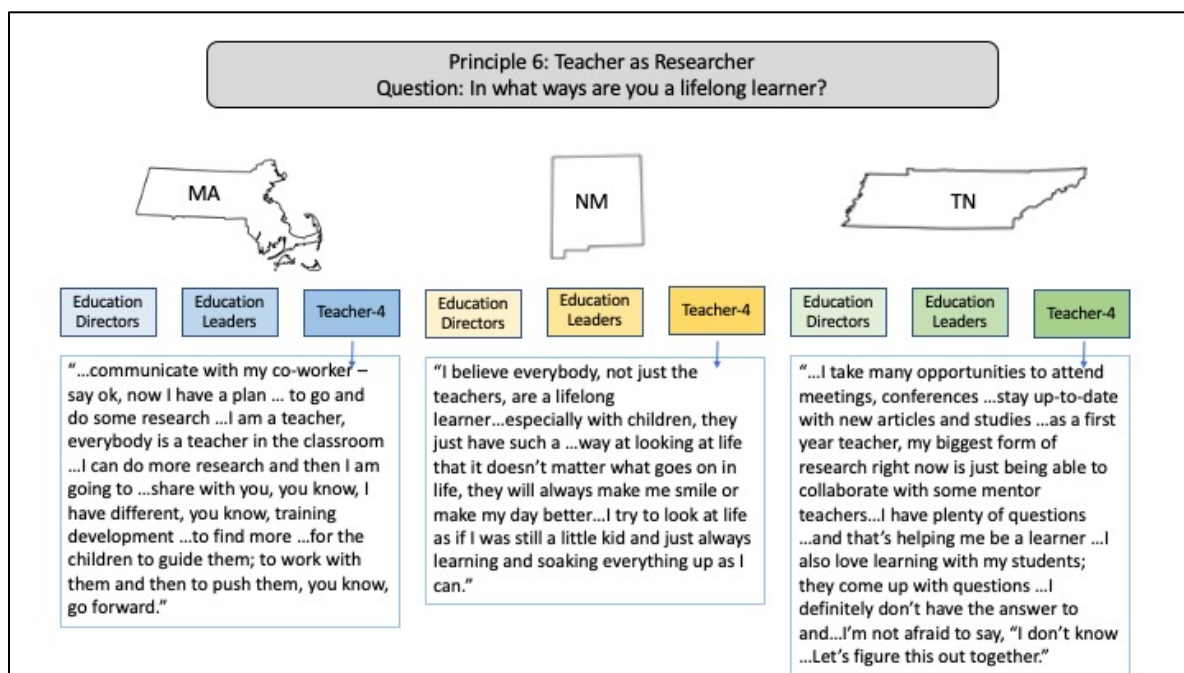


Figure 50. Teacher 4 Participant responses for teacher as a researcher

Documentation. The descriptions in Figure 51 were randomly selected from teacher participants’ responses to the principle Documentation as Communication. Teacher 2 from Massachusetts uses vocabulary often found in Reggio-inspired programs, describing documentation as “showcases of learning.” Teacher 4 in New Mexico summed up her ideas in Reggio-inspired language stating, “we...represent it in different ways...their thoughts or ideas...” Again, Teacher 4 in Tennessee has specific language used in Reggio-inspired programs in her statement, “...student work in the hallways and in the classroom...see and be reminded of what they’ve accomplished.” Though some teachers use Reggio-inspired language, all responses demonstrate a general understanding and knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach (Figure 48).

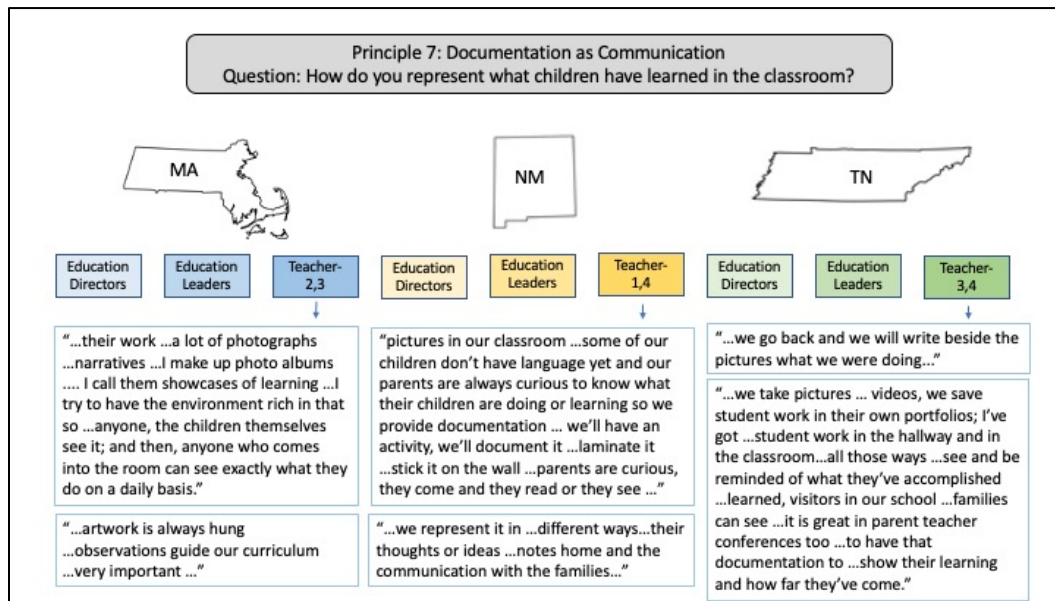


Figure 51. Responses from Teacher Participants 2 and 3 of Massachusetts, Teacher Participants 1 and 4 of New Mexico, and Teacher Participants 3 and 4 from Tennessee for the documentation question

Parents as partners. Teachers in each state were strongly focused on teacher-parent-child relationships, and it was clearly demonstrated in all aspects of the data collection. The New Mexico Head Start program was found to demonstrate the strongest connection to family and community based on the artifacts displayed in classroom and secondary-area observations.

There is an overall basic understanding of this Reggio-inspired principle as documented in the responses of participants through a survey, interview, and observation of learning environments. In Figure 52, there are examples of the language often found in teachers who are including Reggio principles in their program's relation to the principle of parents as partner.

Again, the three teachers with more Reggio-inspired experiences represented more Reggio-inspired understanding and implementation in relation to their work connecting with children, families, and the communities where they reside. For example. Teacher 2 in Massachusetts explained it in this way:

...if you don't have a relationship with your families, you're really are at a disadvantage, so, it's to...my best interest to, to forge those relationships and...make them feel comfortable even if they don't speak your language or if for some reason they are apprehensive because of a situation they may be in, but you just have to really reach out and try to find something to, to let them feel that you are there to help them...their children and provide resources for them.

This demonstrates a vision for how she engages parents as part of extending her respect for their children and the value of their education as well as that of the family.

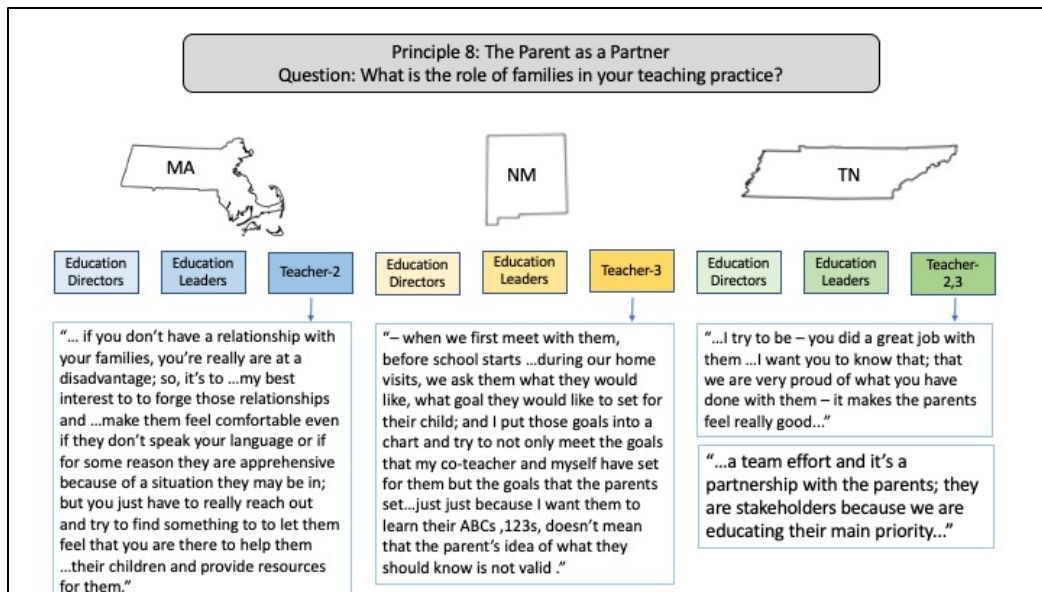


Figure 52. Responses from multiple Teacher Participants to parent as a partner

Third, the cultural richness of the approach which is derived from the families and communities of children was not clearly represented consistently in classrooms across each state.

Community partnership. Each individual state reflected vast differences to understanding what a community partnership meant in terms of serving as a resource for support. The interesting finding is that New Mexico affirmed strong connections with their community, resulting in strong benefits for their Head Start program, whereas Massachusetts and Tennessee did not experience these strong community relationships (Figure 53). New Mexico participants across all sample groups responded with enthusiasm about the constant and consistent community involvement across elder partnerships and events which supported the preschool program. Quotes are included below from New Mexico participants:

Education Director:

So the community in itself is largely what is based on some of the things that are influenced at the school; we are a huge community-based school where we do partner with

our local programs, and the local programs help with dental screenings, health screenings they're also a great resource for parents, and we provide parents a community resource as well, and the teachers are able to work with our family service workers to help the parents find resources that they need too. So, at the beginning of the year, the teachers get or actually the parents get a copy of our family resource guide.

Education Leader:

So we did a lot of self-promotion. So, I think our relationship with the community is really strong; we get a lot of positive feedback about our program just from different programs from different community members. We're always welcoming various community members into our school, just come in, tour the school, visit a classroom, have lunch. I think food is a big way to get people into your center... And so, also in the community there are different events that are hosted like say, environmental fairs, health fairs, those types of events, and so, our program is always represented at those events; we just had a community Halloween carnival so our program put up a booth and did a booth there at the event; so, yeah...we are always trying to be in the mix just so that the community knows about our program.

Teacher 1:

I have been here for a long time, and I think we have gotten more partnerships with our community members to collaborate with each other recently so we have like we have elders, we have WIC, we have a language committee, we have the library, so we're more inclusive with what is going on within our community, and I think it is good for the kids to see – like – oh, this lady works over here or oh, this this lady is the nurse over here you know, so that they recognize them outside when they're not here... Cause if I go to

Walmart and they saw me, they're like what are you doing here? I don't know, you're supposed to be at the school you, may be stuck in the closet, you know, they are very curious like, you don't belong here, so I think it is important for them to see other people in other places besides what they do.

Teacher 2: "They collaborate a lot with outside the program, like with the rec center, the library, the health office, I think the elder care. So, they collaborate a lot together here in this area."

Teacher 3:

...It's a strong relationship. Very strong. The community 110% supports this program, and they do so by participation – parent participation, community participation and different events whether it be family events, cultural events, Halloween, we just had one that was community that was department-wide. So, that was really nice to see everyone from the community together supporting one another... They definitely like the fact that we reinforce the culture and the language...

Teacher 4:

The relationship here is amazing. It's really, really good. We will have several volunteers come in and help cook or help us with the oven, help and teach the kids dances; last year we had the animal control come and kinda show our classroom a little bit what they do; and then we had the shelter come and show like a step-by-step of with the animals and then we brought my own dogs in; and has been brought dogs in because we adopted them from there and gave them a home so we kinda wanted to show them a kind of step-by-step in that process and how it works with the community; walking to the library or having the library come to read to the kids; just there's so many different ways. I think one of the

teachers is working on getting Smokey the Bear to come and see the kids... Of course, we have volunteers from the families to come and work with all of the children... So, just so many different ways – the community is a huge aspect here.

These responses demonstrate the New Mexico participants experienced strong connections between the school and the community partnering in the facilitation of education, life-skills, and respect for the values of early education for children and their families.

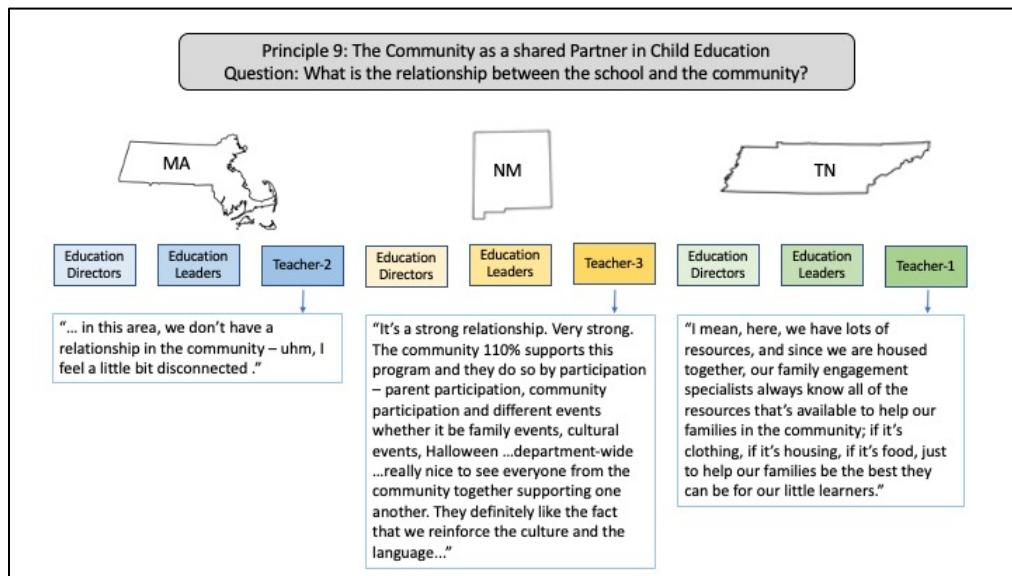


Figure 53. Responses from Teacher 2, 3 and 1 Participants from Massachusetts, New Mexico and Tennessee in response to the community question

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings from the three Head Start programs in this multiple case study. Narratives of the findings from each case are stated in the first sections of this chapter in relation to each of the four research questions and the themes that emerged in relation to each case. A cross-case analysis was provided in the final sections, addressing patterns of similarity and difference across the three cases: Head Start programs in New Mexico, Massachusetts, and

Tennessee. A discussion of the implications of the findings, limitations of the study, as well as questions and potential for future research follows in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study, the research questions, the summary of findings, and final discussions are presented in this chapter in the following sections.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this study was to determine a feasible alignment between the Head Start program model and the Reggio Emilia principles as perceived by Head Start directors, education leaders, and teachers in Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Northeast Tennessee. The second purpose was to determine whether HS teachers' beliefs suggest that they might benefit from professional development, training, and/or awareness of the REA principles to better support them in bringing together teachers, families, and the community into the processes of sharing the responsibility of serving the educational and emotional needs, safety, and care, of children interdependently (Cooper, 2010; Crosnoe, 2012; Edwards et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1997; New, 2007).

Summary of the Findings

This study sought to answer four research questions to learn about the beliefs and practices of Head Start education directors, education leaders, and teachers in relation to Reggio-inspired principles.

1. What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?
2. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?
3. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

4. What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

Question 1: What Reggio-inspired principles are observed in Head Start classrooms?

In all three cases, examples of observable artifacts representative of Reggio-inspired principles were found in many forms including traditional teacher-led, child-led, mandated, and scripted. They were often melded together without a clear purpose.

In New Mexico all the nine principles were observed in the form of artifacts and learning environments in some form. What stood out in this location were the examples of artifacts and learning materials in relation to family culture. Representations of culture, connections to community, and value for children understanding their identity were found in secondary and primary areas. In primary areas teachers included cultural items like blankets and woven rugs. In the secondary areas, artifacts donated from community members, parents, and other Native American communities were abundant. This school also provided a lot of materials for parent education, parent support, community relations and teacher professional development. Thus, the Reggio-inspired principles most strongly represented in New Mexico were:

- Principle 1: The child as protagonist
- Principle 4: Environment as a third teacher
- Principle 6: Teacher as researcher
- Principle 7: Documentation as communication
- Principle 8: The parent as a partner
- Principle 9: The community as a shared partner in child education

In Massachusetts all nine principles were observed in the form of artifacts and learning environments. Math, language and literacy, and science were major focuses in this location. A

variety of signage including directions, maps, diagrams, graphic organizers and illustrations were found in all classrooms in forms that are developmentally appropriate for supporting children's learning. The Reggio-inspired principles most significant to Massachusetts are the following:

- Principle 1: The child as protagonist
- Principle 3: Child as communicator
- Principle 4: Environment as a third teacher
- Principle 7: Documentation as communication
- Principle 8: Parents as partners

In Tennessee all nine principles were observed in the form of artifacts and learning environments. In this location the seasons, holiday celebrations, children's perceptions of family were a central focus in primary and secondary areas. Children's work displayed throughout primary and secondary areas, though a majority of this work was teacher-directed. The Reggio inspired principles most significant to Tennessee are the following:

- Principle 3: Child as communicator
- Principle 5: Teacher as a partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide
- Principle 8: Parents as partners

While there are some principles highlighted as the strongest in each location, all nine Reggio-inspired principles were observed in some form, whether in one classroom or several, in each location.

Question 2: What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start directors report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

The Head Start directors expressed knowledge of early childhood from many perspectives, and all had knowledge of the Reggio Emilia approach. The amount of education and experience

made a difference in each director's approach to curriculum, community, and their expectations of the quality of work for which they were striving.

What was apparent from the director in New Mexico, who shared the same culture with many of the families in the school, was her intention to promote the best learning opportunities possible for children who are a minority population in America. She sees children as protagonists (Principle 1) and parents as partners and co-learners with children and teachers (Principle 8). While her interview responses align with several principles, these two stand out as most representative of the New Mexico director.

The director in Massachusetts was in a doctoral program and was in touch with the value of literacy in early childhood education, and tried to instill all the components of the Head Start expectations in conjunction with the skills children needed to be ready for school. Also, she was aware of the diversity necessary to promote quality learning, which was observed in the diversity of staff that was representative of the community of children in the school. She was strong in her research and professional development in relation to literacy and STEM, which aligns with teacher as researcher (Principle 6). Documentation as communication (Principle 7) was strong as seen in the multiple ways she oversaw communication being provided for children and from children. While waiting to observe in classrooms the researcher saw very strong interactions and engagement between parents and teaching staff, beyond typical greetings, which shows an alignment with the parent as a partner (Principle 8).

The director in Tennessee knew a lot about elementary and preschool, as confirmed with certification to teach in two states. As a new director she was working to try to weave in cultural and community aspects to the school, which were not yet implemented. This aligns with the principle of community as a shared partner in child education (9). Caring for children and

meeting their school readiness goals, as well as their safety were priorities for this director, in addition to providing more professional opportunities for teachers. The professional development focus aligns with the teacher as researcher (Principle 6). She has a strong link to the parent as a partner (Principle 8) with her overall emphasis of the families in the learning environment.

Question 3: What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start education leaders report teachers in their centers are demonstrating in their classrooms?

All the education leaders had experience teaching in early childhood education, and all shared a deep commitment to the mission of Head Start. They all had solid knowledge of the role relationships play with children and families.

The New Mexico education leader exhibited a lot of compassion. She shared that she was from the local community and wanted the best for the community, thus the best for children in the community. She was in this field to help families in the community do better, and she promoted any approach to strengthen family and community values. The principles most supported by her responses include the parent as a partner (Principle 8), community as a shared partner in child education (Principle 9), and child as protagonist (Principle 1). Additionally, this education leader said that she was learning from the Reggio-inspired teacher in her school and was studying about the REA on her own, thus she had responses that aligned with all of the nine Reggio-inspired principles.

In Massachusetts, the education leader was strongly focused on wanting children to be ready for kindergarten and was concentrating programming on being sure all resources were available for this purpose. She had strong values for diversity in the community and encouraged teachers to identify with the families, which aligns with the parent as a partner (8). She has a strong Child as Protagonist perspective (Principle 1), and a strong alignment with the

Environment as the Third Teacher (Principle 4). When she spoke about the child's communication through language and with many means she reveals alignment with Child as Communicator (Principle 3).

The education leader in Tennessee also had a lot of experience. She was in touch with the children, had a good relationship with the families and showed authentic consideration of their needs, which aligns well with Child as Protagonist (1) and the Parent as a Partner (8). She had knowledge of other educational approaches and spoke at length about the challenges she would help to resolve for children on a daily basis, which aligns with the Teacher as Researcher (6). Child as Communicator (Principle 3) is also demonstrated in her responses regarding the communication of a diverse population of children in an inclusive learning environment.

Question 4: What Reggio-inspired principles do Head Start teachers report they are using in their classrooms?

What the researcher found in the Head Start schools was that the participants were authentically part of a shared continuum of learning and practice of early childhood education (Bredenkamp, 2017; Henry et al., 2006; Katz, 1996). Teacher participants in every state, who claimed to know very little about the Approach, stated prior to the interview process that they had been learning about the Reggio Emilia Approach through a peer teacher who had been inspired enough to introduce it to them. Also, participants reported that they were learning more through discussions and hands-on experiences with their more knowledgeable teaching peer. In conjunction with the mentoring they were receiving from their teaching peer, teacher participants reported reading books and articles and bouncing off ideas with their more experienced teaching peer. Many teaching participants across all states reported practices and theories which were

representative of early childhood best practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and which were observed in primary and secondary areas of the schools.

Principle 8 stood out as strong with all the teacher participants, as all reported that having a positive relationship with parents was key. All teachers said they were using Documentation as Communication (Principle 7), which varied in its forms and their particular understanding. All the teachers provided examples of Children as Collaborators along with information on strategies they use to help children collaborate (Principle 2). Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, and Guide (Principle 5) was a concept all teacher said they were striving toward.

The three teachers across the three locations who were more Reggio-inspired responded with solid examples of each of the nine principles. Though Teacher 4 in Tennessee who struggled with the concept of environment as a third teacher, reported that the environment is important.

Overall, in New Mexico the six participants saw themselves as direct links to the community (Principle 9) and their responses included evidence of Documentation as Communication (Principle 7). Overall in Massachusetts, Child as Communicator (Principle 3) and Documentation as Communication was evident (Principle 7). In Tennessee, Teacher as Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer and Guide (Principle 5) and the Parent as a Partner (Principle 8) stood out as the most significant in their alignment.

Discussion of the Findings

It is clear that all participants, education directors, education leaders, and teachers across the three cases in this study have diverse perspectives that are related to their educational background and experiences in the field of early childhood education. The values of the programs they work within impact the ways each participant has developed values about family and community relationships. The conversations with these participants were thought-provoking and the opportunity to view the learning environments where they work with children highlighted the

limitations of mandatory curriculum, the culture of community in the classroom, and similarities among Head Start and the Reggio Emilia Approach in relation to the political impact of poverty.

These are discussed below.

Rethinking Mandatory Curriculum

The researcher learned that the mandatory curriculum of Head Start programs prevents exploration and incorporation of other models and approaches, so that perhaps only a teacher who is deeply rooted in the philosophy and practices of Reggio-inspired curriculum might be able to include Reggio-inspired practices. While each case had one teacher supporting her peers in learning from her knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach, in New Mexico the introduction of Reggio-inspired practices was most successful because the leadership had more knowledge and support for the approach.

The researcher found that there is little opportunity for teachers in Head Start to learn about other approaches, though most participants expressed an interest in learning more about the Reggio Emilia Approach. This is due to the mandatory Head Start trainings that are not focused on other approaches because the requirements are for grantees to make a decision about curriculum in order to receive funding, and most make Creative Curriculum their choice in order to comply. A question regarding Creative Curriculum found in the three Head Start cases is whether its investigative studies reflect the interests of all children in every community where the curriculum is adopted. Teachers can learn to incorporate other ideas and approaches and tie them into Creative Curriculum (Teaching Strategies, 2013/2013), but they need to be introduced to these through professional development and supportive follow through.

Recommendation for Head Start would be to re-evaluate this criteria to put into place an expectation that each program write a justification for their choice of curriculum and how it meets the educational needs of the children being served and how it connects with the learning domains,

in addition to the cultural needs of the residing community. Can Head Start consider professional development beyond the system of tiers where education directors and education leaders have more knowledge of early childhood development theory and curricular approaches than the teachers who are on the ground working with children every day? There is a need for intentional educational opportunities for teachers to grow beyond how to orchestrate mandatory curriculum so they can learn to increase their scope: Opportunities that begin and continue from the teachers' first days teaching. A better educated workforce should lead to better outcomes for children, and professional development can fill that need (Sykes, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018; Wilson, 1997). The Reggio Emilia Approach values continual professional development in its structure where teachers and pedagogical support persons, along with directors, all come together to focus on the curricular needs of the children. They study current research in relation to those needs, whether content-focused or centered on the social emotional needs of the children (Edwards et al., 1998, Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001,)

Community Culture Reflected in the Classroom

Locating the ways that Head Start is in alignment with the Reggio-inspired principles in order to identify gaps is complex. One goal of the researcher was to find these gaps in order to argue for Reggio-inspired professional development to improve the practices of Head Start teachers. What was discovered is that children, families, learning experiences, and communities in these Head Start cases are different enough in their uniqueness, which is what guides the experiences of children. Each Head Start functions differently based on the communities of the children and families they are serving. The relationship of the Reggio-inspired principles to each of the Head Start cases in this study derives from the culture of children and families. This was expected based on the knowledge that the Reggio Emilia Approach cannot be fashioned as an exact replica in any community in America or elsewhere (Giudici et al., 2001; Wien, 2008). This

is due to the qualities of the Approach in how it informs early childhood education as it develops from the expressions of children, families, and community without being a prescribed method or curriculum. Each learning experience is shared, passed down generationally, and with layers of meaning interpreted and reinterpreted in ways that early childhood education is supported.

The schools in Tennessee and Massachusetts would benefit by implementing more cultural artifacts from the children and families they serve. All children and families should see themselves represented when they walk into a school and classroom. This concept suggests that teachers and school administrators might consider the cultures of the population of children they serve, research the cultures of the families in the school community, and acknowledge them as a meaningful way to engage with families (File, 2001; Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

Similarities of Approach in Relation to the Political Impact of Poverty

Because the Head Start program model is guided by current research, best practices, and was led by a team of experts in the field during the early 60s (Lim et al., 2007; Zigler & Styfco, 2010), there are shared similarities with many types of early childhood practices and theories. Because the model depends on current research to keep abreast of the needs and education of young children, formulation of the model is guided by the understanding that poverty is a variable in early education practice (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

What we see in the educational divides and civil rights movements across America currently are depicted in the images of people of color alongside those who are not, joining together to reimagine a better America. The Head Start movement was also grounded in an early education premise that was established to elevate people out of poverty through a better education for their children. The Head Start mission was designed to reframe how equity in education for all was *free* from racism and discrimination, supported children with disabilities, and challenged America's people to do better and be better for the sake of America's future where only

opportunities for better education can help to mitigate (Neuman & Dickinson, 2011; Office of Head Start, 2018). The Reggio Emilia Approach was also derived from a catalyst; World War II. From the devastation and destruction of communities during that war came inspiration to educate Italy's children, so they could find agency and advocate for themselves and others in the world while making different decisions for how their intellect would guide their decisions and dreams (Malaguzzi, 1993/1998).

Recommendations for Future Research

Using the survey with a larger participant sample would be meaningful to generalize to the greater population and might serve to support funding efforts to increase opportunities for Head Start and other preschool programs to investigate Reggio-inspired principles to increase learning opportunities for children. A larger survey study including the collection of child outcomes across sites might reveal a relationship between what the teacher reports on their use of Reggio-inspired principles and children's learning.

A larger survey study will also provide insight as to gaps in teachers' understanding or use of Reggio-inspired principles, as well as the value of culture and community in preschool classrooms in order to plan for related professional development.

It would be valuable to strengthen the observation tool by using it in a wider sample of Head Start schools and Reggio-inspired schools, which can inform the researcher of relevant considerations from within the perspective of the approach.

Another form of study to consider is the practices and perspectives of Head Start teachers prior to, during, and following Reggio-inspired teacher professional development, using interviews and observations as well as measures of child outcomes.

Study Limitations

There were several limitations to this study and a primary one was due to the inability for the researcher to secure travel funding. Other study limitations were lack of time to plan and coordinate thorough observations when children were not in the classrooms. The researcher navigated between transitions, lunch, recess, and other unforeseen circumstances like the weather in Massachusetts keeping children in their classroom longer to transition into the indoor recess space. Additionally, teachers' time with the researcher for the interviews was rushed during their limited free time during the school day.

Reframing questions could have helped the researcher to obtain more specific information during the interviews. For example, the first question asking about their teaching philosophy could have been broken into a phased question asking for details like educational experience and training experiences.

The small sample size of participants, 18 for the study, limits the ability to compare responses or generalize to the population (Creswell, 2017). With a larger sample a diverse range of participants can support the generalizability to the population, and greater meaning can be attributed to the overall results from the findings. Qualitative research is designed to capture responses by the participant in the form of recording and documenting open-ended questions and then transcribing them into text for analysis. The process is detailed, and consumes a great deal of time for the researcher to transcribe responses, code for themes, and find the overarching constructs by assigning meaning and interpretation from the responses, and then writing the narrative (Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2015).

Summary

This chapter revisited the purpose of the study and its research questions prior to presenting summaries of the findings related to each research question. Additionally, a discussion

of the findings included insights from the researcher regarding the limitations of mandatory curriculum, community culture, and relationships among Head Start and the Reggio Emilia Approach in relation to the political impact of poverty. Future research and limitations were acknowledged.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Form for Content Validity of Interview Questions

Content Validity for Interview Questions. The questions organized around nine Reggio-inspired principles are listed below.

Opening.

1. Could you please share about yourself and describe your teaching style?

Introductory.

1. If I were to visit your classroom what would I see in relation to best practices for children's learning and development?

1. Can you please share what you know about Reggio-inspired practices?

Quantitative Checklist Begins Here:

Principle 1: Child as Protagonist

1. The role of the child in the classroom is:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

1. The children in my classroom exhibit capabilities, interests, culture, and diverse learning styles.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 1:

Do the 2 survey questions for Principle 1 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 2: Child as Collaborator

1. Children collaborate in the classroom as co-learners with peers and teachers, scaffold with peers and adults, and participate in curricular planning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 2:

Does the 1 survey question for Principle 2 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Principle 3: Child as Communicator

1. Materials and tools guide the children to communicate what they understand and what they want to know, for example: building structures, discussions, painting, drawing, sculpture, drama, and/or music.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I encourage children to formulate their questions and inquire about concepts they do not fully understand, or ideas they may have.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 3:

Do the 2 survey questions for Principle 3 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

- 1. No
- 2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Principle 4: Environment as the Third Teacher

- 1. I use tools and strategies to arrange the classroom environment to meet the learning needs for each child.

- 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
- 2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

- 2. The environment is the third teacher.

- 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
- 2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 4:

Do the 2 survey questions for Principle 4 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

- 1. No
- 2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Principle 5: Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide

- 1. My role in the classroom is to collaborate with children, families, colleagues and the community.

- 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I highlight children's contributions as reflected in their activities, relationships with peers, interdependent interactions with adults or spontaneously through active learning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. I consider myself, the teacher, partner, provocateur, nurturer and guide

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 5:

Do the 3 survey questions for Principle 5 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 6: Teacher as Researcher

1. I consider my role to be a *teacher as a researcher*. I understand and plan the ideas or interests of children when listening to them communicate with peers, and implement their ideas into the learning environment for further exploration.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I utilize my teacher professional development as a valuable tool to connect children's interests and educational experiences in connection to classroom learning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 6:

Do the 2 survey questions for Principle 6 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 7: Documentation as Communication

1. I use documentation as a method to remind the children about what they worked on in the classroom.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I observe children while they are engaged in activities and interpreted their engagements for planning curricula.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. Documentation is a form of communication.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 7:

Do the 3 survey questions for Principle 7 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 8: The Parent as a Partner

1. I practice *teacher-parent* partnerships.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 8:

Does the 1 survey question for Principle 8 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 9: The Community as a shared Partner in Child Education

1. The community is an educational partner and supports our outreach efforts with meaningful resources for our school.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 9:

Does the 1 survey question for Principle 9 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

suggestions for improvement or comments:

Quantitative Checklist Ends Here.

Ending.

1. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B: Survey

1. Children are self-directed by guiding their own learning in the classroom.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
2. Children bring unique and diverse ways of learning to their classroom experiences.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
3. Children's ideas are valued in our classroom curriculum.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
4. Children construct knowledge through social engagement.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
5. Some teachers in our center(s) facilitate the interests of children by promoting their play.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
6. Some teachers in our center(s) make time to bond through meaningful relationships with each child in the classroom.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
7. Some teachers in our center(s) design learning center(s) around children's thinking.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
8. Some teachers in our center(s) encourage children to communicate their needs to adults.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
9. Some teachers in our center(s) include children in curricular planning processes.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
10. Some teachers in our center(s) carefully organize materials to guide children to socially engage within the context of short and long-term investigations.
Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
11. Some teachers in our center(s) think of themselves as a co-learner with children when they investigate new concepts.

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
12. Scaffolding focuses on a reciprocal process between teachers and children, learning at the same time.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
13. When given the opportunity children choose to collaborate with peers or teachers to reach goals that are of interest to them.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
14. Some teachers in our center(s) collaborate by allowing children choices during long periods of uninterrupted exploration.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
15. Children communicate what they know using more than one approach (e.g. talking, drawing, music, dramatic play, sign language.).
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
16. Children design their own conversations in the classroom.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
17. Child generated questions frame the way teachers plan for the inquiry process (curriculum plans).
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
18. Some teachers in our center(s) use photos of children's experiences (prior and current) as a means to document what they learn.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
19. Some teachers in our center(s) use video of children's experiences (prior and current) to promote connections for new learning.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
20. Some teachers in our center(s) value using transcripts of children's prior experiences as a reflection tool for learning with children.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|










21. Professional development guides my teacher practices for designing a classroom environment to meet the needs of each child.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
22. Some teachers in our center(s) are flexible in arranging their classroom environment.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
23. The classroom environment is a valuable teaching strategy for connecting children to meaningful learning.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
24. The classroom environment represents the culture of the community it serves.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
25. Some teachers in our center(s) use the classroom environment to incorporate documentation of the wide variety of processes through which children are thinking.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
26. Some teachers in our center(s) incorporate genuine representations of the children’s family culture into the classroom environment as a learning tool.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
27. Teachers’ role with families is to foster partnerships.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
28. Teachers’ role is to develop meaningful relationships with children in order to facilitate autonomous learning.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
29. Some teachers in our center(s) collaborate with community members to support positive learning opportunities for children.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
30. Some teachers in our center(s) engage parents in the classroom in participatory classroom activities.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree








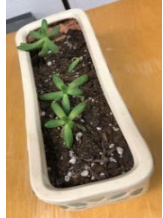







31. Some teachers in our center(s) provide materials to facilitate children's ongoing explorations.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
32. Children come to the classroom full of knowledge that is often beyond milestone expectations.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
33. Some teachers in our center(s) research materials for children to use in relation to their ongoing explorations.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
34. A teacher researcher is one who relies on children's conversations to guide curricular planning.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
35. Teacher professional development connects teachers with current best practices.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
36. Some teachers in our center(s) implement what they learn from professional development to use in their classroom to keep current on the best strategies for guiding young children.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
37. Some teachers in our center(s) plan to support what children are investigating, they research alongside them.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
38. Some teachers in our center(s) work hard to develop questions that are appropriate for guiding children to find problems on their own and ask their own questions.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
39. Some teachers in our center(s) document children's conversations to capture their engagement.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree
40. Some teachers in our center(s) use observation tools to understand what children know.

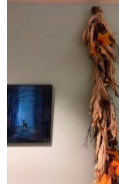








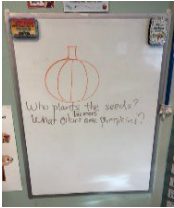
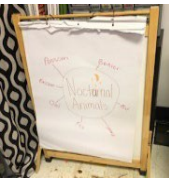




- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
41. Graphic organizers are visual tools to use with children to capture their ideas about their learning.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
42. Observation data can be used to understand collaborative learning within the classroom.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
43. Documentation panels communicate teachers' understanding of children's long term learning.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
44. Some teachers in our center(s) use documentation of children engaged in learning experiences to plan meaningful learning extensions (documentation refers to any of the following - written observation records, photos, video).
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
45. Some teachers in our center(s) consider their relationship with the parents of the children in their classroom as an integral part of children's learning.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
46. Some teachers in our center(s) use documentation of children's learning as a means to communicate with parents.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
47. Some teachers in our center(s) value parents as an integral part of children's learning by including their ideas when planning curricula extensions.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
48. Some teachers in our center(s) believe communication is best initiated through whatever ways families request so they can connect them with their child's activities and daily life at school.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
49. Knowledge of children's family life impacts the way teachers plan culturally responsive curriculum.

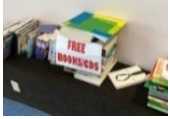
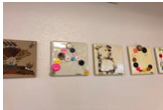








- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
50. Families are children's first teachers.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
51. The community my school is located in invests resources for the education of children.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
52. Some teachers in our center(s) partner with the community to share the capabilities of young children.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
53. Some teachers in our center(s) develop long-term, meaningful learning projects for the classroom with individuals or businesses in the community.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
54. Our teaching staff calls on community members for professional development related to a variety of needs (support for children with special needs, technology, assessment, etc.).
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
55. Some teachers in our center(s) believe that it is important for children to develop meaningful learning relationships with individuals and groups in the greater community as a way of promoting their futures as active citizens.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
56. Collaborative experiences across classrooms creates meaningful community within a school.
- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | I do not fully understand | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|

Appendix C: Observation Tool with Findings

#	REA Principle	Suggested Evidence Those noted are only some suggestions of what might be observed	Observed Evidence Note observed items that are suggested and others that relate to the principle	New Mexico Y=Yes; N=No	Tennessee Y=Yes; N=No	Massachusetts Y=Yes; N=No
1	The child as protagonist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of transcripts where children initiate conversations 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, parent/bulletin boards.</p> <p>Examples of languages and expressions directly quoted from children: Artwork with descriptions/identification of images, mobiles hung from ceiling, doorways; classroom rules, feeling/emotion charts.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 
2	The child as a collaborator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images of children working/exploring together 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images of children in peer-to-peer engagement working on projects, building structures in small and large-groups.</p> <p>Photograph book categorized and labeled.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 
3	The child as communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's expressive work displayed in classroom (not rote work). Arts (drawing, painting, emerging writing). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows, large-group circle areas.</p> <p>Examples of drawings, clay, projects between family and children in efforts for projects for classroom to showcase (alphabet tiles, counting projects).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> 

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images of creative work that cannot be displayed two-dimensionally. Photos of block structures and such. 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways.</p> <p>Secondary areas noted: Tabletop and on top of shelves within reach of children. Photograph book categorized and labeled.</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
4	Environment as a third teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of teacher professional development 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows.</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various and multiple use of esthetic materials and qualities in classroom (i.e., plants, clean, well-organized cultural artifacts displayed from children and community) 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows.</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple ways of implementing the ideas and creative thinking of children and research (i.e., visible documentation of the processes of children's learning through images, displays of artwork and drawings, graphic organizers). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows.</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual images and creations that represent the children and families in the classroom environment (i.e., photographs of children and their families, family decorated cubbies). 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows.</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	Y 	Y 	Y 

5	Teacher as partner, provocateur, nurturer, and guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of teacher collaborations and engagement with children (i.e., images of activities, images of teachers guiding children in developmental milestones (physical, intellectual and social-emotional child development)). 	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of teacher-child-family partnerships (i.e., images, illustrations, literacy efforts, materials exhibiting reflective teaching and strategies). 	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
6	Teacher as researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of teaching strategies based on research from teacher and children's ideas (i.e., projects, literacy artifacts). 	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
7	Documentation as communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of the various ways children, teachers and families communicate information interdependently (i.e., documentation panels of children's learning, documentation of questions and inquiry process children share with peers and school community). 	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 
8	The parent as partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of family, school-child-teacher collaborations, and engagement. 	Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows. Examples of images	Y 	Y 	Y 

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of parent fostered community efforts bridging school partnerships. 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 
9	The community as a shared partner in child education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images and documentation of community fostered and initiated educational and other partnerships. 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of community resources demonstrated through documentation in the school and or classroom. 	<p>Primary areas noted: Classrooms, hallways. Secondary areas noted: Entranceways, doorways, windows.</p> <p>Examples of images</p>	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 	<p>Y</p> 

Appendix D: Form for Content Validity of Survey

RE Principle Survey Questions. The questions organized around nine Reggio-inspired principles are listed below. Select and circle your response to each question.

Principle 1: Child as a Protagonist.

1. Children are self-directed and are capable of working in open-ended settings.

3. Information is not sufficient or not clear

4. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I consider the learning style of the children in my classroom based on their interests, and family culture.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. I value children's ideas for most curricular planning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. Children construct knowledge socially, independently and based on their experiences.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

5. Children guide their own learning

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

6. I have time to bond, and develop meaningful relationships with each child in my classroom to learn what they are thinking.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

7. I design learning centers that engage children so there are very few behavior incidents.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

8. I encourage children to be self-confident, recognize, and find their own ways to communicate their needs to peers and adults.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 1:

Do the 8 survey questions for Principle 1 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 2: Child as Collaborator.

1. I rely on engaging children in my curricular planning processes.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I carefully choose and arrange materials to guide children's explorations of big ideas and concepts that connect across long-term investigations.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. I consistently think of myself as a co-learner with children when we investigate new concepts/interests/ideas/processes.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. Scaffolding focuses on a co-learning process where child and teacher learn.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
 2. Information is sufficient and clear
- Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 2:

Do the 4 survey questions for Principle 2 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 3: Child as Communicator.

1. Children communicate what they know using many approaches such as:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. Children design their own conversations in my classroom.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. Child generated questions frame teacher questioning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. I use photos of children's prior experiences to:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

5. I use video of children's prior experiences:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear

2. Information is sufficient and clear
Suggestions for improvement or comments:

6. I use conversation transcripts of children prior experiences

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear
Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 3:

Do the 6 survey questions for Principle 3 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

- 1. No
- 2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Principle 4: Environment as the Third Teacher.

1. Professional development and the tools I use to arrange the classroom environment meet the needs of each child.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear
Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. The arrangement of my classroom's environment is flexible.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear
Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. The classroom environment is a valuable teaching strategy for connecting children to materials, peers, prior knowledge, and learning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear
Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. The classroom environment represents the culture, visions, and expectations of the community, children, and families it serves.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

5. The classroom environment incorporates documentation of the wide variety of processes through which children are thinking, communicating, and learning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 4:

Do the 5 survey questions for Principle 4 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 5: Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide.

1. My role with families is to foster partnerships with children and families.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. My teaching role is to develop meaningful relationships with children to facilitate autonomous learning, thinking, and knowledge.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. In my role as teacher I collaborate with:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. The role of parents in your classroom is to participate in the working relationships of the classroom and school.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 5:

Do the 4 survey questions for Principle 5 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Principle 6: Teacher as Researcher.

1. I use materials that:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. A teacher researcher is one who relies on children's conversations and explorations to guide curricular planning.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. Teacher professional development is a continuous process involving learning from children, families, other teachers, the community, and professional workshops.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. Professional development is necessary to keep me current regarding the best in education for guiding young children developmentally toward their best potential, and for me as a teacher/facilitator.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

5. I am open to implementing new curriculum that I find valuable.

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 6:

Do the 5 survey questions for Principle 6 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 7: Documentation as Communication.

1. I use the following tools to document observations children engaged in learning:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I use observation tools:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

3. I use mapping:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

4. With observation data I have collected I create:

1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 7:

Do the 4 survey questions for Principle 7 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 8: The Parent as a Partner.

1. In my relationship with the parents of the children in my classroom:
 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
 2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. I communicate with parents:
 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
 2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 8:

Do the 2 survey questions for Principle 8 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Principle 9: The Community as a shared Partner in Child Education.

1. The community my school is located in:
 1. Information is not sufficient or not clear
 2. Information is sufficient and clear

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating responding to this question regarding the survey components for Principle 9:

Does the 1 survey question for Principle 9 satisfactorily address the concepts in the principle and possible practices teachers use in relation to the principle?

1. No
2. Yes

Questions for improvement or comments:

Overall rating of RE Principles Survey

1. The RE Principles Survey encompasses a range of questions for each principle that sufficiently captures the concepts within the Reggio Approach.

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

2. The RE Principles Survey encompasses a range of questions for possible teacher practices that when practiced represent the nine principles of the Reggio Approach.

1. No
2. Yes

Suggestions for improvement or comments:

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Questions. The questions organized around nine Reggio-inspired principles are listed below.

Opening.

9. Could you please share about yourself and describe your teaching philosophy that guides your work within in Head Start?

Introductory.

10. If I were to visit classrooms in your center(s) what would I see in relation to best practices for children's learning and development?
11. Can you please share what you know about Reggio-inspired practices?

Key Questions.

Directions: Researcher will ask the initial question and then ask the interviewee to please **circle** one answer from each question that best describes your response. The interviewee will have the questions to circle on a separate document. Then after the interviewee circles responses the researcher will ask one further question for a verbal response.

Principle 1: Child as Protagonist

Question: What is the role of the child in the classroom?

12. I view the child in the classroom as capable, an independent learner, and problem-solver.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

13. The children in our center classroom(s) freely exhibit their interests, culture, and diverse learning styles in activities and engaging with one another.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

14. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 2: Child as Collaborator

Question: How do you encourage children to collaborate?

15. Children are collaborators in the classroom as co-learners with peers and teachers, scaffold with peers and adults, and participate in curricular planning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

16. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus

Principle 3: Child as Communicator

Question: How do you encourage children to communicate in your classroom?

17. Materials and tools guide the children to communicate what they understand and what they want to know, for example: building structures, discussions, painting, drawing, sculpture, drama, and/or music.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

18. It's important to encourage children to formulate their questions and inquire about concepts they do not fully understand, or ideas they may have.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

19. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus

Principle 4: Environment as the Third Teacher

Question: What is the role of the classroom environment in relation to learning?

20. The environment is the third teacher.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

21. It's important to use tools and strategies to arrange the classroom environment to meet the learning needs for each child.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

22. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus

Principle 5: Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide

Question: How do you view your role in relation to children, families, and community?

23. The teachers' role in the classroom is to collaborate with children, families colleagues and the community to guide the best practices and supports for high-quality educational opportunities.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

24. A teachers' role is to highlight children's contributions as reflected in their activities, relationships with peers, interdependent interactions with adults or spontaneously through active learning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

25. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 6: Teacher as Researcher

Question: In what ways are you a lifelong learner?

26. I consider the role of a *teacher as a researcher*. I understand and plan the ideas or interests of children when listening to them communicate with peers, and implement their ideas into the learning environment for further exploration.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

27. I utilize my teacher professional development as a valuable tool to connect children's interests and educational experiences in connection to classroom learning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

28. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 7: Documentation as Communication

Question: How do you represent what children have learned in the classroom?

29. Documenting the activities of children is a form of communication and reminds the children about what they worked on in the classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

30. I observe children while they are engaged in activities and interpret their engagements for planning curricula.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

31. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 8: The Parent as a Partner

Question: What is the role of families in your teaching practice?

32. I intentionally practice *teacher-parent* partnerships.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

33. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus.

Principle 9: The Community as a shared Partner in Child Education

Question: What is the relationship between the school and the community?

34. The community is an educational partner and supports our outreach efforts with meaningful resources for our school.

Strongly Disagree Disagree I do not fully understand Agree Strongly Agree

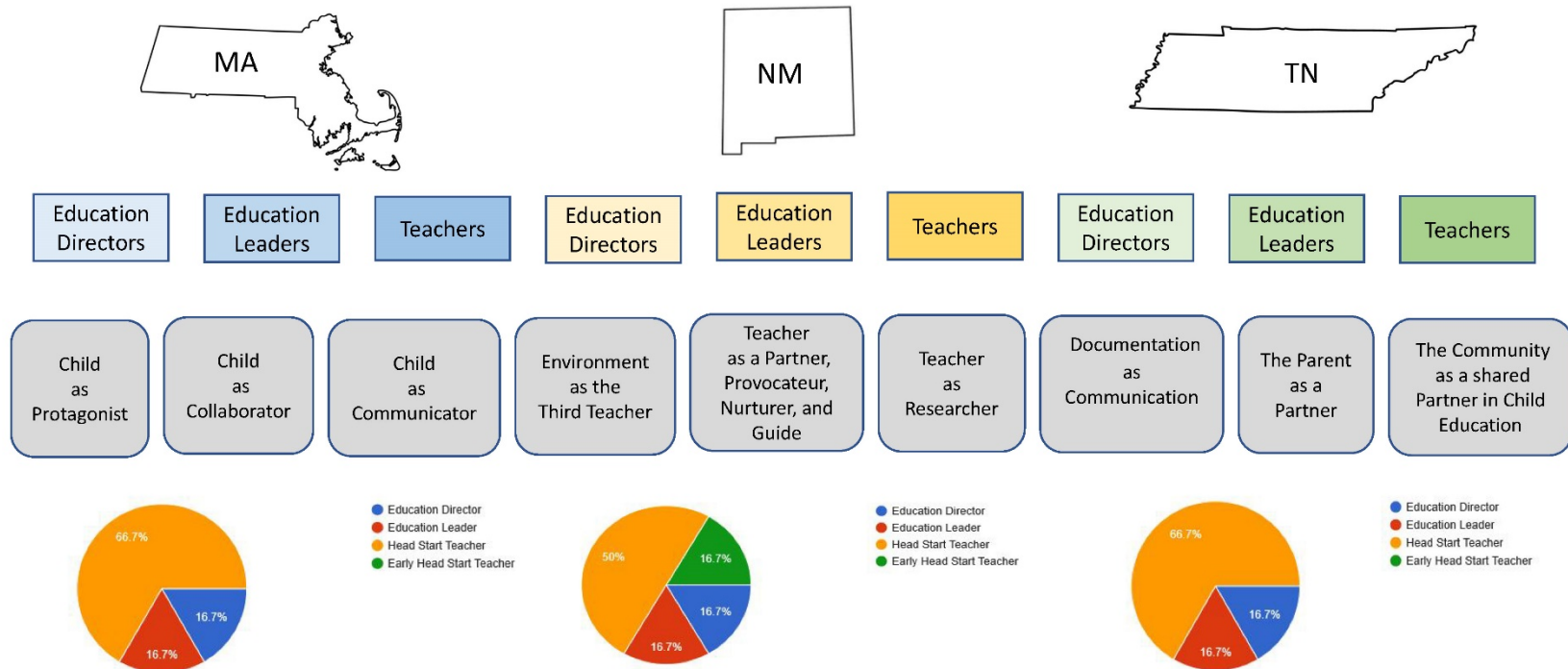
35. Probe: I am going to ask you the questions again and ask you to please elaborate with examples from classrooms in your centers and whether or not there is professional development provided for this focus

Ending.

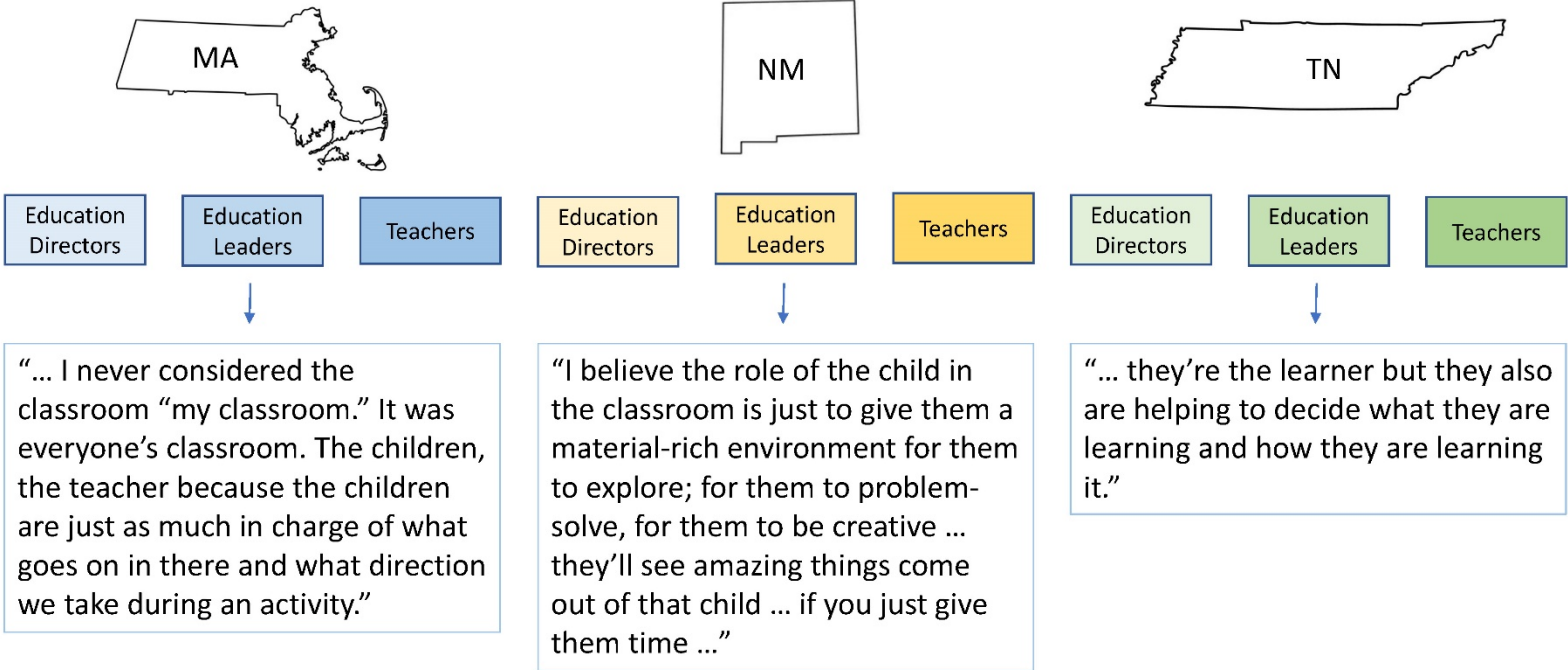
36. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix F: Slides

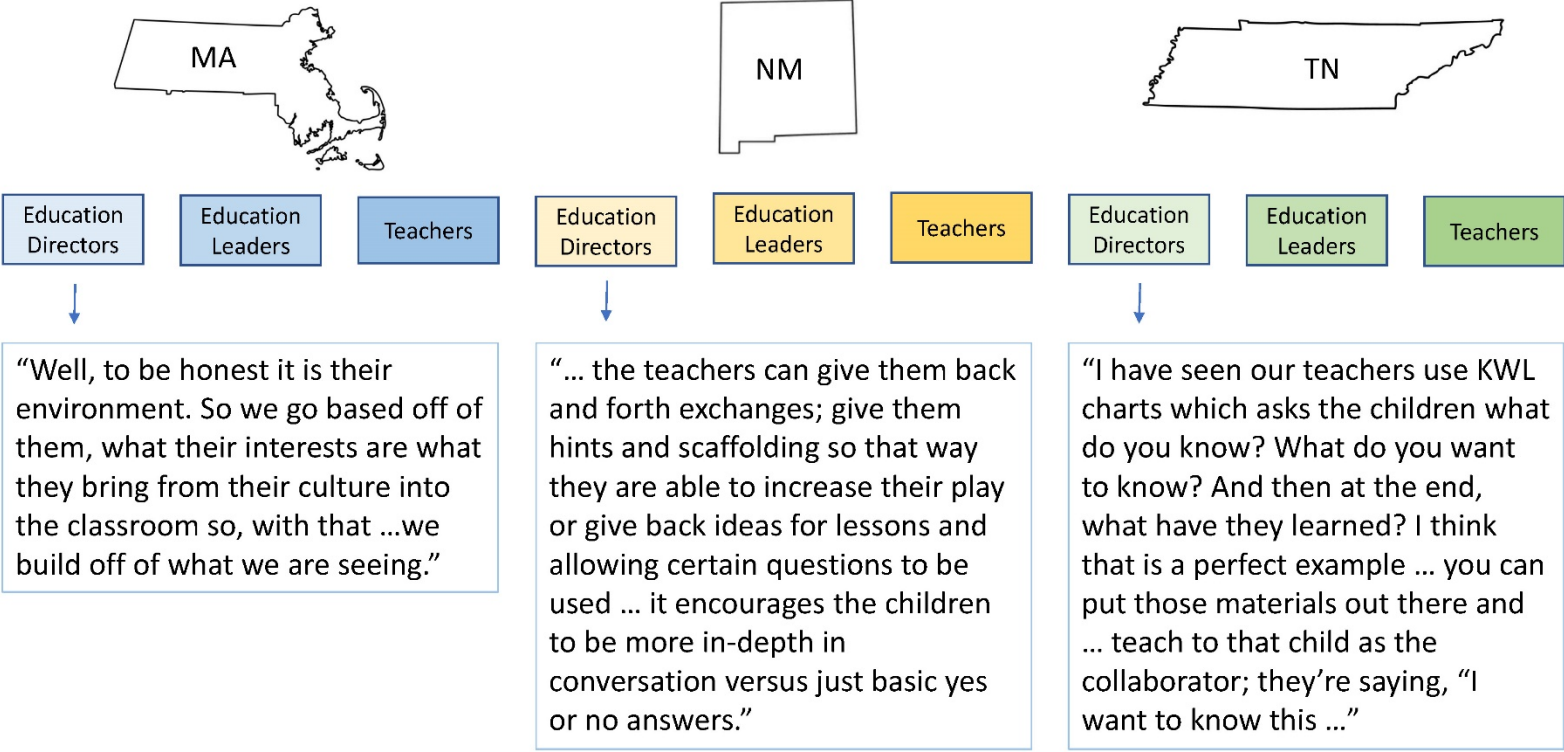
Head Start preschool teacher's perceptions of Reggio Emilia principles practiced within their own setting: A case Study



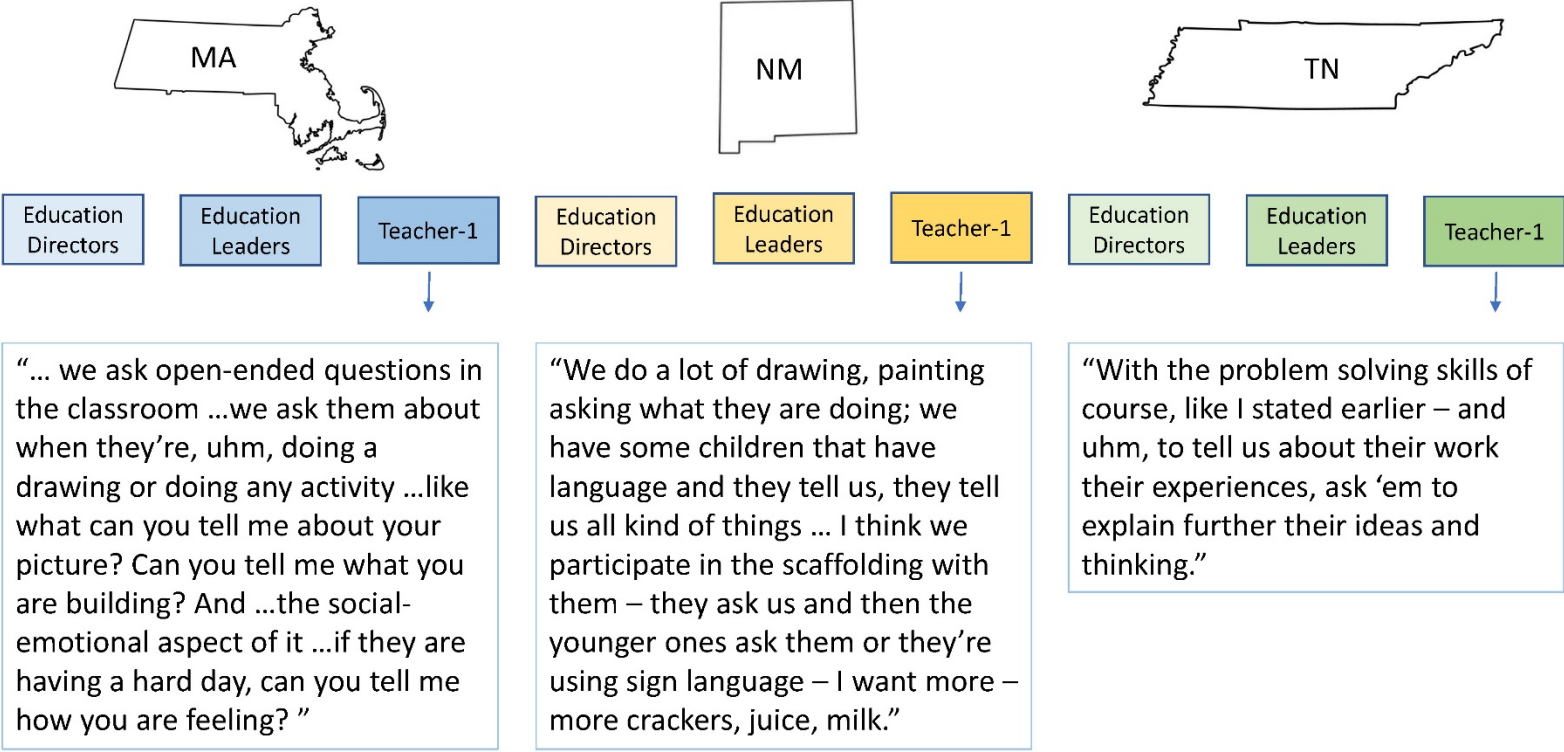
Principle 1: Child as Protagonist
Question: What is the role of the child in the classroom?



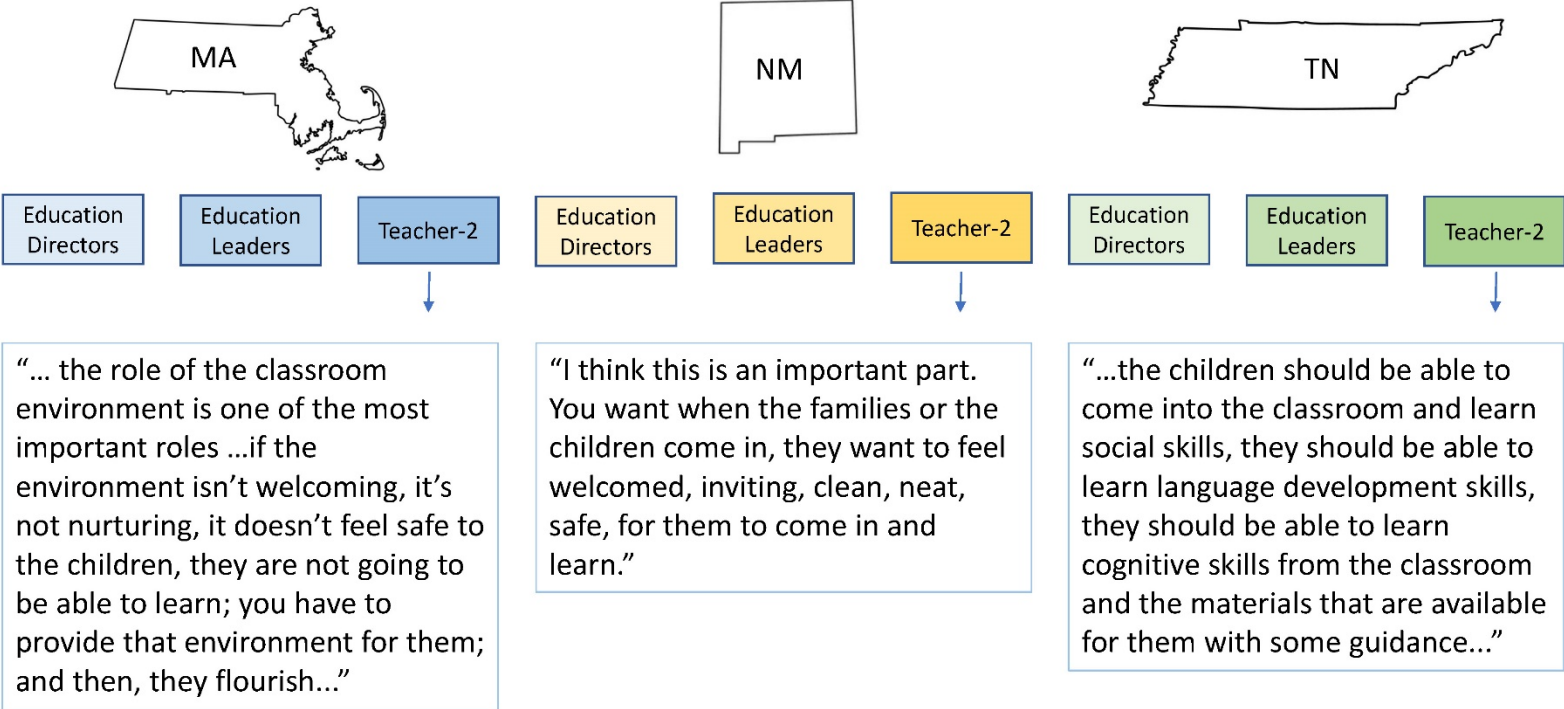
Principle 2: Child as Collaborator
Question: How do you encourage children to collaborate?



Principle 3: Child as Communicator
Question: How do you encourage children to communicate in your classroom?



Principle 4: Environment as the Third Teacher
Question: What is the role of the classroom environment in relation to learning?

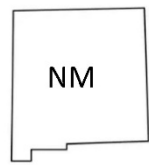


Principle 5: Teacher as a Partner, Provocateur, Nurturer, and Guide
 Question: How do you view your role in relation to children, families, and community?



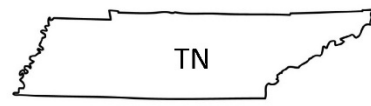
Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-3

“...I am the glue that makes it happen ...not just with the child , you’re dealing with the whole family ...you’re dealing with your colleagues ...the community ...the environment and the experiences that the children are coming from, so, you have to ...figure out how ...when a child learns ...it doesn’t just stop with that child in the classroom ...it continues with ...that family...”



Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-3

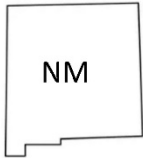
“...I am the link between the two – I believe whole heartedly ...that the parent is the first teacher...my role ...is to ...show the children tools to be ready for kindergarten ...share those tools with the parents ...during home visits ...newsletters ... conferences ...any family activity even when we say “hello” ... just not cognitively, it can be social emotionally ...I give them any information ...you see that confidence in the child ...to learn even more.”



Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-3

“That is also very important with me and my relationships. I strive to have a very good relationship with my families as well.”

Principle 6: Teacher as Researcher
 Question: In what ways are you a lifelong learner?



Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-4

“...communicate with my co-worker – say ok, now I have a plan ... to go and do some research ...I am a teacher, everybody is a teacher in the classroom ...I can do more research and then I am going to ...share with you, you know, I have different, you know, training development ...to find more ...for the children to guide them; to work with them and then to push them, you know, go forward.”

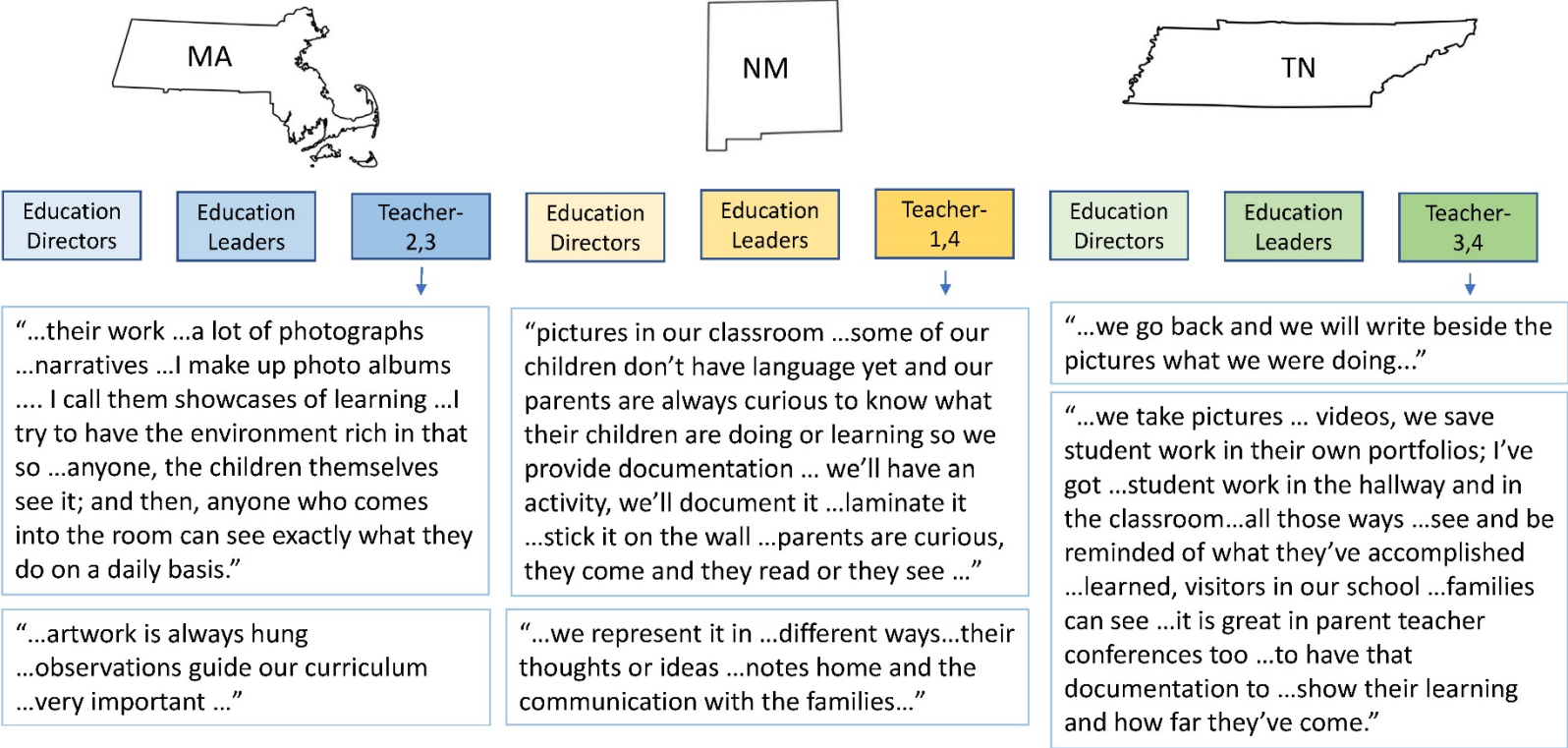
Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-4

“I believe everybody, not just the teachers, are a lifelong learner...especially with children, they just have such a ...way at looking at life that it doesn’t matter what goes on in life, they will always make me smile or make my day better...I try to look at life as if I was still a little kid and just always learning and soaking everything up as I can.”

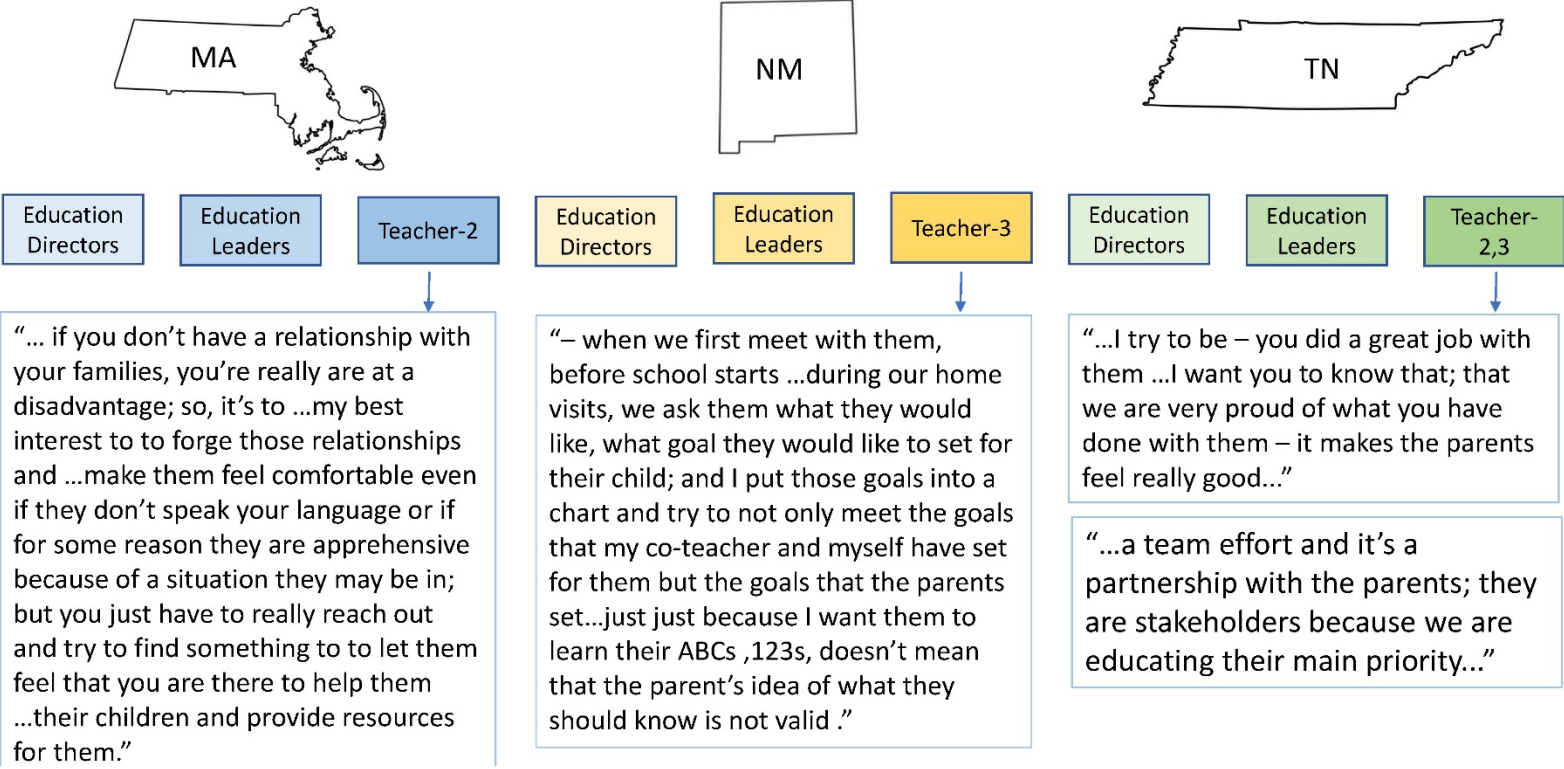
Education Directors Education Leaders Teacher-4

“...I take many opportunities to attend meetings, conferences ...stay up-to-date with new articles and studies ...as a first year teacher, my biggest form of research right now is just being able to collaborate with some mentor teachers...I have plenty of questions ...and that’s helping me be a learner ...I also love learning with my students; they come up with questions ...I definitely don’t have the answer to and...I’m not afraid to say, “I don’t know ...Let’s figure this out together.”

Principle 7: Documentation as Communication
 Question: How do you represent what children have learned in the classroom?



Principle 8: The Parent as a Partner
 Question: What is the role of families in your teaching practice?



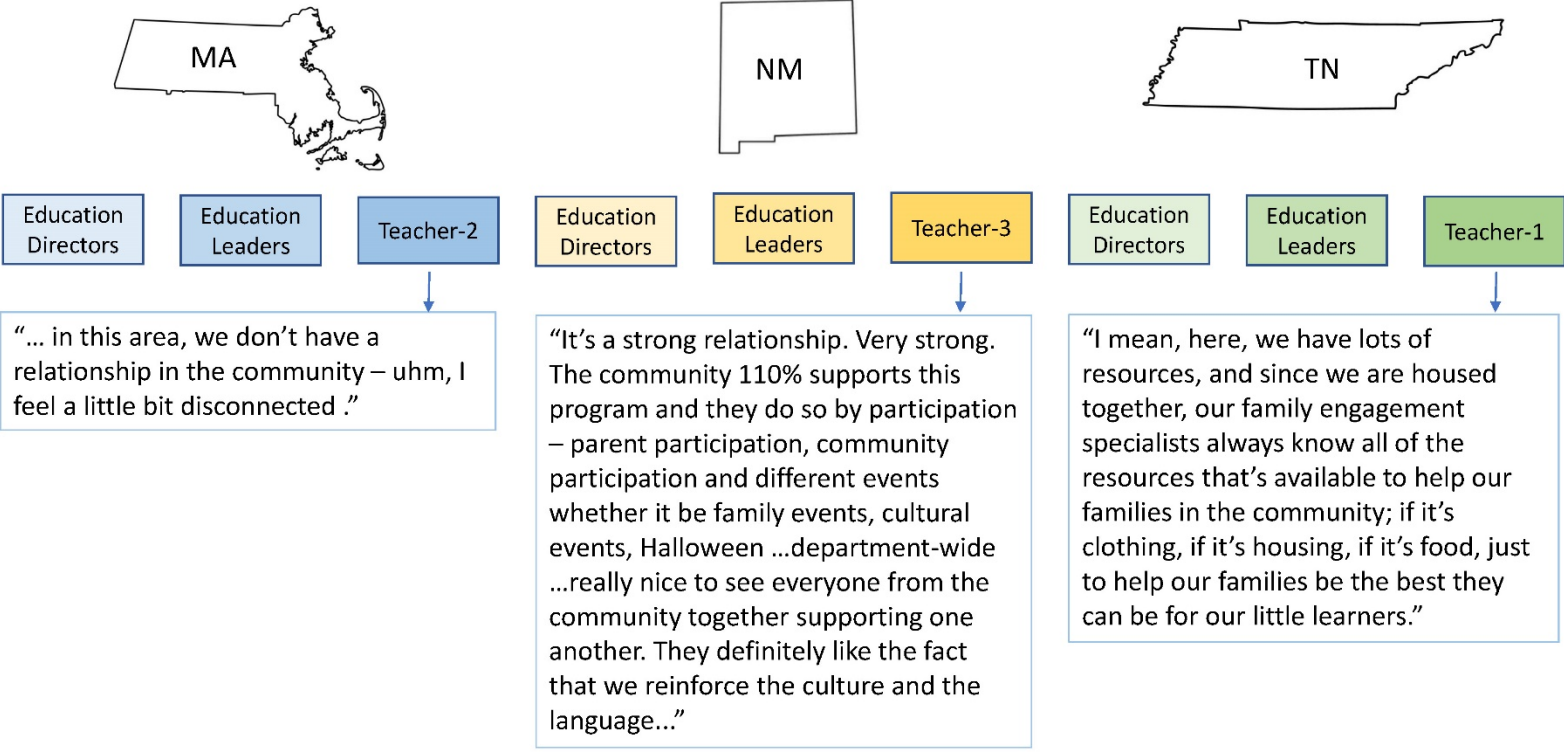
“... if you don’t have a relationship with your families, you’re really are at a disadvantage; so, it’s to ...my best interest to to forge those relationships and ...make them feel comfortable even if they don’t speak your language or if for some reason they are apprehensive because of a situation they may be in; but you just have to really reach out and try to find something to to let them feel that you are there to help them ...their children and provide resources for them.”

“– when we first meet with them, before school starts ...during our home visits, we ask them what they would like, what goal they would like to set for their child; and I put those goals into a chart and try to not only meet the goals that my co-teacher and myself have set for them but the goals that the parents set...just just because I want them to learn their ABCs ,123s, doesn’t mean that the parent’s idea of what they should know is not valid .”

“...I try to be – you did a great job with them ...I want you to know that; that we are very proud of what you have done with them – it makes the parents feel really good...”

“...a team effort and it’s a partnership with the parents; they are stakeholders because we are educating their main priority...”

Principle 9: The Community as a shared Partner in Child Education
 Question: What is the relationship between the school and the community?



VITA

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	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA 2019-Current
	New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC) Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA 2018-Current
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