

Looking At The ISSUES

Stark Education Partnership

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Innovative Early Education Approach Promotes Lifelong Learning

Resilience, responsibility, self-confidence, teamwork, problem-solving skills as well as creative and scientific thinking are just some of the benefits of the [Reggio Emilia Approach](#) to preschool. From its early beginnings in post-war Italy, Reggio has grown to become a recognized global leader in innovative and highly effective childhood teaching.¹



“What does a ‘best in class’ early education program look like?” the leaders of the Paul and Carol David Foundation asked when considering a pilot project in Massillon City Schools. To answer that question a team of educators and community leaders researched, studied and visited exemplary programs locally, statewide and across the nation. Today, if you visited Massillon City Schools’ preschool site, you would find a completely transformed classroom and several that have adopted the elements of Massillon’s preferred model, the Reggio Emilia Approach.



Kristi Muzi, Massillon City preschool teacher and program supervisor, was the first to pilot this innovative approach and transformed her classroom in the 2019-2020 school year. “The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has brought a new excitement to my preschool classroom,” Kristi explained. “It allows my students to explore their interests through hands-on activities and experiences that are meaningful to them. It is amazing to seeing the enthusiasm in the children as they take ownership of their learning and transform themselves into artists, scientists, authors, architects, or whatever they want to be!”

With the support of the David Foundation, Reggio trained teacher, Madison Okray, was added to the Massillon preschool team. Madison shared that the children influence the learning in a Reggio classroom. “Every material, activity, and conversation is guided by students’ interests and curiosities, while aligning with state requirements,” Madison added.

Reggio classrooms foster open-ended experiences by creating conversations that turn into projects, led by student’s questions and prior knowledge. Massillon partnered² with the Reggio-inspired Weaver Child Development Center to see these classrooms in action. Weaver’s Executive Director and Walsh University Adjunct Professor, Susie Clark-Maioriello, provided yearlong professional development and coaching for the Massillon preschool teachers as they transitioned to a student-driven learning environment that builds essential skills for school and life.



1. “The Reggio Emilia Approach and Why It Benefits Children.” Early Learning & Kinder. 2018.
2. Partners for this David Foundation-driven pilot project include: Paul and Carol David Foundation, Massillon City Schools Administration, Dr. Rita Schaner, Stark Education Partnership, Walsh University and the Weaver Child Development Center.

The Stark Education Partnership (a 501(c)3 non-profit organization) collaborates with education, business, civic and community members across the entire spectrum—cradle to career—to create and respond to opportunities that will provide ALL students with education and career success.

