



REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
VIETNAM

# EY-FS at RGS Vietnam

## Early Years Foundation Stage Philosophy

At Reigate Grammar School Vietnam, Early Years education provides a foundation on which continuing learning rests. ShonKoff (2017) states that when we give children what they need to learn, develop, and thrive, they give back through a lifetime of productive citizenship.

Studies of brain development show that positive early learning experiences are directly related to positive lifelong outcomes. As such we view the Early Years approach as a discrete entity in the elementary school.



Cambridge Assessment  
International Education

Cambridge International School



***“Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn” - Carlina Rinaldi. (2004)***

# Things that are important to us:

We believe:

- In the importance of relationships.
- In the importance of a child's cultural capital.
- In the environment being the 3rd teacher.
- In play as the tool for driving learning.
- The importance of symbolic play to support literacy and numeracy development.
- In student led inquiry.
- That every child is able and competent to learn.
- In providing opportunities of agency – voice, choice and ownership.
- Early years is a unique teaching and learning experiences and should be seen differently to upper elementary.



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# Rational: The importance of relationships

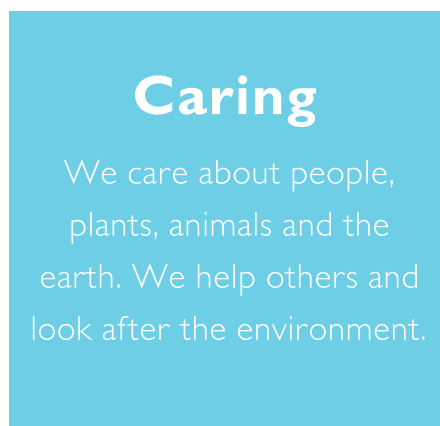
Children's relationships shape the way they see the world and effects all areas of their development.

Relationships in the early years foundation stage is a fundamental part of establishing important skills and dispositions that centre on trust, agency and belonging.

When the importance of relationships is reinforced the foundations for an effective learning community are established, building confident, resilient life-long learners.

Stable and supportive relationships, language rich environments, and mutually responsive 'serve and return' interactions with adults promote healthy brain structure.

Supportive relationships help children develop lifelong resilience which are important to specific ways of teaching and learning.



# The importance of a child's cultural capital

Research can show that when children and family cultures are valued, both the child's experience of learning and progress can benefit. To remember children bring their own ideas, understanding, life experiences, beliefs, values, family dynamic and structure to school. As teachers, we recognise and acknowledge this through our daily practices of promoting identity and enabling voice.



## Knowledge

We know about many things. We remember what we have learned.





# The environment being the third teacher

We feel that the environment is essential in a child's learning. It should be non-threatening, inviting, welcoming, safe, secure and suited for student interests and development stages. The Enhanced PYP states that safe stimulating and inviting learning spaces promote exploration through wonder, creativity, risk-taking when learning through play. The layout of an environment can promote communication, relationships, collaboration and exploration through play. The well-established classroom environment can be linked to developing positive behaviours, creating students who are emotionally invested and in turn stay engaged.



## Risk-Taker

We like to try new things.  
We stand up for the things  
we believe in.

# Play as the tool for driving learning

We believe play-based learning is imperative for the development of a child's interpersonal skills such as confidence, creativity and communication. As well, play supports a child's emotional intelligence by providing opportunities for self-regulation, collaboration, negotiation, problem-solving, decision making and assertiveness. Play-filled experiences provide children with the foundational skills, knowledge and understandings necessary for personal, social and academic growth. In the early childhood section, play opportunities underpin future dispositions for learning by providing a holistic platform on which children can shine. Through enjoyable play, children develop neural connections vital to effective brain functions. Consequently, set play-based tasks enables developmentally appropriate and holistic ways for our students to learn.

Early learners are curious and capable learners with a sense of agency that is rich in potential, bringing a multitude of skills and understanding of the learning process for themselves and others. When play is central to a student's development, it creates a non-threatening environment for children to learn about the world at their own pace, within their own schema, enabling opportunities for student inquiry while developing personal interests.

Play is the key driver of inquiry of cognitive skills as children problem-solve with play materials, ideas and peers. Social play in particular is a significant contributor to early language development and literacy outcomes. Play allows for child agency when play is 'guided', when an adult lightly scaffolds learning through authentic interactions. Guided play should be fun, flexible, voluntary and intrinsically motivated. Such guided play supports the development of language, executive functions, mathematics and spatial awareness, scientific thinking and social and emotional development.

**“PLAY is our brain's way of learning.” - Diane Ackerman**

# The importance of symbolic play to support literacy and numeracy.

Symbolic play is a type of play that young children engage in, where they use an object or toy to represent or symbolise other objects; such as using a banana as a cell phone. This play presents a safe space for children to experiment and learn by doing.

Symbolic play is a stepping stone to literacy and numeracy. When we write letters and numbers, we're using symbols to represent what we want to convey. When children are engaged in this type of play, they're practising this very concept.

In EY-FS, literacy and numeracy is much more than just recognising numbers and reciting the alphabet. It's a richer and broader term that is used in almost every aspect of the child's daily life.



## Inquirer

We are curious and enjoy learning. We try to find out new things.





Some of the opportunities to support literacy and numeracy development in EY-FS include:

- Discussions where children are able to express themselves and their ideas.
- Stories, songs and rhymes to support and build vocabulary and phonemic awareness.
- Environmental print to promote emergent reading.
- Routines and schedules for time management and spatial awareness.
- Questioning and modelling correct language use.
- Everyday experiences like washing hands can introduce concepts such as prepositions.
- Role-play scenarios encourage communication between peers.
- Classroom set-up promotes student-led inquiry.
- Tidying and sorting can support mathematical concepts such as colour, numbers and shapes.
- Class helpers encourage responsibility, ownership and confidence.
- Independence, such as putting on shoes, supports the development of spatial awareness.
- Problem-solving skills for everyday life.





These opportunities are developed further through our Units Of Inquiry.

For example, during 'How We Organise Ourselves' Unit of Inquiry, symbolic play can be seen when a child picks up a block that they use as a telephone to call the hospital. The opportunities for literacy in this case would be the discussion they have with the doctor, while improvising with the use of the telephone. Opportunities for numeracy would be to identify and dial numbers required for such a phone call.

A few more examples include:

- A box becomes a fire truck, tractor etc. (What shapes do you see? What colours do we need?)
- Some chairs and a blanket are transformed into a den (How many chairs do we need? How big is it going to be?)
- Lego blocks become cars and buildings (What shapes are you using? Have you given your building a name?)
- A rope becomes a fireman's hose pipe (What sound would the water make?)

Therefore, with encouragement from a strong use of questioning, children's literacy and numeracy skills develop when they are able to explore, imagine and express themselves confidently through symbolic play.



## Principled

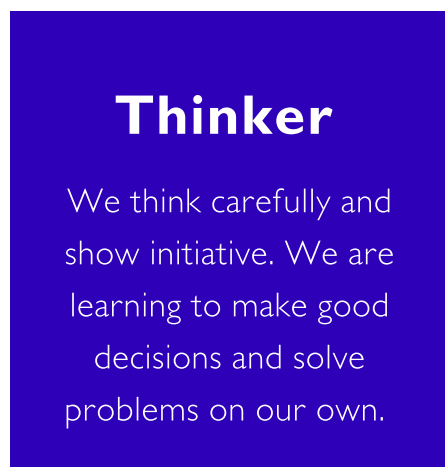
We are learning to share and play well with others.



# Student-led inquiry

Student-led inquiry encourages children to be active learners. It enhances critical thinking as well as curiosity making learning more interesting. When students are actively engaged, they are observing, playing, wondering, questioning, investigating and concluding. Through this, children show more confidence in their own abilities, thoughts and ideas, build stronger relations with peers and improve their communication skills.

A curious student is an engaged student who explores the world around them instead of relying purely on information delivery to them by the teacher.





# In the child being competent, able and empowered through agency.

When a child is empowered through agency it helps them make sense of the world around them and encourages resilience and confidence.

Participation is important for children as it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them, learn new skills, have fun and develop a closer connection to their community. It enhances decision making, active listening, facilitation, problem solving, communication, observation skills and the ability to be reflective. Children also have the opportunity to further develop their personal qualities such as a sense of humour, energy, enthusiasm, understanding and flexibility.

Asking what a child wants and thinks about something is a powerful way of telling them they are important, giving them a clearer understanding of social inclusion and citizenship. Children who are included in evaluating a project or process often feel more involved and committed to the project and its aims. It helps them understand what the project is about, therefore encouraging ownership.

Through learning to express their ideas and views, having the confidence to say what they think and being able to listen to others points of views enhances personal and social development skills. Therefore allowing children enough time to digest information and formulate their own opinions in order to contribute to decision making.

**Open Minded**

**We think carefully and show initiative. We are learning to make good decisions and solve problems on our own.**

# Everyone has a voice

When you listen to a child it makes them feel important and establishes an understanding that their opinion do matter. The IB advocates for 'agency' stating it is a driving force to support voice. Within the IB-PYP framework, students with agency have voice, choice and ownership; which leads to a propensity to take action. It is through this agentic action that we contribute to and participate in our own learning and the learning of our communities.

Giving a child a voice:

- Promotes self-worth and self-esteem
- It encourages confidence and the development of new skills
- Prompts creativity and imagination
- Helps them learn they are valued through sharing their feelings, opinions, emotions and having a choice
- Allows opportunity for children to be part of decision making



## Communicator

We are learning to listen to others and share our ideas with others in many ways.





# In authentic assessments

Documenting learning is the compilation of the evidence of learning. It can be recorded and displayed using a variety of methods; it can be shared to make learning visible; they can take on a variety of formats.

When assessing Early Learners, it is important to document their cognitive, physical and affective development, such as knowledge, conceptual understandings and skills. When observing the children, we document and reflect on the dialogue between students-to-students as well as student-to-teachers.

From using observation as an assessment tool, teachers can develop a clear understanding of the knowledge, understanding and skill base of their students which caters to strong assessments. (Assessment, pp.66-82, 2018, Primary Years Programme, Learning and Teaching, International Baccalaureate Organization).

‘Authentic assessment’ provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on students learning more optimally than performance indicators that can be seen in traditional forms of assessment, as the child is seen in a ‘whole context’ and this is noted through learning stories.



## Reflective

We know when we have done well and when we could have done better



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Learning stories enable us, as teachers, to gain an insight into interests that students have and how we can go about keeping them engaged within the classroom environment. From learning stories, teachers discover what kind of learning is best suited to each student, be it whole class, group work or independent learning. Again, learning stories give credit to children for their work within a whole scenario where Language, Mathematics, PSPE and an Inquiry understanding may be displayed. Whereas, the traditional approaches to assessment simply found the gaps (Gipps, 2008) of a specific set of intentions that students may not have had the opportunity to develop outside a play-based environment. Therefore, a more formal restrictive setting was required to cater for the assessment of the gaps learning.



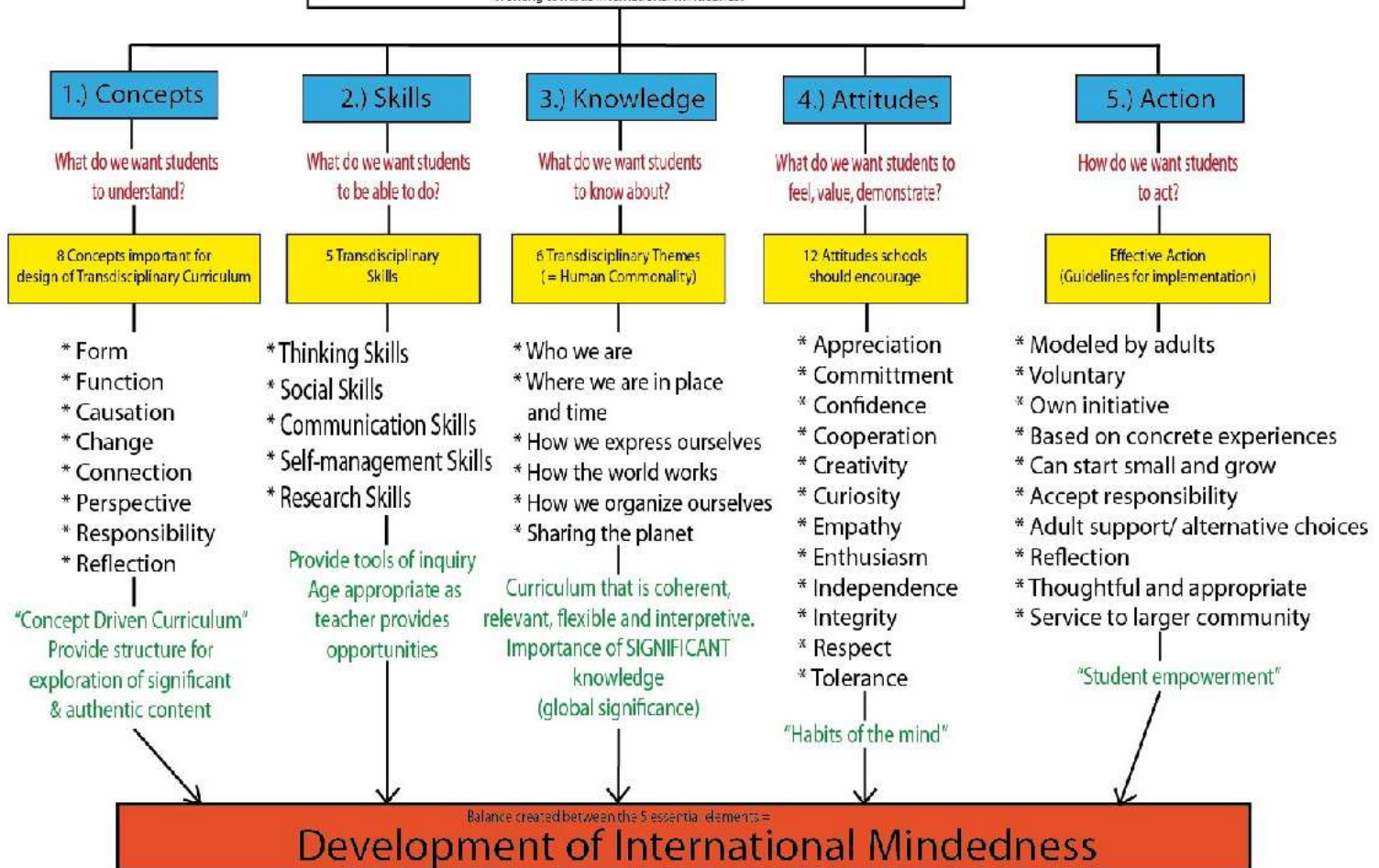
## Well-Balanced

We look after our mind  
and bodies. We try to stay  
healthy and happy



# 5 Essential Elements in PYP

Working towards international mindedness



“Observe and listen to children because when they ask “Why?” they are not simply asking for the answer from you. They are requesting the courage to find a collection of possible answers.” – Loris Malaguzzi

