



Sightlines' principles, as given in *Learning to Learn in Nature*

- **Children are rich in curiosity, competence and potential. They are innately sociable and seek exchanges. Their desire and predisposition to be curious, to enquire, to hypothesise, to interpret and make sense of their experiences, to be in relationship, are basic human characteristics.**
- **Education is the creative process of exchange and relationship with the world, ourselves, and others. The task of educators is to support and encourage children's exploration and understanding. The acquisition of skills is not in itself an aim of education. Skills grow in the course of children's engagement in their learning, their relationships and their meaning-making.**

From these two grounding principles, these then follow:

- Given that human beings are innately sociable, effective learning environments must be characterised by opportunities for sociability. Small learning groups of children engaged in explorations and shared interests are a key strategy in an environment of enquiry.
- Listening and exchange are dominant activities in our pedagogy, and regular reflection by educators in small groups is a necessity. The practice of observation, as a way of trying to see and understand what children are doing and thinking, accompanied by reflection and analysis, enables educators to work with the grain of children's learning.
- Our educational work stems from engagement in, and imaginative exploration of, the natural world. Moving indoors, we see the school environment as a studio for the exploration and exchange of ideas, a place where children can bring all of their senses to the business of learning, and use all their expressive languages to make their learning visible.
- The educator's role is to accompany children on their journeys of learning, to anticipate possible directions, and to judge when to lead, when to follow and when to travel alongside.

4 Es: Working definitions

Encounter: the full opportunity to meet the new or strange, or the familiar in new and unexpected ways. The accompanying and motivating desire is to *be with* the focus of attention, to appreciate it with all our faculties. It is the experience from which we often talk of the feeling of ‘awe’ and ‘wonder’ – though there are lots of other possible feelings besides.

Enquire: with full attention and curiosity to engage in wondering, imagining, making meaning; figuring out how we might relate to the subject of enquiry; the mutual significance

Exchange: We make worthwhile meaning, not in isolation but through exchange with others – we bring to others our hypotheses, puzzles, inspirations, we present them, hear others’ ideas, contest them, modify our own, reach new understandings.

Express: Just as we encounter with all the tools of our human perception, so we have the potential to exchange and develop our meanings and our relationships through many faculties of expression. Through working diversely with the multiplicity of these faculties our possibilities of relationship, understanding and meaning-making also multiply. And with the attitude of real intent to understand, we are motivated to become skilled in the use of all the tools of expression and understanding. Skills are eagerly built as we work ‘with the grain’ of children’s investigations (the converse is also true of course, as we can see in places of education which do not honour children’s natural connectivities: teaching and learning can become a drudge – on both sides!)

About Sightlines Initiative

Sightlines is a national organisation promoting creative, reflective practice in early childhood education. We are the official UK reference for Reggio Children and part of the Reggio Children International Network. We organise study visits to Reggio and run CPD courses and events in the UK. Our national network helps connect and inspire educators interested in developing creative, reflective educational practice. We believe children are born innately sociable, curious, competent and creative, and that the role of early years’ education is to nurture, value and respect these qualities, and create engaging and meaningful learning environments for children.

