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The First 1000 Days (Scrapbook)

No AI has been used in this assessment

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The First 1000 Days

What are the first 1000 days?

(KOKO Plus Foundation, no date)

According to Pregnancy, Birth and Baby (2024) the first 1000 days represents the start of pregnancy until the child's second birthday (24 months). During this critical time, a child's brain, body, and immune system go through significant growth and development. It is essential that between this period the baby's needs are met. This includes having nutritious food and nurturing relationships. As well as being in safe, secure and healthy environment and having opportunities and time for play. After birth, factors such as the baby's nutrition, their surroundings, and relationships continue to play a vital role and can have lasting effects on their health and wellbeing.

This is supported by Indrio *et al*. (2023) who Emphasises that the first 1000 days are important for a child's growth, both physically and mentally. Indrio *et al*. explains that during this time, the brain and other organs develop quickly and can be affected by good or bad factors, many of which can be controlled. Early interventions such as, preventive, protective, or curative, can significantly improve health outcomes for both the child and parents. To be most effective, interventions must be tailored to the specific developmental stages of the first 1000 days, including all three trimesters of pregnancy.

Why are the first 1000 days important?

Morreau (2016) explains that the first 1000 days is vital for a child's overall development. The connection, bonding and attachment that happens between baby and parent helps develop the baby's brain and supports them in forming quality relationships throughout their life. From this the child can learn empathy, understanding and boundaries.

However, challenges like poverty, parental stress, and lack of support can prevent parents from providing the necessary care to their child. This can lead to preventable illnesses in the child if the mother's needs are not met during pregnancy. Similarly, after birth, it can lead to health issues, neglect, and serious behaviour problems.

Support from interventions, such as health professionals and access to well-funded services are essential to help families create a nurturing environment. Ensuring children grow up healthy, happy, and well-adjusted.

(Breens Intermediate, 2021)

This period highlights the importance of holistic development. Meaning all areas of a child's growth, such as their learning, development, and progress, are interconnected. This suggests that instead of learning in separate stages, babies experience multiple types of development at the same time. For example, speaking, sitting up and counting objects can happen all together. Developmental areas are linked, meaning delays in one area can affect others. The "pedagogy of care" is recommended as the best approach for children from birth to 2, as it emphasises on the inseparable relationship between care and learning in this holistic framework (Brodie, 2018).

Caregiving

What is exceptional care?

Responding to children's need and interests

Providing children with early learning opportunities

Providing children with proper health

Encouraging children to explore and interact with others

Providing children with nutrition

Providing children with responsive caregiving

Providing children with safety

(World Health Organisation, 2018)

What is exceptional care?

Emeans Education (no date) believes that the five components (in the picture to the right) must be met for a child to reach their full potential.

Nurturing-Care (2019) discusses each section and describes each as the following:

It is extremely important that both mother and child have '*adequate nutrition*'. This is because the mother's 'nutritional status' affects her health, the child's development, and her ability to breastfeed. Interventions that can support this include breastfeeding support, vitamin and mineral supplements and managing malnutrition and/or obesity.

The '*good health*' section relates to the health and wellbeing of not just the child, but the caregiver too. This is because the caregiver's wellbeing can directly impact their ability to take care of the child. Key interventions for this area include family planning, vaccinations and supporting the caregiver's mental health.

(World Health Organisation, 2018)

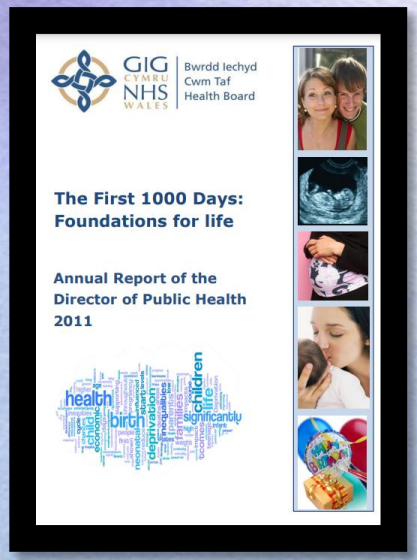
'*Responsive caregiving*' means that caregivers must understand and react correctly to their child's cues. This is considered the most important area of the five as it helps caregivers in all other aspects of care. Interventions include promoting eye contact and smiles, facilitating caregivers to recognise cues and maintaining responsive communication daily.

A baby learns through objects, the environment and interactions with people. This helps support their brain development and future learning, which is why it's crucial to create '*opportunities for early learning*'. There are numerous activities that can help to support this, such as, talking, reading, playing, maintaining daily routines, sensory play and even just playing peek-a-boo with the child.

Creating a '*safe and secure*' environment protects the child and their family from physical and/or emotional risks. These dangers could include abuse, neglect, and even environmental hazards, such as pollution. Interventions that can encourage a safe and secure space are, by having clean water, having somewhere to play safely and social care services.

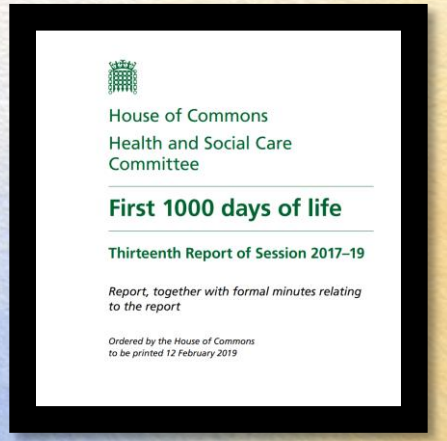
Why is exceptional care important?

Exceptional care is essential for promoting development within children, as well as reducing stress and helping children cope with challenges. Caregivers who are closest to the child play a key role in providing exceptional care (World Health Organisation, 2018).



(Public Health Wales, 2011)

This is supported by Nurturing-Care (2019) who states that the best people to provide this to a child are the ones who are closest, such as the mother and father, close relatives and caregivers. Therefore, a stable and secure family environment is crucial for the child. To enable caregivers to offer this care, there must be supportive policies, services, and community resources available.



(House of Commons, 2019)

According to Public Health Wales (no date) interventions are a key part in the first 1000 days as they support the starting foundations for a child's health and development. A public health approach is needed to create environments that support families and help parents succeed. Social support systems, including fair employment and strong communities, help parents manage challenges, therefore reducing the impact on children. Providing easy access to essential services and support means everyone, through policies, work, and communities, play a role in helping families thrive.

Theorists who support exceptional care in the first 1000 days:

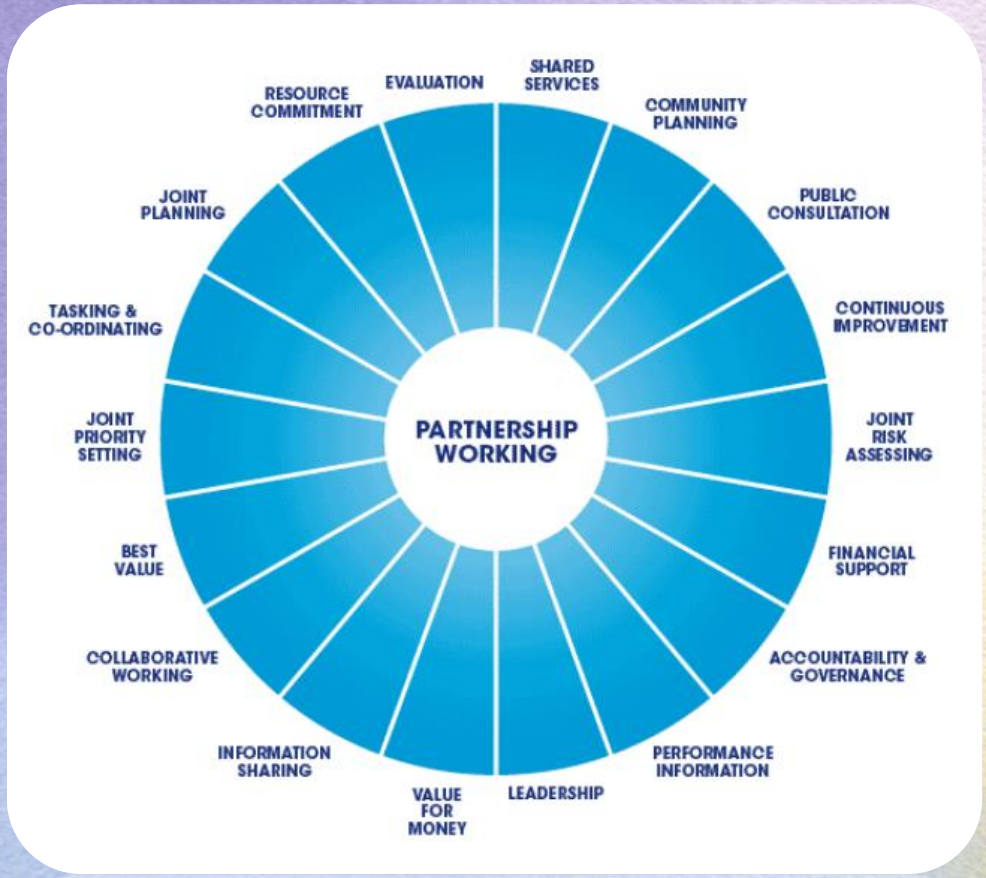
According to Aspire Beginnings (no date) theorist, Emmi Pikler, believed that for babies to develop naturally, certain things had to be done. This included allowing babies to move freely, as it contributes to their holistic development and supports their independence, confidence and curiosity. It also involves treating babies with respect, offering a gentle and nurturing touch, and allowing them to develop at their own pace. This can be seen in the 7 key principles of Pikler's approach:

- Give the baby your full attention
- Take your time with them
- Focus on building trust and relationships when providing care
- Involve the baby in their own care
- Never put the baby in a position that they could not get too themselves
- Allow plenty of time for uninterrupted play
- Tune into the baby's cues

Care Learning (2025) suggests that many theorists highlight the importance of the first 1000 days in a child's development and its influence on current practice. One of these theorists is John Bowlby, whose theory emphasises the emotional connection between the caregiver and child. He believed that secure attachments are essential for a child's emotional development. When a child experiences a secure attachment, they feel happy, safe and are confident to explore their environment. This principle also applies to practitioners in early years settings, as they build close connections with children which create that emotional safety and supports their development.

Professional Partnerships

What are professional partnerships?



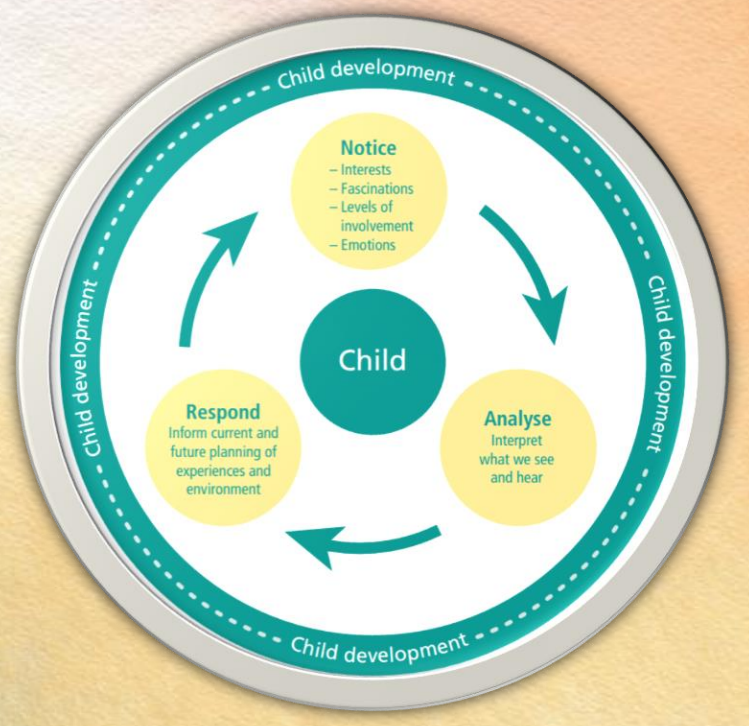
(Community Development and Health Network, no date)

Community Change (2010) explains that partnership working means different groups working together to pursue a shared goal. Partnerships are mostly created to deal with certain challenges and can be either short term or long term. A partnership working approach is essential for successful outcomes in children and families.

What is the role of early year practitioners in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days?

The role of an early years practitioner in supporting children and families during the first 1000 days is essential for building strong positive relationships, understanding individual needs, and providing the right support. Education Scotland (2020) discusses that practitioners can encourage these things by:

- Practitioners can earn the trust of parents by listening carefully, showing respect for their knowledge, and valuing the role they play in their child's development and growth. This helps create open communication, which allows both parents and staff feel comfortable asking for help or support when needed.
- Practitioners create safe environments that are friendly, welcoming, and approachable, where parents feel comfortable and confident leaving their children.
- By getting to know both the child and the parent, practitioners can better understand and support their ever-changing needs.
- Practitioners also offer advice and support and are able to connect families with various services if needed.
- Practitioners take responsibility for creating a sense of community in the setting, ensuring that both children and parents feel included.
- Settings that have an open-door policy encourage regular communication and provide ongoing support, helping families during this crucial time in their child's development.



(Welsh Government, 2022)

What is the role of early year practitioners in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days?

Welsh Government (2022) notes that early year practitioners use observations to support children's growth. By watching closely, practitioners learn what interests each child and can understand their emotions, social interactions, and skills. This helps practitioners create learning experiences that fit the child's needs. Observations provide important information that is needed to plan the right activities. By observing children in different settings, practitioners can offer the right support and help them develop during this key time.

Practitioners play an important role in creating supportive environments where children can thrive. These environments offer opportunities for learning through movement, creativity, and relationships. Practitioners ensure children have time to explore the outdoors and have open-ended resources that encourage exploration and learning. By creating inclusive and nurturing spaces, practitioners help every child feel supported and valued, helping their development during this crucial time (Birth to 5 Matters, no date).

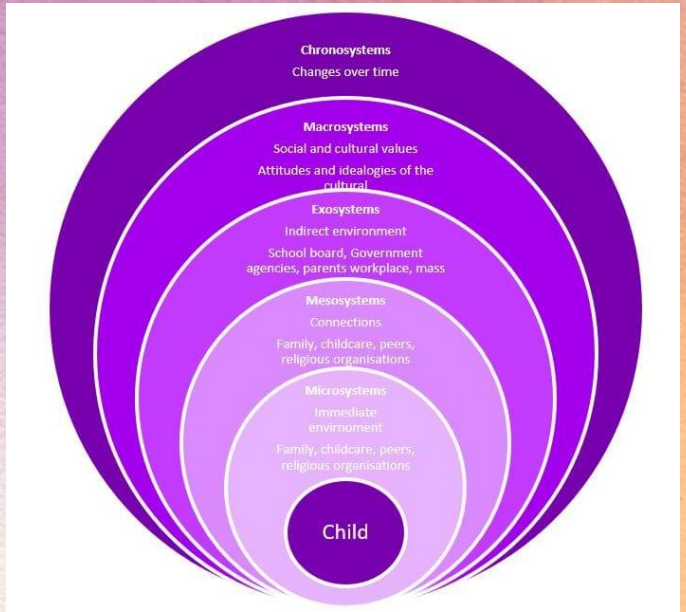
Working in professional partnerships allows practitioners to:

- Make improved decisions
- Interact with one another
- Collaborate
- Share their knowledge and expertise
- Share workload
- Have shared support
- Learn from each other
- Maintain clear communication

(The Open University, 2024)

The importance of effective partnership working:

Public Engagement (no date) notes that effective partnership working is important because it offers mutual benefits to all teams involved, such as sharing ideas, resources and skills. It can also provide different views that make you question your thinking and method. Effective partnership working also helps teams access new networks, which lead to improved outcomes overall. Whilst working in partnership can be incredibly rewarding, it does require a clear shared purpose and aligned goals from all teams involved, to avoid any tension. It is important to make time when starting a partnership to map out your joint goals and aims.



(The Education People, 2021)

This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's theory, which acknowledges that various aspects of a child's life have an impact on their development. The Education People (2021) explains that instead of just focusing on a child's growth, Bronfenbrenner explored how different factors, relationships, and environments affect development. His 'Ecological Systems Theory' shows how all parts of a child's environment play a role in their development and the different levels involved in this process. The 'Mesosystem' and 'Exosystem' emphasise the importance of professionals working together to support a child's growth. The 'Mesosystem' focuses on interactions within the child's immediate environment, such as family, school, and caregivers. Effective collaboration between these groups is key to the child's success. The 'Exosystem' involves partnerships that may not directly interact with the child but still support their development. Both systems work together to create a positive environment for the child's growth.

Maternal factors that could impact development and what support could be offered:

HM Government (2021) notes that major stress in the prenatal period can have harmful consequences on the development of the baby. Some maternal factors that could impact a child's development are:	**Early interventions and support for mothers who are under stress can greatly improve the chances of their children growing up to be strong, competent, and valuable members of society (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2009) This support could be:**
Domestic abuse	NHS (2024) says that women experiencing domestic abuse whilst pregnant puts both the mother and unborn baby at unnecessary risks and stresses. The NHS suggests speaking to a trusted person, such as, a midwife, health visitor or GP, or seek support from the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, Refuge, Women's Aid or Galop whose contact numbers are all on the NHS website. However, if a woman is in imminent danger, they should contact 999.
Depression	Mind (2024) lists numerous signs and symptoms of perinatal depression, such as, feeling sad or tearful, feeling detached from reality, lacking self-worth and/or having suicidal thoughts. Similarly to NHS, Mind advises speaking to a GP, health visitor or midwife. Support options include therapy and counselling, medication and in extreme cases where other treatments have not been effective, electroconvulsive therapy.
Malnutrition	UNICEF (no date) supports maternal malnutrition by enhancing women's nutrition in all 3 stages of pregnancy (before, during and after birth). They encourage women to eat healthy and give advice on what vital vitamins they will need, such as iron, folic acid and calcium. UNICEF also mention that physical activity and adequate rest is extremely important for expectant mothers. They also offer personalised nutritional advice and support throughout pregnancy.

Challenges

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Practitioners in the early years face numerous workforce challenges that significantly impact the quality of care and education. Owston, Jones and Stanley (2024) highlight that the main key challenges include inadequate pay, difficult working conditions, limited opportunities for professional growth, staff lacking proper qualifications, ineffective leadership, and low staff morale. Frequent staff turnover worsens these issues, making it harder to maintain consistent, quality interactions and properly understand and support children's developmental needs, which is essential for their growth.

Research in Practice (2013, pg. 8) notes that challenges for practitioners could include, time and the amount of work, dealing with difficult parents, inexperienced staff who may also lack confidence and environmental challenges.

In a survey taken by early years practitioners, Lawler (2022) states that 70% of staff do not feel respected in their jobs. Staff also feel undervalued, feel they are persistently disrespected and that they are seen as just babysitters.

Early Education (2021) mentions that there are many challenges and barriers for outdoor play, such as health and safety concerns, lack of resources/no money for equipment, not being able to meet staffing requirements for outdoors and not having the support to carry out 'risky play' which, according to Rice (no date) is a necessary part of children's development.

Activities

Engaging Experiences

Engaging experiences are essential for a child's holistic development and are key to nurturing a foundation of lifelong learning.

Kirkland (no date) says to encourage engaging experiences children should

- Have plenty of time and space for uninterrupted play. real-life experiences, such as visits in the community
- Use authentic objects to enrich sensory engagement
- Play with children of different ages to support one another
- Provide open-ended materials to inspire creativity
- Have access to outdoor play in all weather, as being in nature provides never-ending opportunities for exploration and learning.

Enabling Environments

(Virtual Lab School, 2023)

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach that views children holistically, describes the environment as "being the third educator" (Eaton, 2023).

What is meaningful learning?

(Nunnelley, 2018)

(Do Be Mindful, no date)

Activities that provide meaningful learning:

(Froebel Trust, no date)

Treasure Baskets

Treasure baskets, created by Elinor Goldschmied, consist of numerous objects that can be found in a house, and are either natural or recycled, and placed into a basket and in front of a child. These baskets provide meaningful learning opportunities for babies between 5-10 months old, as they provide a variety of materials in reach that a child can explore independently and in their own time (Froebel Trust, no date).

(Action for Children, 2022)

Sensory Play

Action for Children (2022) describes sensory play as any activity that uses the senses. “Children use their sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch to understand the world around them”. It is important for a child's development as it supports their brain growth, memory and problem-solving skills, improves their language and social skills, encourages creativity and helps their fine motor skills.

Activities that provide meaningful learning:

(Zero to Three, 2019)

Reading Aloud

Despite what people think, babies will learn by being read too. Starting early is key because a baby's brain begins developing language skills before they can speak. The more words a baby hears, the more they will learn. Storytelling can happen anytime, such as when changing nappies, in the car or during meals. Those moments offer chances to strengthen the bond and connection between caregiver and baby, whilst also supporting their language and literacy development (Zero to Three, 2019).

Singing and Nursery Rhymes

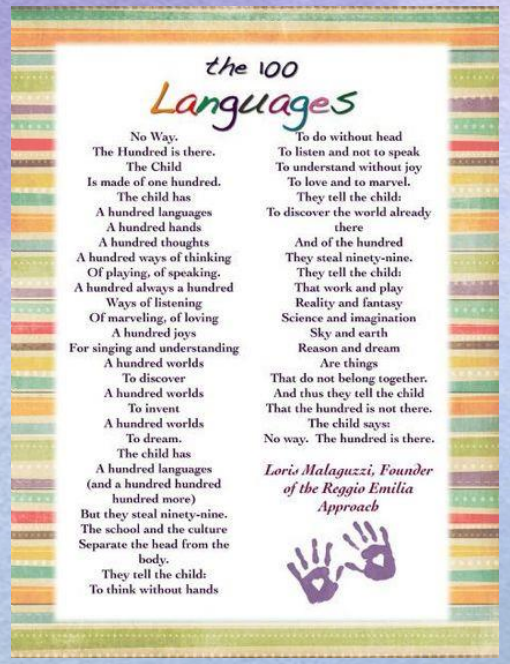
Fink and Marxer (no date) notes that singing to babies helps them learn. It is great for a baby's language development, listening skills and building a bond. It is also a type of play and is overall a fun activity for everyone involved and that a baby will love. According to BBC (no date) nursery rhymes also offer numerous benefits for babies. They introduce new vocabulary and improve phonological awareness. Nursery rhymes with actions also support gross motor skills and coordination, whilst some teach basic numeracy skills.

International Approaches

How different countries support the first 1000 days

The Reggio Emilia Approach, developed in Italy, is a philosophy that views children as capable, curious individuals who learn through exploration and interaction. Learning happens through collaboration with peers, teachers, and the community. The environment plays a crucial role, acting as a "third teacher" by inspiring and supporting children's development. It emphasises that children can express themselves in a “hundred languages”. This approach focuses on a project-based and emergent curriculum, and follows children’s interests and creativity to create deep, meaningful learning experiences (Reggio Emilia Approach, no date).

Waldorf Education, founded in Germany, focuses on nurturing the whole child “academically, artistically, socially and emotionally”. Their holistic approach encourages a love of learning and creativity. For children in early years, their curriculum includes storytelling, music, play and nature activities which develop skills and imagination. Teachers gently guide and encourage children in a supportive environment with daily routines. Children’s progress is assessed through observation, and parents and teachers regularly meet to discuss the child's development (Waldorf Education, no date).



the 100
Languages

No Way.
The Hundred is there.
The Child
Is made of one hundred.
The child has
A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
Ways of listening
Of marveling, of loving
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding
A hundred worlds
To discover
A hundred worlds
To invent
A hundred worlds
To dream.
The child has
A hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred
hundred more)
But they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
Separate the head from the
body.
They tell the child:
To think without hands
To do without head
To listen and not to speak
To understand without joy
To love and to marvel.
They tell the child:
To discover the world already
there
And of the hundred
They steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
That work and play
Reality and fantasy
Science and imagination
Sky and earth
Reason and dream
Are things
That do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
That the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach

(Reggio Emilia Approach, no date)

Lewis-Brown (2012) discusses the Reggio Emilia Approach and Waldorf Education, and notes that they have many similarities. They both focus on holistic child development and prioritise creativity through play, storytelling and activities. Both recognise the importance of the environment which encourages children to explore and discover, and they acknowledge that children do their best learning through hands-on experiences. However, their approaches also differ, for example, Reggio Emilia uses an emergent, project-based curriculum guided by children's interests, whilst Waldorf Education follows a structured curriculum in line with developmental stages. Teachers in the Reggio Emilia Approach are seen as collaborators, whereas teachers in Waldorf Education lead and guide the learning through storytelling and creative activities. Both approaches place the child at its centre and provide meaningful learning opportunities in the first 1000 days of a child's life to support their development.

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