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2024 Phyllis Bernstein Kuchner
Scholarship Award Recipient

I am passionate about creating inclusive and stimulating learning environments that foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills in young learners, and the Reggio Emilia approach as a powerful tool for achieving this goal.

Thanks to the Phyllis Bernstein Kuchner scholarship, I recently had the opportunity to attend a two-day Reggio-inspired course at Bank Street College and it was truly transformative. We explored foundational concepts, including the image of the child, which is at the heart of the Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy – the philosophy that our JCC preschool follows.

This idea, that every child is capable, curious, and full of potential resonates deeply with me and reaffirms the importance of creating spaces and experiences that honor children’s voices and individuality.

We delved into the importance of the environment as the “third teacher” and how it can inspire exploration, creativity, and collaboration. The course emphasized the value of loose parts and how these open-ended materials can invite children to imagine, build, and represent their ideas in unique ways. I came away with practical ideas for incorporating loose parts into my classroom in a more intentional way, ensuring the materials spark curiosity and reflect the children’s ongoing inquiries.

One of the highlights of the course was the time we spent workshoping documentation. I brought in some of my own work, which was incredibly well-received and with guidance from the facilitators and feedback from my peers, I was able to refine it into something I’m proud to display outside my classroom. It was such a rewarding experience to see how documentation can truly bring the children’s learning and thinking to life for others to see.

Another invaluable aspect of the course was the chance to connect with other professionals in the field. It was inspiring to meet and network with so many passionate educators, all of whom are committed to providing rich, meaningful experiences for young children. Sharing ideas and hearing about different approaches in other settings really broadened my perspective and gave me new ideas to take back to my own practice.

This course inspired me to reflect on one of the things that I love about Judaism – the value placed on learning and sharing that learning with your community. I am committed to making a positive impact in the field of early childhood education and thrilled that I was able to learn from experts in the field.

Overall, this course was an energizing reminder of why I love working with children and how intentional, reflective practices can make a profound impact. I’m excited to carry these insights forward in my work and continue to deepen my understanding of Reggio-inspired education to benefit young learners as they embark on their early Jewish journeys.

