



ROSS EARLY EDUCATION CENTER CO-EDUCATIONAL, TWO THROUGH FIVE YEARS OF AGE

The Ashley Hall approach to early childhood education is based on the Reggio Emilia philosophy, emphasizing experiential learning and creative expression through a variety of student-led opportunities. All lead teachers in the Ross Early Education Center have either earned master's degrees in an applicable field or are current master's degree candidates. Associate teachers have four-year degrees or over ten years of experience in the field. While using a differentiated approach that honors each child's developmental timeline, our teachers have expertise in the field where they have developed a teaching philosophy that fosters all areas of growth, including social-emotional, cognitive, motor, and language. Students acquire fundamental academic skills and develop positive learning habits through an emergent curriculum that supports concepts in mathematics, science, and language arts. This core academic curriculum is supplemented with daily instruction in French and regularly scheduled swimming, art, library, and music.



ASHLEY HALL
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THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education was developed more than fifty years ago in Italy and has been embraced worldwide because of its strong, child-directed learning model. The approach focuses on nurturing children within a community and through interactions with peers, teachers, and parents. An engaging school environment is a vital component of the Reggio approach and is often referred to as the “third teacher.” Classrooms that promote exploratory learning and creativity while introducing provocations for explorations are a hallmark of the approach.

The guiding philosophy behind Reggio Emilia is that children are valued as curious, intelligent, creative, and resourceful learners who have a natural desire to interact and communicate with others. Teachers cultivate their students’ learning through serving as the facilitator. As the children actively explore their environment and topics of interest, teachers incorporate cognitive, language, social, emotional, and fine and gross motor skills into their play and learning. As a result, Reggio Emilia classrooms are joyful, purposeful, and active.

KEY FEATURES *of the* REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

- ★ Teachers are active learners and facilitators. They encourage the development of community in their classrooms and guide the learning process. Teachers listen, interact, observe, and document children’s work. They help children to question and evaluate by encouraging critical thinking and independent inquiry.
- ★ Home-school relationships are vital to children’s healthy growth and development. Teachers communicate regularly with parents, and all programs are family-centered. Ashley Hall’s parent communications portal, the Learning Commons, offers a central source of school information and individual class pages for each teacher.
- ★ The arts are a powerful component of the Reggio Emilia experience. They are a symbolic language through which children can communicate and express their comprehension of investigations.
- ★ The documentation of children’s work is essential as a learning tool. Children express, articulate, and formulate their ideas and understandings through this process. Documentation includes pictures, narratives, artwork, and graphic representations of the learning process.
- ★ Explorations are child-centered and can be long or short-term. Children are encouraged to follow their interests, and teachers guide students in making decisions about the direction of an investigation, ways for the classroom community to work together, and media for representing their learning.



★ The environment is a major contributor to the learning process; therefore, the classrooms are rich in possibilities and spur the creative thinking processes for children. Common spaces encourage growth of community so that children from different classrooms can work together and share insights. The welcoming environment is an expression of respect for each child. In addition, the classroom environments are center-based, with children moving to areas of activity to work according to their interests and skill levels. Centers for math, language arts, daily living, sensory exploration, science, art, and dramatic play are also found in each classroom.

THE EARLY EDUCATION CENTER CURRICULUM

LANGUAGE ARTS

Our language arts program utilizes a phonetic approach to early reading using components from a variety of curricula, including *Zoo Phonics* and *Learning Without Tears*. Our *Zoo Phonics* program incorporates a kinesthetic, multi-modal approach to learning all aspects of language arts, including articulation and conversational development, and is based on phonics and phonemic awareness. Our handwriting program, *Learning Without Tears*, is used to support the development of fine motor and printing skills as our students learn to write through a developmental progression of the formation of letters and numbers, building a strong foundation for this skill.

SCIENCE

Science instruction encourages inquiry, exploration, and observation and provides time for experimentation. Science is incorporated in numerous ways throughout our early education program, from full-day field trips to our second campus on Johns Island, which we lovingly call The Nature Retreat, to the exploration of our vast campus, and through daily materials investigated in our classrooms as provocations. Our students are naturally curious about the environment around them, and it is our goal to embrace this curiosity and foster a love for the sciences.

MATH

Our math program is wide-ranging, including the study of numeration, problem-solving, probability, linear counting, gradation, geometry, and patterns through the use of manipulative materials and age-appropriate activities. Hands-on math materials allow our students to begin with concrete concepts and move toward more abstract thinking.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Because young children learn a second language best through conversation, our students are introduced to French through a modified immersion technique. This conversational approach develops our students' auditory comprehension and social skills through dialogue. All of our students have daily exposure to conversational French, an investment that serves as a foundation for future language education and cultural experiences.

SWIMMING

Swimming abilities are principal life skills. Because of this, our students have weekly swimming instruction in our year-round swimming program. Our students learn to develop a love of the water and are able to build confidence in their swimming abilities as they work with our certified swim instructors to enhance their skills.

ATELIER

Drawing inspiration from Reggio's Hundred Languages, a symbolic imagining of the endless potential for self-expression in children, our *atelier* is a special place where children are exposed to a wide variety of creative materials. Children are free to explore clay, paint, sculpture, and digital drawing as well as experiment with sound and dramatic play to express their unique ideas about the world. The studio is guided by the *atelierista*, an educator with a background in the arts, who also spends time in the classrooms working with the children and teachers.

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

Children are naturally drawn to music and movement, and the studio is the perfect place to cultivate that love. Each week, students sing, play instruments, and engage in creative movement that builds strength and coordination. Family events provide many opportunities to showcase student work.

Please note: Certain activities that do not meet Ashley Hall's current COVID-19 safety procedures may be postponed and/or canceled. The safety and health of our students are the School's utmost priority.

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