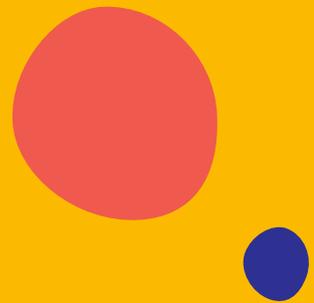




# Quality education, a global challenge

The Charter on quality education  
in response to the educational emergency



Fondazione  
Reggio Children  
Centro Loris Malaguzzi



“The rights of children shall be the rights of other children:  
this is the dimension of value of a more complete humanity.”

Loris Malaguzzi

# Quality education, a global challenge

The Charter on quality education  
in response to the educational emergency  
of our time

by **Fondazione Reggio Children**

This Charter on “Quality Education, A Global Challenge” is based on a belief in **quality education** as the first tool to a mission of creating a **democratic, inclusive, forward-looking society and citizenship**.

This Charter, by **Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi**, is built starting from **the city of Reggio Emilia** and its educational experience that, along with the experiences of other cities in Italy and worldwide, has generated in these years **innovative projects of solidarity, research and quality education**, capable to offer a possibility of acting strategically with regard to the educational emergency of our time.

This Charter is also built on an analysis of **global challenges, before and in a time of pandemics**. The pandemic has further **exacerbated the educational poverty**.

This Charter helps to re-imagine the central role of quality education starting from early childhood and throughout life, as a fundamental right and a public fact, furthermore in time of pandemics.

The Charter is an invitation to **growing networks** and to achieve shared **identified objects for mutual actions**. It represents the main values of **Fondazione Reggio Children**, which aims to offer and share them as **contribution to the research for quality education** as right and response to the educational emergency.

# OUR VISION

## Our Vision of Children

Children are **citizens and holders of rights from birth**.

They are **competent to learn** from birth, in a co-shared relationship with the community of all living beings.

**Early childhood is the DNA of humanity** and holder of its own culture. Children have the right to quality education.

In the fight against educational poverty, **the right to a quality education** has a key role.

If humanity will be able to act as an **educating community** so as to look at itself through children's eyes, it will be able to change the Planet's destiny for the better

### —• Our request, our commitment

Foster **the right to a quality education from birth**.

## Our Vision of Quality Education

The **quality education** recognizes the **uniqueness** of each child.

The quality education:

**begins with educational services** but is completed within the **educating community**;

**recognizes the potential of children** and their **Hundred Languages** through which they express themselves and, in communication with Others, get to know the world;

**fosters learning** as a process of **reciprocity and research**;

**promotes the joy of learning through play and experience**, with the mind, hands, and heart, integrating the different dimensions – **real and virtual** – of knowledge;

**proposes a quality learning environment**, a place of beauty and culture, so as to be offered as a third educator;

**is based on the responsibility of the educating community**: children, parents and families, teachers, school personnel, associations, businesses, institutions, the surrounding area and the city;

**measures up to the specifics of the contexts** so as to create favourable, engaging, and welcoming learning conditions;

**welcomes fragility and differences**, encourages encounter and dialogue with the Other, develops **autonomy, resilience, and solidarity**;

**fosters the ability** to build **relationships and networks of solidarity** among people and all living beings;

**sets up the essential elements** for the **social reconstruction** of fragile communities.

## —• Our request, our commitment

Bringing **quality education experiences into contexts of educational poverty** and educational emergency, due to health, climate, political reasons and economic, social, and cultural marginalization.

## Our Vision of School

School is **the heart of the civil community**.

Education is the heart of democracy. Despite the difficulties, the school has demonstrated its value during the pandemic.

It is the place where to grow up, **to learn together**, the place of discovery and research, of the encounter with knowledge, fragility and diversity, **right from birth**.

The school needs to be **open, in relation with the community** and the realities of the area it is located in.

**After the pandemic experience:**

the school that tackles educational poverty addresses, even more, **rights and vulnerabilities in learning;**

the school needs to **re-interpret and re-imagine** its educational environments, **to go beyond its own boundaries** and to become a neighbourhood, a garden, a forest, a library, a city, **a collaborative lab of democratic citizenship;**

**the school needs to be:**

**a school of everyone and for everyone, a beautiful and welcoming place**, which can provide **protection** and boost **confidence, weave networks and build bridges** with the surrounding area, the institutions, **the social and health services;**

**a school where educational actions are built by referring to children and pupils** and teachers and educators are entitled **to a collaborative network;**

**a school where teachers and educators are recognized and valued** in a process of lifelong learning that allows, among other things, the exchange of experiences also at metacognitive level;

**a school which is able to regenerate the community**, its values and its knowledge.

## —• Our request, our commitment

**Recognizing the right to quality education for children aged 0-6 years** and to **lifelong learning**; equipping the school with the proper resources to be a protagonist in the community, a beautiful and welcoming place open to the community; promoting projects so as to support and enhance the educational services; ensuring that the **teaching staff** are given the appropriate supports to develop the potential of children and to promote **learning as knowledge, integration, participation and reciprocity**.

## Our Vision of Parents and Families

**Parents and families** are the **first educators** and partners in their children's learning. They have, as well, the **right and duty** to participate in the educational process.

**Conditions of fragility** have increased for families experiencing the pandemic.

Quality education **supports parents and families** in their **parenthood**, enhances them in the educational experience as **public and responsible subjects**, supports them in **collective actions** in the school and for the school, in their participation in the community and for the community.

### —• Our request, our commitment

Supporting parents and families, recognizing their role as **key players** in the educational experience and in responsibly belonging to the community.

## Our Vision of the Community

The community is the **place of the democratic exercise of rights and duties**, where relationships and civil living take place and where the image of the future is shaped.

**The community** lets itself **be transformed and influenced** by the presence of children and their rights.

**The community** has to be **an educating community, an ethical community, a resilient community**, because it promotes **education as a common good** and school as a regenerative place for the whole community.

**The community plays a critical role in quality education** and in **tackling educational poverty**.

**The community takes care** of its own members, above all of the most fragile subjects, starting with children. It takes care of its own spaces, its own times, its relationships, the dialogue between cultures.

If educational poverty is above all a **lack of care**, then the community is an answer.

### —• Our request, our commitment

Actions to support the **establishment of educating communities** and to promote **places and spaces in the community** that allow **children** to build up relationships, communicate, experiment, play and learn, together with families and the community.



## AREAS OF RESEARCH AND AIMS

### of the Charter ‘Quality education, a global challenge in response to the educational emergency’

The quality education is the response to consider in many areas, not only in the educational emergencies due to economic or political marginalization. Also the climate emergency should start from education.

Fondazione Reggio Children proposes **the Charter ‘Quality Education, a global challenge’** as a value and compass for the challenge to tackle the educational emergency, exacerbated in time of pandemics, by affirming strongly the right to quality education.

The project is born considering that a democratic and inclusive society, based on cohesion and forward-looking, must **put childhood at the centre of its actions and its projects**. In order to ensure the harmonious development of children, it is necessary to guarantee **the right to quality education** from birth, which is all the more necessary in contexts characterized by **economic and social marginalization, high vulnerability, and affected by emergencies and pandemics**.

The pandemic has further **exacerbated the existing educational poverty**, already to be found in different ways in all societies, continents, and countries around the world. Educational poverties have been exacerbated and others have been added: migrations and conflicts have not diminished, social and economic marginalization has grown, the digital and technological gap has affected learning. By excess and by default, housing poverty, lack of relationships, new fears, and consequences for wellbeing and health have weighed on families and children.

In order to **re-imagine together the central role of childhood and of quality education** starting from early childhood as a fundamental right – as the Charter states. It is necessary to mobilize citizens, organizations, institutions and to affirm with even greater conviction the right to education from early childhood and throughout life, as **public fact** and foundation of a new normal. Not only children but even adults, families and communities, **may find themselves in a condition of educational poverty, of fragility and vulnerability**, and, starting from childhood, they may need to be involved in projects of quality education.

## Educational Emergency in our Times

### Educational emergency – our mutual challenge

The educational emergency is a global problem, affecting all Countries and social classes long time before the actual pandemic, even more after its outbreak. The consequences of the pandemic have globally challenged the foundations of the right to study. Educational poverty is expressed today in a more complex way, finding new and old educational poverty side by side. The pandemic or rather the pandemics induce to look at reality not as a dichotomy between emergency and a modified normal, but as another form of coexistence to be re-imagined.

### Educational poverty as lack of relationship

The younger generations were the first to witness and to claim that school, education, rather than a direct transmission of contents, is the place of maieutics and learning together. Learning and motivation pass through intra- and intergenerational relationships. The component of the educating community – which can be set up at school, in daily life – is indispensable to the growth and development of the identity of persons. The lack of direct relationship and isolation have generated new relational, psychological and existential poverty, which requires extraordinary tools and dedicated approaches. According to quality education, fragility and vulnerability, in young people and adults, are to be seen as fragility and vulnerability of the relationships in the community.

### Educational poverty as digital gap

The digital gap emerged powerfully during the pandemic with distance learning: an economic, social, cultural and generational gap. A gap that affects the whole population, finding schools and families unprepared, though deeply involved in finding solutions often along with students. A gap that requires to be overcome with investments in networks, tools, proximity relations, professional development, solidarity and the capacity to rethink with a new approach professionalism, teaching and learning.

### Educational poverty as lack of public beauty

Educational emergency is also a growing lack of trust in the principles of democracy and in the rules of common living. Schools, as public spaces, shall be established as places where the community takes care of itself and its culture. The need for social distancing has further highlighted in many countries the inadequacy of school facilities, of the face-to-face approach, the lack of workshop opportunities and open-air spaces to fairly respond to adequate learning needs. Similarly, students have often found themselves confined to cramped domestic spaces. The new school with quality education shall make its spaces available as opportunities for public beauty, for the school population and for the community. It shall recognize the learning environments as the third educator, by rethinking in a participatory way, contemplating the

learning possibilities related to the Hundred Languages and bringing the school to exchange knowledge in the city and with the city, in nature and with nature. Public beauty means also the encounter of relationships and care. Quality education should state the right to beauty.

### **Educational poverty as nostalgia for nature**

The forced separation from nature and the desire of it during the pandemic crisis as an event of imbalance in global health have brought up the issues of sustainability, climate crisis and protection of the Planet. There is a need for reflection on new educational proposals that look at the community of all living beings. That nature from which the human being has been separated, that nature that people have exploited beyond all limits, is the same nature that determines the wellbeing of the Planet and to which the human kind have to be re-educated.

### **Educational poverty as social or economic marginalization**

The economic and consequently educational poverty of minors and their families has increased in the outskirts of urban areas, in the most difficult neighbourhoods of cities and metropolises, in the poorest rural areas, but also in countries that have always experienced serious economic and climatic difficulties, lands of migration. The pandemic has furthermore impacted with new poverty due to job losses and business closures on a social marginalization linked to already existing economic difficulties. The need to promote quality education projects in these countries and realities remains paramount, since they would be of great support to children, families, and communities.

### **Educational poverty as an overstimulation**

Educational poverty can also affect the wealthiest and most affluent, hyperstimulating and therefore most impenetrable contexts. It should not be forgotten that there are children who can be offered a better educational experience, of reciprocity and exchange, even if they live in advantaged contexts.

### **Educational poverty as a humanitarian emergency**

The most difficult contexts of educational poverty are those in war, in the most contested migration routes and refugee camps, in climate emergencies, alongside humanitarian organisations. Here, where pandemics and other health emergencies have also worsened living conditions, it is more important than ever to be close to the most denied childhood in order to give it back an identity, a hope, and the possibility of being simply children.

## A Network on Quality Education

The world is today, basically, in front of a global educational emergency.

This emergency looks at a **new humanism** to educate people to coexist **with the community of the living beings**. This requires the ability to contribute **to the resilience and resistance of communities**, finding ways to **safely enhance the right to education, to learning as a relationship and participation**, by acting in an innovative way

**The educational emergency can only be tackled through quality education.**

The educational experience linked to its inspirer **Loris Malaguzzi** and to the Italian city of Reggio Emilia, based on the idea of child as a citizen from birth, on children's rights, on childhood as culture, on education as a common good and on school as a regenerative place for the whole community, can contribute as a reference to developing quality, solidarity and research educational projects in the most diverse contexts.

Poverty, discrimination, climate change, wars, migrations, the globalization of indifference, the exploitation of human beings and, last but not least, the health emergency of the coronavirus, all these prevent the equality and the possible achievements of a large part of the contemporary young generations throughout the world.

Despite the many efforts to save this childhood, **new initiatives must be promoted.**

The education – as a cultural and collective dimension of care and reciprocity – allows the empowerment of an entire community. The school and an educating community can support the complete development of the person, parenting and family by triggering a **caring, resilient and resistant** response.

With this Charter, therefore, Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi aims to **contribute to research for quality education and to promote networks, exchanges of ideas, pilot projects and long-term experiences** in order to **improve the living conditions and relationships of communities** by starting up lasting processes.

