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A New Beginning for Wellington College Early Years in India

By Conrad Botha, Founding Head of Early Years



A Wellington College Early Years education is defined by an environment that is free to the unlimited possibilities of curiosity, imagination, and potential. It is open, free-flowing, authentic, yet familiar and welcoming, valuing the child as strong, capable and resilient, rich with appreciation and knowledge. Understanding the children's interests and providing an authentic responsive environment for exploration and experimentation is one of the focal points of the college's pedagogy. Presenting the Wellington environment as the 'third teacher' is positioned so that it cultivates individuals who are capable of relating both to themselves and to the

natural world they live in, fundamental skills for living in modern-day India. We also know that these inspiring yet cosy environments allow our children to establish high wellbeing alongside deep levels of involvement in what is provided. This, in our experience, leads to the maximum conditions for learning and progress of each and every child.



Feelings, imagination, and intellect are ultimately the essence of being. This is considered unique to each individual child their thoughts, and actions are understood and celebrated within the early years, always linked and brought to life through the Wellington Early Years Curriculum. Directing attention and interest beyond that of which is known about one's own family, background, and past experiences. Instead, it is capable of building relatedness which emerges within a child from the first encounter within the setting and its carefully curated resources, filled with concrete and elemental experiences leading on to becoming more symbolic and complex as they fully emerge within themselves, and this very special place of being.



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“We value space because of its power to organize, promote pleasant relationships between people of different ages, create a handsome environment, provide changes, promote choices and activity, and its potential for sparking all kinds of social, effective, and cognitive learning. All this contributes to a sense of wellbeing and security in children. We also think that the space has to be a sort of aquarium which mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the people who live within it.”

– Loris Malaguzzi in 1984.

With our fluid and contemporary approach to early years education which is reflected in the physical environment, our children truly get to learn in the moment and capture their curiosity. As these dynamic moments of serendipity develop, the resources and their composition within the classroom spaces respond with flexibility, creating an environment that is active, alive, and ever-evolving. This has been made possible by bringing experienced Wellington educators to India from exceptional early years settings in our schools in China and they are eager to share their knowledge with others here in India whilst learning from local educators of how to ensure the Indian culture is woven into indoor and outdoor environments.



Rudolf Steiner believed that architecture is the integration of all types of art. Thus, the aesthetic design inspired by the wonderful landscapes and cultures of India and all that it has to offer the setting is considered an important part of the learning process, celebrating the work of the community, famous local and international artisans, and more importantly that of its founding diverse community of learners. Furthering our inspiration as we work towards creating not only an exceptional physical environment but a culture of curiosity, awe, and wonder embedded at the heart of our setting, we enjoy great influence from the Curiosity Approach. We will be the first early years



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setting in India to obtain this prestigious award, as we work towards obtaining our accreditation during the school's founding year.



The glass walls have the function of connecting internal and external spaces. They offer a greater presence of natural light, allowing children to observe and play with transparencies and reflections, and bring forward a greater sense of belonging as it is possible to see other members of the community working between the indoor and outdoor habitats. Light is also known to be one of the most intriguing elements of exploration and discovery with young children, a way to tap into emotion, beauty, vivid imagination, and concrete learning.



In our setting, the 'toys' available, which we refer to as learning resources, are all open-ended, unstructured, and preferably made of materials from nature such as wood, bamboo, clay, metal, and copper. Plenty of reusable and recyclable items and materials for the inspiration of new projects can be found, enriched by household items and real-world tools. Almost all spaces are covered with soft flooring items such as rugs, mats, and floor cloths allowing children to experience the comfort of exploring freely. These rugs and a variety of different shapes, heights, and sized tables also allow our children to instantly know where their play can take place but maintain the freedom to choose where best they can focus, play alone or with another by us inviting rather than telling.

With our founding families transitioning into ownership of the early years building and environment by inviting children to share that responsibility with us, they are experiencing an intentional adventure at the start of their learning journey where they are shown value and importance in their voice, free to expression, and that their needs are valued. We give our children a voice and we learn to listen to them.