Welcome to New NAREA Board Members

In 2009, the NAREA Board welcomed four new members: Barbara Acton, David Fernie, Jeanne Goldhaber and Susan Redmond. In this NAREA Column, each new board member shares the history and nature of her/his work in early childhood as well as her/his goals for NAREA and plans for contributing to this organization.

Barbara Acton

Barbara is currently the Executive Director of the Childhood League in Columbus, Ohio, a program that serves children with special rights. The Childhood League collaborates with numerous agencies and organizations to support children and families with services and opportunities. Prior to her work with the Childhood League, Barbara was Director of the Columbus School for Girls’ early childhood program and worked for several years in collaboration with Amelia Gambetti, Lella Gandini and others to support the work of the school, using the philosophies and experiences of Reggio Emilia as a tool. Barbara was a founding board member of NAREA from 2002-2003. Barbara maintains a strong interest in advocacy and is a constant force for raising the quality of programs and services for children, including those with special rights.

It is my honor to be a member of the NAREA Board once again. As a founding member, I am pleased to serve again and to have been part of the organization’s growth from its inception to its present strength of nearly 1000 members. Along with the other members of the Board, I am committed to being part of the cultivation and stewardship of relationships that extend across all boundaries and are essential to our success as educators and advocates of all children.

I believe among the greatest gifts we have received from our colleagues in Reggio Emilia is to give value to the verbs “to connect,” “to listen” and “to exchange.” Guiding my every contribution as a NAREA Board member is a commitment to these three verbs, representing both an attitude of the heart and of the will. I plan to direct my contributions to the promotion of these values and to the building of alliances, in order that together we may advocate for and help to ensure every child’s right to be respected as a unique individual and vital member of global citizenry. My commitment to learning as well as my experiences as an early childhood educator, parent and school administrator will serve to inform my advocacy and service as a Board member. I am especially honored to share my insights and experiences as they relate to children with special rights and the many ways diversity of every kind enriches our lives and learning.

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David Fernie

David is currently Professor of Early Childhood Education at Wheelock College in Boston. Before coming to Wheelock in 2005, he held faculty and administrative positions at Ohio State University for 20 years. David has conducted research in several areas: the ethnographic study of learning and teaching in classrooms for young children, children’s understanding of media portrayals, children’s play and the professional development of teachers. He is interested in better understanding how to support the growth of new and experienced teachers as they develop intentional, child-centered, and culturally responsive curriculum. To this end, David is active in a regional “Democracy Inquiry Group,” through which many exchange initiatives connected to the Reggio approach are shared. He has written over 35 book contributions and articles, and is a contributor to the Gandini, Etheridge, & Hill book, Insights and inspirations from Reggio Emilia: Stories of Teachers and Children from North America. With his colleague, Rebecca Kantor, he is author and co-editor of the (2003) Hampton Press volume entitled, Early Childhood Classroom Processes.

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to join the NAREA Board and that I have enjoyed the first two Board meetings I attended, impressed with the energy and high quality of discussion, planning and actions that took place at and because of those meetings. Here are some thoughts on goals and my possible contributions as a new NAREA Board member.

As a Professor of Early Childhood Education with a long-term interest in the Reggio Emilia approach, one goal I would hope to contribute to is to further the connection of Reggio-related work in higher education with Reggio-inspired practice and practitioners. The larger related goal is to advance our systems of early education and care by integrating the efforts and expertise of different segments of that system, and to learn from one another about how this might be done. A second goal, with the recent New England conference as an example, would be to help NAREA advance its existing goal of achieving a stronger regional presence in the lives of its members. A third goal would be to extend the reach of the organization and of resources like "The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit to communities and, particularly, to underserved populations where public advocacy and more enlightened policies for children and families are needed. As noted, efforts to meet these goals are already in place to various degrees, and I am glad to make whatever contributions I can to achieve them.

Jeanne Goldhaber

Jeanne is Associate Professor in the Early Childhood PreK-3 Teacher Preparation Program at the University of Vermont, where she has worked for 20 years with the children, educators and families of the Campus Children’s Center. Jeanne co-authored with Dee Smith the book, Pinching, Poking and Pretending: Documenting Toddlers’ Explorations with Clay, and has also co-authored chapters in many of the books related to the Reggio philosophy that have been published in North America: Bambini: The Italian Approach to Infant/Toddler Care, Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach, both First Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way and Next Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way, and most recently, Insights and Inspirations from Reggio Emilia: Stories of Teachers and Children from North America.

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Our colleagues in Italy have taught us so much about what a community can accomplish when its members articulate a vision and commit themselves to years of the deliberate and unwavering work of its enactment. For this reason, I find the NAREA vision statement quite beautiful in its ambitious mission to "build a diverse community of advocates and educators to promote and defend the rights of children, families..."
Susan Redmond

Susan is a 4K preschool educator at First Baptist Church Kindergarten in Greenville, South Carolina, a program founded in 1952 with an enrollment of 225 and a staff of 40. After becoming inspired by the Reggio philosophy in 1989, Susan joined study trips to Reggio Emilia and participated in various United States initiatives, including those in Santa Monica, Boulder, Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco. Susan has worked closely with Project Infinity since 2003, a collaborative project of Inspired Practices in Early Education, based in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work is with children in an environment where dialogue and listening are strong, families are valued and a spirit of research is predominant. Susan is an advocate for children and will participate in hosting "The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit with her colleagues in 2014.

NAREA was launched to build a community of advocates and educators inspired by the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The potential effectiveness of NAREA lies in our collective progress in promoting collaboration among educators who believe strongly in the potential of children. How does an organization with a universal vision define and project its message to be heard by educators in individual communities? In which way can classroom educators connect to the work of NAREA? Our mission statement includes a vision of "a world where all children are honored and respected for their potential, their capabilities and their humanity." Our educators are passionate in their work with children. The child is the common denominator. The work of NAREA is the child.

Within the NAREA goals, there are opportunities:
- to encourage the solidarity of concerned educators who value the rights of children;
- to broaden the appeal of NAREA membership to classroom educators intrigued by the Reggio philosophy by creating opportunities for educator exchange;
- to build strategies for listening that will foster an ongoing dialogue with educators;
- to support the struggle of educators to define their identity within the Reggio-inspired landscape; and
- to strengthen visibility of the voice of the child.

The Sixth NAREA Summer Conference
Columbia College Chicago, Chicago IL
June 23-25, 2010

Contact: NAREA, 770-552-0179, narea@mindspring.com, http://www.reggioalliance.org/narea_professional_development/annual_conference/current.php

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I am looking forward to bringing the voice of the classroom teacher to the NAREA Board. In contrast to many of the other Board members, my daily work is with children and parents in the environment of a preschool classroom. My colleagues are my fellow educators. I collaborate with the child. My days are shaped by children and enriched with the processes of observing, listening, documenting, analyzing, revisiting and projecting. My role on the NAREA board is to represent the classroom teacher.

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