Indianapolis Report Year 5

Following the Hosting of the Exhibit
The Wonder of Learning,
The Hundred Languages of Children

Prepared by members of the Indianapolis
Reggio Collaborative
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Reggio Children and the NAREA Exhibit Committee collaborated to develop a list of reflective questions for hosts of the Wonder of Learning Exhibit. The Year Four Report for Indianapolis is organized around those reflective questions.

Table of Contents

Reflections
Dialogues about Quality in Indianapolis
Collaborative Participation in Indianapolis
Values, Goals and Perspectives in Indianapolis
Visibility of Learning in Indianapolis
Documentation of Classroom Experiences and connection to curriculum standards and outcomes
Documenting the Role of Classroom Environments in Indianapolis
Sharing Our Work with Others
Advocacy for the Rights of Children in Indianapolis
Reflections
Although the Wonder of Learning visited Indianapolis several years ago, ripples of impact from the exhibit continue to bring change to education in our city and our state. Indianapolis Public Schools expanded funding for preschool opportunities for more than 500 children during the 2014-2015 school year. The preschool population at the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School grew from around 50 students last year to 100 students this year. The State of Indiana begins the $11,000,000.00 On My Way PreK initiative in January of 2015. This initiative is designed to support the preschool needs of up to 2,000 children. And the City of Indianapolis just approved a $40,000,000.00 public/private partnership to support high quality preschool opportunities for underserved children living in Indianapolis. We can link all of these initiatives to the advocacy work that happened when the Wonder of Learning was in Indianapolis!

Our own professional growth continues through visits to Reggio Emilia. During March of 2014 Dr. Ryan Flessner took a group of 22 undergraduate students and St. Mary’s staff members to Reggio for the Professor/Student Study Tour. In March of 2015, Ron Smith will take a group of 9 teachers and undergraduate students to Reggio for the same Study Tour. Dr. Louise Cadwell also works closely with the staff members from both the Lab School and St. Mary’s through consulting and direct staff development.
Dialogues about Quality in Indianapolis
How did “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit and the NAREA Professional Development Series provoke dialogues around quality in early childhood education in your community?

In our last report we referenced a new preschool initiative by Indianapolis Public Schools that served over 500 students using Title I funds. Superintendent Ferebee grew that program during the 2014-2015 school year both district-wide and at the IPS/Butler University Lab School. The St. Mary’s preschool class at the Lab School and the IPS preschool class were both so popular with families that the program was expanded to include two St. Mary’s classes and two IPS classes at the Lab School growing our preschool program from 50 students to 100 students served annually.

Dr. White, our former superintendent was inspired by the Wonder of Learning exhibit, and his visit to St. Mary’s Child Center helped him to make the decision to open a Reggio inspired elementary school (IPS/Butler Laboratory School). The continued dialogue between Dr. Ena Shelley, Connie Sherman and Ron Smith with Dr. White played a large role in his decision to use public education funds to provide preschool opportunities for the children of Indianapolis. Continued dialogue between Dr. Ferebee, Dr. Shelley and Ron Smith helped him with his decision to expand the program.

This year the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School nearly doubled in size, but we were not able to accommodate all families that wanted to join our learning community. The school is now one of the top requested schools in the city and is growing in popularity with Indianapolis families. Information about the Reggio inspired Lab School can be found at:

myips.org/butlerlabschool
facebook.com/ButlerLabSchool
@ButlerLabSchool - Twitter
@ButlerLabSchool - Instagram

The Reggio inspired preschool program at the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis is thriving and staff members at the program are interested in working with the Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative in new ways that could expand the collaborative.

The Indianapolis Museum of Art is currently in Dialogue with Butler University and St. Mary’s Child Center. They plan to open a Reggio inspired preschool program soon that would be managed by St. Mary’s Child Center.

Although this is not an early childhood initiative, next year, the Shortridge IB (International Baccalaureate) Lab School will open. This school will be another collaboration between Indianapolis Public Schools and Butler University. It also happens to be located next door to the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School. We expect the two schools will collaborate on many projects in the future.
Collaborative Participation in Indianapolis
How did the exhibit and the professional development series strengthen the collaborative participation of educators, families, administrators, community members and/or government leaders in the dialogue about early childhood education in your community?

2010 - Present: In sharing the exhibit with members from PNC bank, a strong relationship was established because of their focus on investing in early childhood education. PNC Bank now hosts and facilitates quarterly meetings of a large group of stakeholders in early childhood education. In addition, Jeff Kucer of PNC Bank is now a member of the Butler University College of Education Board of Visitors.

2014: PNC Bank has provided a gift of $150,000.00 to Butler University and St. Mary's Child Center for continued funding of the preschool program located in the Lab School and managed by St. Mary's Child Center.

2014: The private donor that gave $150,000.00 to support preschool at the Lab School before the Lab School opened, has provided another gift of $200,000.00 to Butler and St. Mary's for continued support of the preschool program.

2011 - Present: As the Laboratory School for Butler University, the Lab School serves as a rich training ground for future educators. There are many ways in which the Butler University collaborates with the Lab School. The most prominent example would be the Block A Course. Block A is a 15 credit hour methods block course addressing early childhood literacy, early childhood math, project-based learning and Reggio inspired practice. The course takes place in the Lab School where students spend Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays for an entire semester embedded in our school. Mondays and Tuesdays are spent on coursework in a classroom provided to Butler and Wednesdays are spent in field experiences working with the Lab School students. All elementary education majors must take Block A prior to student teaching. In addition to Block A, the Lab School has a large presence of student teachers from Butler.

2012 - Present: Additional Butler College of Education classes experience shorter field experiences at the Lab School. For example, several of the pre-service physical education majors now spend a semester at the Lab School learning how to integrate physical education with project work in an experience we call movement studio. The physical education majors are even learning how to create pedagogical documentation to make learning visible within their work with children.

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Values, Goals and Perspectives in Indianapolis
What opportunities for teachers, parents, administrators, community members and/or government leaders to meet and discuss the values and goals of education and childhood were generated as a result of the presence of the exhibit and the professional development series initiatives in your community? How did these opportunities contribute to a better understanding of the various perspectives that exist within your community on this subject?

2013 - Present: As mentioned already, Dr. Eugene White (former Superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools) was moved by his visit to the Wonder of Learning and his follow-up visit to St. Mary's Child Center. Those experiences led him to the decision to open a Reggio inspired elementary school (The IPS/Butler Lab School). These experiences also influenced his decision to make tuition free preschool available for 500 of the children of Indianapolis. As the planning for these new preschool classes began, Dr. White not only placed one of the classes at the Lab School, but he had his staff consult with Dr. Ena Shelley, Connie Sherman and Ron Smith as they developed the curriculum for all the new preschool classes IPS is now offering. Our new Superintendent Ferebee has expanded these preschool opportunities both system-wide and at the Lab School.

Spring 2014: The IPS/Butler University Lab School hosted a delegation day for educators who were interested in learning about Reggio inspired practice and the work happening at the Lab School both with the children and with the pre-service teachers from the Butler University College of Education. Approximately 30 educators participated and they have taken some of what they learned back to their own learning communities.

2016: Plans are beginning for a conference hosted by Butler University, the IPS/Butler Laboratory School, St. Mary’s Child Center and the new Shortridge IB Laboratory School focused on inquiry-based learning at all levels of education.
Visibility of Learning in Indianapolis
How did the exhibit and professional development series impact the visibility of the learning and relationships of children, teachers and parents within your early childhood education community?

2010 - 2015: Members of the Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative continue to receive frequent requests for professional development and tours of the schools. Interest from Indiana legislators continues as well. There has been a noticeable increase in Bills related to early childhood education in response to an increase in advocacy efforts. Although we cannot directly relate all legislation to the presence of the Wonder of Learning in Indianapolis in 2009, the presence of the exhibit certainly played an important role.

2013: The Indianapolis Children’s Museum (one of the worlds finest museums for children) opened a preschool program three years ago. New leadership has moved the preschool toward Reggio inspired practice. In addition, one of the most popular exhibits in the museum (Playscape) was designed to be a Reggio inspired exhibit. Staff from St. Mary’s Child Center were consulted on the design of the new space.
Documentation of Classroom Experiences and Connection to Curriculum Standards and Outcomes
How have the early childhood educators in your community learned to extend the documentation of classroom experiences of learning and relationships to include connections with the values and goals of parents and administrators, as a result of the professional development opportunities created by exhibit and professional development series? In which way did the educators connect children’s experiences to government/district mandated curriculum standards and outcomes?

2010 - 2015: St. Mary’s Outreach Program continues to offer professional development opportunities for local early childhood entities. Head Start and Day Nursery (the two largest early childhood service providers in the State of Indiana) have continued participate in those opportunities.

2011 - 2015: The Butler University College of Education students spent a great deal of time at the Lab School learning together with the children and teachers of the school. The Block A class mentioned earlier in this document is perhaps the most prominent of these experiences.

Fall 2015 - The IPS/Butler University Laboratory School will receive a school rating for the first time from the Indiana Department of Education based on the results of the ISTEP Assessment.

Standardized assessment of children has become a really interesting issue recently in Indiana. The new version of our mandated assessment is 10.5 hours long this year for just the applied skills portion of the test for our nine-year-old students. This compared with 2.5 hours last year has parents across our state beginning to question both the value of such assessments and the time spent giving and preparing for them. We are working with families to collaborate and make their voices heard on issues of what it means to be educated and how we believe children should be spending their time in school.
Documenting the Role of Classroom Environments in Indianapolis
How did the exhibit and the professional development series encourage educators to document the role of the environment in their classrooms? What did educators and parents learn about the role of the environment within the school community through the documentation of the learning and relationships that typically develop within that context?

The role of the environment is a continued area of research for the Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative. Not only the Wonder of Learning, but visits to other schools such as The College School in St. Louis and Opal School in Portland as well as visits to Reggio have inspired us to think about the relationships that can be facilitated by thoughtful classroom and school environments. Relationships to materials and to others are carefully considered not only as environments are created, but as they are used. This has been particularly interesting and challenging at the Lab School where we are now creating environments for children as old as 2nd and 3rd grade. Each year as the children at the Lab School grow older, we must ask ourselves what does it mean to be a Reggio inspired 2nd or 3rd grade class? And next year, what does a Reggio inspired 5th grade class look like and how does it function.

When we consider the role of the environment, we want to consider the environment beyond the four walls of our classrooms. To the end, the IPS/Butler Laboratory School has worked with Bay Tree Design to redesign our outdoor spaces. Sharon Danks of Bay Tree wrote the book Asphalt to Ecosystems: Design Ideas for Schoolyard Transformation. She and her landscape architect facilitated a participator design process that collected feedback from our children, our parents and our faculty as a new outdoor space was designed. The project was paid for by generous donations from Duke Energy ($20,000.00) and the Efroymson Family Fund ($10,000.00). The draft plan will be presented to our school community in March 2015 and the final draft should be completed in April 2015. At that point we will move toward fund raising and construction. Our mission and goals for the new outdoor space are listed below:

Preface to Lab School Green Schoolyards Mission:
“Every place has a soul, an identity, and seeking to discover it and relate to it means learning to recognize your own soul as well.”
Dialogues with Places, Reggio Children

Mission:
The Butler Lab Green Schoolyard will be a living example of how children can transform the world around them.

Goals:
- Because learning continues beyond the classroom door, we will create outdoor learning spaces that mirror the qualities of our classroom spaces – with regard to aesthetics, diversity of opportunities and a material-rich learning environment.
- We will reduce asphalt and prioritize permeable surfaces with an emphasis on native habitats (prairies, forest, trees, foliage, insects, etc.). Our focuses will be stewardship of the Fall Creek watershed, attention paid to seasonal changes and familiarizing children with the seed-to-table relationship.
- We will create a place where memories are made...where the beauty of the space and of the relationships between children and nature are reflected in understanding that lasts a lifetime.
- We will create play opportunities with inclusive design, and which offer children graduated, beneficial risk, open-ended experiences, variety and choice.
- We will create a play space that nurtures a sense of wellbeing in the areas of physical, social, and mental health.
- Collaboration, communication, and organization are values that will be evident throughout our outdoor space. There will be a place for everyone and everything contributing to happiness and wellbeing.

Enduring Understandings:
- Anyone can be an agent of change who makes the world a better place.
- To affect positive change it takes effort, patience, and persistence.
- We live nested in a socio-ecological context that begins with the self. Beyond the self, this context expands through the family and home, the neighborhood and school, the city, the state, the nation and ultimately the world, and we influence and are influenced by each of these settings. But it’s closest to the self where the bi-directional influence is strongest.
Therefore, by enhancing our immediate surroundings we are not only choosing a natural place to start affecting this positive change, but also the place with the most profound effect on our individual world view.
Sharing Our Work with Others
Were the educators in your community able to organize an exhibit of documentation of the learning and relationships of children, teachers and parents to be shared with community members in a public context during your hosting period? If so, where was the exhibit and how did your community respond? If not, what plans do you have for such an annual exhibit?

Fall 2013 - Present: Clowes Hall, a 2,000 seat theater located on the campus of Butler University is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary. As part of the celebration local artists were invited to create pieces of art 48” x 48” in size. The fifty pieces of art now hang in the lobby of the theater and one of the fifty pieces was created by the children of the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School. At the event where the display was unveiled several of the local artists expressed that they were happy that Reggio inspired practice is gaining a foothold in Indianapolis.

2010 - 2013: Since the Wonder of Learning moved on to other cities, interest in site visitations to our schools has continued. The schools of the Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative have functioned as a living exhibit of our work and countless visitations to the schools occur each year.

2013: The IPS/Butler University Laboratory School now hosts an annual event that includes documentation and examples of student work. The event is hosted each May and it includes an auction that provides funding for the purchase of art materials for the children.
Advocacy for the Rights of Children in Indianapolis
How did the presence of the exhibit and professional development series contribute to educators', parents' and community members' abilities to advocate for the rights of children in the community? In what ways did their abilities develop? Did educators and parents develop a better understanding of current policies regarding early childhood education and issues being addressed by school and government officials, the disposition to communicate with school and government officials through e-mail and phone and/or attendance at meetings and rallies?

2010: Jeff Kucer (PNC Bank) and Ena Shelley co-authored an Op Ed piece that appeared in Inside Indiana Business, the Journal of the IBJ.

2011: Ena Shelley was interviewed by Matt Tully regarding the early childhood platform of the candidates for mayor of Indianapolis. She was also interviewed and quoted in two articles by another Indianapolis Star reporter, Scott Elliott on the need for funding for early childhood education in Indiana.

2011: Once again, legislation presented this session 2012 for high quality early childhood education has surpassed other sessions. The Governor of Indiana will sign a bill that will form an Early Childhood Advisory Council. Two large groups that were involved with the exhibit: IAEYC and United Way of Central Indiana have taken on advocacy for high quality early childhood education as part of their strategic plans. They have developed procedures that foster the participation of families and educators in support of bills for early childhood.

2012: Jason Kloth is the new Indianapolis Deputy Mayor for Education. Jason visited the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School to learn more about the partnership with Butler, IPS, St. Mary’s and PNC Bank that led to having a high quality preschool located inside a public school. Jason expressed his desire to help the city find a way to provide a quality education for all of Indianapolis’ children. He thinks our model could be a piece of this complicated puzzle.

January 2013: Dr. Ena Shelley (Butler University) and Connie Sherman (St. Mary’s Child Center) testified in front of the State Legislature on behalf of legislation for a preschool pilot program. A version of that legislation was passed and Connie Sherman was appointed Special Advisor to the State Early Childhood Advisory Committee. It should be noted that this pilot program represents the first funding for preschool in the history of the State of Indiana.

January 2015: Susan Pence, wife of the Governor of Indiana visited the Lab School to learn about the Reggio inspired work happening at the school.

February 2015: Lab School parents are collaborating with parents from other school communities to advocate on behalf of children to reduce the amount of and emphasis on standardized testing in the State of Indiana.