In Early Education:
The International Reggio Emilia Exchange

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Introduction

This issue of Innovations focuses on the culture of the atelier in the Reggio Emilia educational project and the way in which North American educators and schools have been influenced as a result of their understandings of this aspect of the Reggio Emilia approach. This issue closely relates to the focus of the September 2018 peer-reviewed issue, “The Theory of the Hundred Languages: How Representation with Materials and Media Becomes a Language for Expression and Learning.” The atelier is one of the conditions for guaranteeing the quality of the educational relationship and of the experience of children and adults in the educational services in the Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools, where it is described in this way:

The atelier is not a specialized place but a place in dialogue with the other spaces of the preschool and the infant-toddler centre. Likewise, the atelierista is not a specialist but works in relationship with the other professional figures in a context of reciprocal professional development and collaboration between different kinds of knowledge. This strategy interprets the idea of the interdisciplinarity of knowledge and the participation of the hundred languages in the construction of knowledge. The culture of the atelier values the different forms that each individual gives to his or her ideas and knowledge, so that no child loses the courage and pleasure of building knowledge, which in itself is a creative process. (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2017, p. 40)

The first article in this issue, “A Family of Ateliers: Investing Hope in Creativity and Collaboration,” by Nancy Sadler, director/pedagogista of Palisades Preschool in Santa Monica, CA, and Valeria Vacchi, atelierista at Palisades Preschool, describes the evolution of the school over a 10-year period through the collaborative and intentional creation of multiple ateliers—“places of investigation where knowledge-building processes are developed in solidarity with imagination and creativity.” The article also centers on the collaboration of the atelieristi, who grew in number over time, and the teachers, as well as the challenges encountered in the process of working together in these various contexts and the meaningful experiences with children and families that took place.

The “Perspectives on NAREA” column features the “Call for Proposals for the September 2019 Peer-Reviewed Issue of Innovations.” The topic of next year’s peer-reviewed issue is “Exploring the Relationship Between Educational Research and Professional Development.” In “Teachers as Researchers: Formation and Professional Development in a School of Education (2001),” Carla Rinaldi writes about this relationship: “Personal and professional development and education are something we construct ourselves in relation with others, based on values that are chosen, shared, and constructed together. It means living . . . in a permanent state of research” (2006, p. 137). Proposals for this issue are due on October 1, 2018.

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—Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools
Also in the “Perspectives on NAREA” column is “The 14th NAREA Summer Conference - ‘Crossing Cultures, Contexts, and Communities” by the NAREA Conference Team. This article follows the pedagogical and interdisciplinary thread of the conference through quotes by featured speakers from Reggio Emilia, Tiziana Filippini and Barbara Quinti, from their daily presentations:

Tiziana, from her many years participating within the pedagogical coordinating team of Reggio Emilia’s infant-toddler centers and preschools, discussed values, principles, and theories, while Barbara, an atelierista for 22 years, elaborated by sharing in-depth stories of experiences generated by children and adults. The two perspectives offered possibilities for observing the interplay between vision and research, theory and practice. Insights were further enabled through questions and dialogue between participants and speakers.

The “Voices: Conversations from North America and Beyond” column is related to the topic of this issue as it features “Reflections on the 14th NAREA Summer Conference Ateliers” by the atelier facilitators—Julie Bernson, deputy director for learning and engagement at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA; Emma Boettcher, teacher at Charlestown Nursery School in Charlestown, MA; Katie Higgins-White, atelierista at Peabody Terrace Children’s Center in Cambridge, MA; Amanda McCracken, teacher at Newtowne School in Cambridge, MA; Marla McLean, atelierista at School Within School in Washington, DC; Kendra PeloJoaquin, pedagogista at Peabody Terrace Children’s Center; Nora Thompson, NAREA staff member; and Maggie Van Camp, NAEYC accreditation mentor for Boston Public Schools. The focus of the ateliers, “The Hundred Languages/Relationships/Understanding/Communities,” was related to the topic of the conference, the history and cultural context of the city of Boston, and the values of participation and multiculturalism within the Reggio Emilia educational project.

Finally, the “Voices” column includes “Tributes to Carolyn Pope Edwards” by Lella Gandini, Reggio Children liaison in the U.S. for the dissemination of the Reggio Emilia approach; George Forman, emeritus professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Brenda Fyfe, dean emeritus, Webster University; Melvin Konner, Samuel Candler Dobbs professor, Emory University; and John Nimm, associate professor, Portland State University. These educators reflect on Carolyn’s distinguished career in anthropology and early childhood education, including her pivotal role in the Reggio-inspired community in North America.

REFERENCES

NAREA Conference Team.

June 2018
A Family of Ateliers: Investing Hope in Creativity and Collaboration

by Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi

Nancy Sadler has been the director and pedagogista of Palisades Preschool in Santa Monica, CA since 2007. She began her career more than 30 years ago as an early childhood teacher in bilingual kindergarten and first grade classrooms in public schools in California, expanding to private toddler, preschool, and elementary school settings, working as a teacher and as an administrator. Nancy has participated in four study groups in Reggio Emilia and in a variety of learning opportunities associated with “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. Valeria Vacchi works as an atelierista at Palisades Preschool. She taught children and adults, expanding into different branches of art, in Italy and the U.S. until she made the decision to primarily teach children. To further her qualifications, she took classes in Child Development in California and became interested in the Reggio Emilia approach, studying it in depth over the years and participating in study tours in Reggio Emilia where she felt very much at home, being from Emilia Romagna herself.

Introduction: Setting The Context

I will not hide from you how much hope we invested in the introduction of the atelier. We knew it would be impossible to ask for anything more. Yet, if we could have done so, we would have gone further still by creating a new type of school . . . made entirely of laboratories similar to the atelier. We would have constructed a . . . school made of spaces where the hands of children could be active for “messing about” . . . With no possibility of boredom, hands and minds would engage each other with great, liberating merriment in a way ordained by biology and evolution.

–Loris Malaguzzi (Gandini, 2012, p. 49)
More than 50 years since the genesis of the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, our own transformative interpretation of the concept to which Carla Rinaldi refers as “the whole school as an atelier” (Gandini, 2015) has been emerging in Santa Monica, CA for the past decade. At Palisades Preschool, by intention, occasionally by serendipity, and also in response to the changing community of children and adults each school year, multiple spaces considered to be ateliers have been created and recreated. This evolutionary project values the role of uncertainty and risk-taking within creative endeavors and embraces the mind-set of change, with the awareness that human minds seek complexity and novelty and that a departure from the comfortable and familiar makes way for growth and learning (Vecchi, 2010).

Founded in 1999 at its current site, our school serves 60 preschool children, 2.9 to 6 years of age and their families, as well as 22 two-year-old children and their families, who meet weekly. An ambitious change process began in 2006, during which time a shared understanding of the complexities of the Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012) was gradually evolving among our community of teachers and learners. Initially, as we started

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—Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi

Many Layers of Learning:
A Summary of Professional Development
Initiatives and Experiences

Fortunately, Santa Monica is the home of several well-established schools that have explored the Reggio Emilia approach over a period of 20 years. Our mentors and colleagues at Evergreen Community School, The Growing Place, Branches Atelier, New School West, and First Presbyterian Nursery School have kindly and generously shared their experience with us over the past 11 years. Within this context, we, as Palisades Preschool educators, have enjoyed many opportunities to participate in local study tours, workshops, seminars, classes, and meetings that supported our understanding of the values that are fundamental to this beautiful way of working with young children and their families—and to observe these values in practice. In 2010, “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit traveled to Santa Monica, and we took advantage of its presence to engage in the initiatives that were a part of the experience: studying the exhibit itself, attending presentations by Italian educators, visiting urban schools in Los Angeles that were beginning to explore the approach, and coming together at our own site to share our reflections and questions. More recently, during the past 2 years, educators from local Reggio-inspired schools have proposed and organized learning opportunities with pedagogista Tiziana Filippini in a winter retreat setting in the Santa Monica area.
The establishment of the Pedagogical Institute of Los Angeles in Santa Monica in 2014 by Evergreen Community School and a collaborative of local Reggio-inspired schools connected us with Swedish educators Gunilla Dahlberg and Harold Göthson. Harold visited our school and observed our morning meetings and reflection meetings with children, provoking our thinking about collaboration between children and teachers. The Pedagogical Institute offered us a forum for sharing our work with the community in its exhibit space. “Bicycology” became a traveling interactive exhibit that included documentation of children’s work, first presented at the Institute and later shared at Santa Monica City Hall and at Ocean House, an assisted living setting for seniors in Santa Monica.

Traveling beyond our Santa Monica context, we visited Boulder Journey School in Colorado to study with George Forman in a 3-day documentation workshop. Years later, our whole faculty experienced “The Wonder of Learning” exhibit once more; on this occasion, we went to New Mexico in 2014, participating in initiatives with some of our colleagues from Santa Monica in the five-state collaborative that includes educators from Arizona, California, Illinois, Missouri, and New Mexico. Since 2010, numerous study tours to Reggio Emilia have enabled us to interpret the approach more directly—leading to new questions, challenges, and growth. We are grateful to Angela Ferrario and Judy Kaminsky for organizing these amazing learning opportunities in collaboration with Reggio Children.
We have been privileged to learn from consultations with Lella Gandini. During the past 3 years, Dr. Gandini has visited our little school to observe, share intriguing images and videos, and ask many questions that have provoked our thinking about our work, such as: Why do we do what we do? With charm, grace, wisdom, and subtlety, she has guided our developing understanding of collaboration.

In recent years, we have found that some of our deepest learning occurs when we host educator tours at our own site. When we prepare for these visits from colleagues near and far, we engage in a reflective process that causes us to look at our work from new perspectives. Moreover, each moment in our daily lives together also brings rich opportunities for professional development.

**What do we know about the atelier as a place of research?**

A strong trust in children’s natural competence to construct learning within the context of the group, guided by teacher researchers who offer environments and materials that, in themselves, are invitations to engage in research, is fundamental to the Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012). Children’s **hundred languages** (Forman & Fyfe, 2012) serve as symbolic channels for children to express ideas and theories, testing their hypotheses while scaffolded by other children and adults (Vygotsky, 1978). Malaguzzi’s reference to children’s engagement with materials as “ordained by biology and evolution” reflects the findings of studies in the field of neuroscience strongly indicating that children’s brains are wired to learn through meaningful sensory experiences (Seigel & Payne, 2011) and that learning is further developed and enhanced through the use of language in conversation (Vygotsky, 1978).

The atelier is an actual space in the school for these processes to take place, but also has a metaphorical significance with regard to intellectual dispositions toward learning that we value and encourage: curiosity, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and the joy of learning (Katz, 1993). The atelier has a particular connection with the rest of the school as a “promoter of relationships”—and as an inspiration for the spirit of research within the whole school. Malaguzzi once referred to this place of exploration as the “impertinent atelier”—meaning that its purpose is to ensure an opportunity for asking questions and pushing boundaries.

—Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi
Creativity as a Driving Force

Throughout our experience, we have sought to discover the meaning of creativity. Gardner (1980) explained that the construct of creativity is often defined as a human ability to generate new and useful ideas; it is conceptualized as a human behavior that regulates feelings, acquires skills, overcomes difficulties, constructs knowledge, and solves problems. Loris Malaguzzi viewed creativity as a driving force in the everyday school experience, but he was also aware that adults’ general expectations do not always include the importance of fostering creativity and problem solving in the school’s environment. A concern that Loris Malaguzzi raised was the general assumption that play, associated also with spontaneity, cannot go together with intellectual capacity. The reality in Reggio’s municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers proved the contrary, demonstrating that the spirit of play can also pervade the formation and construction of thought. Children are not conscious of any opposition between play and necessary work. As John Dewey explained, that contrast is a product of adult life: “No one has ever watched a child intent in his play without being made aware of the complete merging of playfulness with seriousness” (Dewey, 1980). The introduction of the atelier in Reggio preschools, as a place of research, attests to the value that Loris Malaguzzi attributed to creativity when imagination finds ways of expression through multiple languages and playfulness leads to serious learning.

The presence of the atelier is a point of reference and a point of departure related to creative thinking where anyone, not only the atelierista, has the potential to be creative. But how can creativity be improved and how can this be related to positive outcomes? At our school, we had already seen that changing conditions in the environments enhanced the creativity in everyone, but there are active steps to take for everyone to cultivate their own creativity and to embrace the collaborative creativity of the group.

Research, in the Reggio approach, is highly valued. Having a considerable amount of information makes the individual develop knowledge and interest in a domain; without interest, it is difficult to become involved and go deeply enough to stretch in a new direction. Movement is necessary to push yourself forward, to progress in an ongoing process of learning. While the creative attitude cultivated by the single person is important, there is more complexity in the synergy of many minds—organizing, selecting, and correlating different channels toward a purpose. The creative process brings exuberance and joy as well as risks and uncertainty, but, without it, there would not be change, innovation, or growth.

I believe uncertainty should be freed of its small degree of negativity and any denials of its virtuous nature; it must be brought back as a constituent element of our lives, of our relations with ourselves, with others, and with nature. Bearing in mind we must fill uncertainty with a content that is positive in some way if we want to be capable of restoring it as something we can live with and use in practical ways as a constituent element of our growth.” –Loris Malaguzzi (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 344)

A Space to Activate Creativity: Early Efforts to Expand the Experience of the Atelier

There is no doubt that we have been more than inspired by our trips to Reggio Emilia, visiting the Loris Malaguzzi International Center and the infant-toddler centers and preschools, absorbing elements and values from different types of work. Nevertheless, the strongest element that stood out and the one always presented in all learning patterns was the sense of empathy that Vea Vecchi emphasized on many occasions: “the sense of empathy that keeps the level of interest high in children.” But once provoked, how is empathy best defined in the setting of the school? Malaguzzi called it “the aesthetic vibration,” the activator of learning that supports and nourishes knowledge not based uniquely on information, but rather on the way in which it leads to sensitive empathy and the relation to things, which creates connections. Additionally, we need to also take into consideration some important admonitions by Vea Vecchi:

We must go beyond materials and techniques to stop and look at processes of empathy and intense relations with things, which the atelier promotes, where the atelieristi are guarantors of the fact
that an expressive, emotional part as well as a rational, cognitive part will always be present in every discipline or language. (Vecchi, 2010, p. 12)

With these criteria, we wanted to create a space that could deeply inspire the children through the medium of paper. An empty room was transformed for the children to explore paper where they could experience the paper in terms of its own qualities. The room was full of white paper differentiated in sizes, forms, length, weight—some hanging from the ceiling, other pieces curled into waves or cut to show positive and negative space. Small kinetic structures were constructed, waiting to be discovered by the children. In addition, large rolls of paper were standing on the floor, more paper was crushed into balls, additional paper was shaped to create caves or tunnels. The children were offered the freedom to discover the impermanent characteristic of paper—crawling into it, gathering it, immersing themselves in this new perception of space and texture.

A second paper exploration came in a different setting. This time the room was not empty; it had shelves and a table with chairs. These were elements that were missing from the first exploration, and we wanted to add them so that the children would be able to have other experiences with paper. The atelieristi also decided to wrap the shelves, chairs, and table in the room with paper, making the material a featured element in the room’s design. While paper was made available to work with, expanding the possibilities of the paper as a material also being featured in the design of the room inspired the children. Provocative elements made of paper were present to suggest possibilities, along with the addition of an overhead projector that provided the element of light to interact with the paper.

The new perspective on paper stimulated strong and unexpected reactions from children and teachers alike, but a constructive outcome did not always result. There were many surprises for the children and teachers that had not been discussed before the exploration of the room, including the paper covering the furniture. Birds and flowers made from paper, paper objects hanging from the ceiling to cast a shadow to resemble a face, and paper cylinders with different cuts to let the light play through were offered to the children to support their learning about the properties of paper.
What captured the children’s attention the most was the paper that was covering all the chairs; the youngest group of children did not like it, and they wanted to rip the paper off. The teachers were surprised but did not interfere, as they believed that the children could learn from this process of deconstruction. But this experience did not move the work forward in an interesting way. Perhaps if the teachers had asked the children questions, such as: “Who could possibly have wanted to cover everything with paper and why?” Then maybe the children would have considered hypotheses, such as: “What if a little paper man came to cover everything with paper?”

Using Rodari’s imaginative exercises in his book *The Grammar of Fantasy* (1996), the possibilities could have been amplified in a game of supposing and imagining while, at the same time, using the logic and the reality of paper according to its own characteristics. Could it have been painted, drawn, bent, cut, torn but not washed? Could it fly?

The teachers were involved in discovering the space with the children, while the *atelieristi* were responsible for preparing the space. *Atelieristi* were aware of what they themselves were doing and what they were not doing, but the team teachers, *ateliers*, and *pedagogista* did not thoroughly discuss the possibilities and the hypotheses related to the proposed experience. Therefore, the teachers did not discover the full potential of the children during these experiences and learned firsthand what we have heard the Reggio educators assert: “The more hypotheses we have in our hands, the more we follow children’s ideas.” As Rodari (1996) reminded us, hypotheses are nets: “You throw out your net, and sooner or later, you catch something” (p. 18). It has already been said that along with the creative path comes uncertainty, but also more mobility and openness for new possibilities.

**Continued Efforts to Experiment: Inventing and Reinventing Multiple Atelier Identities**

A *studio of sound* was born as a place to experiment with sound-making materials. A child-size cello and violin, many percussion instruments, an autoharp, and numerous “loose parts” invited children to play with sound. Musical dialogues between children, performances in which the audience and the performers exchanged roles in a reciprocal fashion, and investigations in graphic representation of sound were among the experiences shared in the *atelier* of sound.

With this first experiment in the expansion of the *atelier*, we observed diverse responses from teachers and children. Unsurprisingly, both adults and children with musical tendencies and abilities—or who leaned toward auditory sensory experiences—especially enjoyed the studio of sound. Of course, teachers with less musical confidence—or who had a low tolerance for “sound”—were challenged by this
Teachers were encouraged to spend time “playing” in the atelier of sound, experiencing the materials and their affordances—and trying out their own hypotheses—before taking small groups of children to this atelier. This strategy helped teachers to form intentions and to anticipate possible sound scenarios children might also encounter and create.

—Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi

atelier. Children, too, with high sensitivity to sound sometimes preferred other learning settings than the studio of sound.

Documentation and conversation brought these realities into the context of the work—helping us to appreciate differences, strengths, and areas for growth for adults and for children. Teachers were encouraged to spend time “playing” in the atelier of sound, experiencing the materials and their affordances—and trying out their own hypotheses—before taking small groups of children to this atelier. This strategy helped teachers to form intentions and to anticipate possible sound scenarios children might also encounter and create. In addition, teachers who felt successful in the space shared their strategies and suggestions with colleagues—sometimes through documentation of their own work. With time and experience, teachers grew in their confidence, comfort, and creativity in this atelier, and their documentation processes revealed children’s learning through the sound experiences—adding a sense of value for teachers that, in the cycle of teaching and learning, promoted more interest (and confidence) on their part.

After a few years, teachers expressed a wish to move the sound-making materials to classrooms and to recreate this atelier space. New intentions emerged as, at this time, a professional development initiative for the deep study of the relationship between aesthetics and empathy was developing within our community (Vecchi, 2010), leading our faculty to consider the connections between living organisms, beauty, and community.

Replacing the studio of sound, the atelier of taste was conceived as a place to share culinary experiences—observing and transforming beautiful seasonal fruits and vegetables. New flooring, furnishings, and materials were a part of the transformation of this room during the summer months. There was a strong connection between the atelier of taste and the classroom as fresh juices came to the lunch table for all to enjoy. An additional meaningful connection grew between the atelier of taste and the school’s original atelier, with observational drawing and painting becoming a part of the experiences with food.

In contrast with the initial responses from teachers to the studio of sound, we observed that this new atelier was more approachable for most teachers. They were, generally, more experienced as cooks than as musicians. However, a variety of attitudes and practices...
with regard to culinary experiences became an interesting challenge that required considerable dialogue, addressing generational, personal, and cultural differences. Once again, the challenge proved to hold great benefits in raising awareness on everyone’s part about our attitudes toward food and the preparation and enjoyment of food. In spite of the variety of practices we encountered, going back to our experiences in Reggio Emilia study groups and using The Languages of Food (2008) as a resource, we reconsidered together the values we wanted to make visible in the atelier of taste—and the importance of the space as a place of research, not just a place for cooking. Ongoing documentation gave visibility to the sense of community and the beauty we intended for this atelier.

Simultaneously, an investigation of the pattern that connects (Bateson, 1972) was taking place in the atelier, adding complexity to experiences with living organisms and traveling to the atelier of taste as children used the light table to research patterns observable in the plants and foods.

The garden became another sort of atelier as children planted, watered, and cared for vegetables and herbs that became homes for other living organisms and eventually traveled to the atelier of taste for observation, transformation, and pleasure. Naturally, particular teachers and children responded to the possibilities of the garden more readily than others, but we worked together to spread the enthusiasm to the entire community, becoming more intentional in our invitations to teachers, parents, and children to participate.

That same fall, treating the outdoor space as a very large atelier, an expansive collection of natural materials was accumulated by children, parents, and teachers and installed on a pathway, creating an exhibit of transforming beauty as the seasons changed. The installation initiative presented challenges in the use of the outdoor space by differing age groups—and brought with it some tensions and differing points of view among teachers. We cannot say that this was an easy process, but through the perseverance of a few teachers, the open attitude of others, and the documentation of the children’s (and parents’) interest and enthusiasm, the value of the “change over time” installation was accepted and supported by most teachers. Observation and poetic inspiration in recent years led to other particular outdoor investigations, including “catching the rain” and “the sky.”
The outdoor studio deck offered an ever-present easel, drawing materials, and other languages selected as a result of teachers’ observations of the children and specific ongoing explorations. The study of the connections between the trees, plants, and other living creatures was a very large component of the work on the studio deck. Using expressive languages, children were offered the invitation to observe and represent the relationships between the many systems visible in the outdoor spaces. The presence of an atelierista in this space guaranteed work provoked by aesthetic sensitivity, creativity, and empathy. The workshop was an additional outdoor space adjacent to the outdoor studio deck and dedicated to exploration with woodworking tools and a variety of materials, such as cardboard, many kinds of wood, and loose parts. Again, an atelierista’s special talents and skills inspired and guided this work supporting children’s individual and collaborative problem-solving. Both the workshop and the outdoor studio decks were generally the domains of atelieristi—creating less controversy than other atelier spaces in terms of the identity of these settings and how they were used. However, these spaces provided very nice opportunities for teachers to observe and work next to atel-
lieristi, developing techniques and language to enhance their own work with children in the classroom mini-ateliers, in particular.

With the additional space offered to the school as part of a new lease, the studio of construction took shape. A large room with building platforms, unit blocks, hollow blocks, loose parts, ramps and tubes, an overhead projector, and table space for drawing combined to create a place for research into stability, symmetry, velocity, innovative design, collaboration, and communication, for example. Predictably (at this point), “teacher-builders” were the most enthusiastic about this atelier. Nevertheless, as many teachers had experience with building materials in classrooms, this studio was somewhat familiar—although the scope and possibilities for construction were greater than in the classroom. Deciding the quantity and variety of materials to include were subjects for discussion early in the experience. Once more, documentation sharing at team meetings after school helped colleagues to appreciate the potential of this space. Seeing and hearing how other teachers approached small group work with construction materials presented more possible hypotheses regarding ramp building, for example, and strategies for connecting dramatic play and building, as well as for caring for the materials safely.

An interest in storytelling on the part of both children and adults motivated the creation of the atelier of stories—a place to tell stories and also for the making of beautiful and unusual books to house children’s stories. This space was formerly used as an additional studio space, but was converted with enthusiasm to a setting for storytelling by atelieristi and elaborated by teachers after experiencing the space with the children. Fabrics, small animal figures, light and shadow, and natural materials were among the props used to provoke a sense of setting and character.

The stories migrated to the classroom and the atelier—where puppetry, music, digital languages, and performance became part of the storytelling. The use of video recordings of experienced storytelling colleagues working happily in this space with children was very instructive in helping teachers see the playful possibilities of the atelier of stories. Following observations that young children’s storytelling often begins with dramatic play, the atelier of stories shifted location and was integrated with a space designed for dramatic play, becoming the atelier of story-play. Children acted out play scenarios while teachers recorded words and actions that could be transformed into stories, drawings, and performances. Teachers observed, documented, and collaborated to generate strategies responsive to children’s dramatic play scenarios. Particular teachers who had previously worked a great deal with storytelling were able to guide colleagues through the sometimes challenging step of transforming raw documentation of children’s dramatic play into written stories with the children.
An additional transformation occurred in the past school year. Continuing research with living organisms (inspired by an atelier at the Malaguzzi Center in Reggio) with special focus on seeds, the atelier of living organisms was designed using many branches, flowers, leaves, pinecones, petals, and varieties of seeds as part of a new environment, creating a lovely, complex, and fragrant context for research. Once more, the connection with the atelier was alive—with observational drawing and painting adding new dimensions to children’s perspectives. To explore line, children used the dry and fresh natural materials to invent paintbrushes that they used with black ink, discovering the affordances of the materials to make different kinds of lines. A digital microscope was another fascinating provocation for exploration in this atelier.

This atelier presented, perhaps, the greatest challenge for teachers—especially for teachers of the younger children. Shelves held many materials. What would be an effective “starting point”? We drew on our past experience with compositional research, inviting children to carefully explore materials and then to “make something beautiful.” As teachers documented the children’s words and compositions, they learned with the children about the possibilities and beauty of the atelier of living organisms and cultivated their own courage to take risks for the sake of creativity within this atelier.

In the classroom, mini-atelier spaces offered opportunities for exploration with materials such as clay, wire, fabric, and watercolor. Color-mixing to create palettes representing classroom identities (i.e., the Sunflower class, Lavender class, Rosemary class, Cherry Blossom class) was a part of initial investigations in the classroom mini-atelier spaces. The existence of the mini-atelier in classrooms also served to connect the classroom to the atelier and the atelierista, a reminder that the classroom is a place of investigation, aesthetics, and empathy.

Lastly, a very large basement space in the school building became its own toddler-parent atelier each Friday morning. The space was transformed by the two teachers and the facility manager (an atelierista in his own right!). Lighting, varied elevations, colors, and textures were part of an overall softness (Ceppi & Zini, 1998) and intrigue created in this atelier for 2-year-old children and their families. On other mornings, the basement space became an atelier for music and movement, sometimes including an overhead projector, a large projector screen, scarves, branches and leaves, and musical instruments.

In the case of each of our atelier spaces, we learned that offering time to teachers to play in the spaces, to talk with one another in advance of the work and share documentation during the work, and to have access to research on the topics related to each atelier (often discovered and shared by the atelieristi and pedagogista) were essential elements in eliciting the meaning of the work with the children. Another worthwhile part of the teachers’ preparation was field trips to local museums before the start of the school year.

For example, in gathering knowledge and seeking inspiration to prepare for potential investigations into animal homes, teachers, atelieristi, and the pedagogista together visited the Natural History Museum and took workshops in weaving with natural materials.
Parallel to the creation of numerous atelier identities in spaces throughout the school was the addition of multiple atelieristi. According to Vecchi (2010), the presence of the atelieristi serves to promote the relationship between the expressive and the rational-cognitive elements in learning. At our school, the initial presence of one part-time atelierista was gradually expanded to the presence of three full-time atelieristi and two part-time atelieristi, including one working primarily in the workshop and another musical atelierista working mostly with 5-year-old children.

Much like the initial development of rooms into specific play spaces that became ateliers, the initial hiring of additional atelieristi did not necessarily begin with a clear intention. Rather, in the interview process for other teaching positions, the director/pedagogista discovered educators with special talents in the arts. The value of their contributions soon became clear through the quality and quantity of work generated with the children related to their particular attitudes, creativity, knowledge, and skills, and their impact on the educational community.

The evolution of the organization of adults and children together in the multiple ateliers throughout the school included the “liberation” or “rescuing” of classroom teachers from always working in classrooms (Gandini, 2015). As described previously, and not without difficulties along the way, classroom teachers, too, worked in the atelier spaces, nurturing their own creativity and personal interests and abilities—learning next to the children and collaborating with colleagues to develop the curriculum. And, atelieristi sometimes worked in classrooms as well as in the atelier—while also suggesting strategies and materials for use in the other ateliers. The atelieristi learned from the teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and ex-
perience as well as their strong relationships with the children and families. The possibilities for frequent and rich collaboration between the atelieristi and the classroom teachers have grown stronger each year in spite of (and because of) the challenges encountered in the various atelier settings, substantiating Malaguzzi’s belief that uncertainty is a condition for growth and learning.

Thinking Like an Atelierista

Although we did not come close to achieving those impossible ideals, still the atelier has always repaid us. It has, as desired, proved to be subversive—generating complexity and new tools of thought. It has allowed rich combinations and creative possibilities among the different (symbolic) languages of children. –Loris Malaguzzi (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012, p. 49)

The complex identities of the atelier spaces demand that the classroom teachers also explore more complex identities. Working not only in the classroom, but also in the ateliers of taste, construction, living organisms, and story-play as well as in the outdoor ateliers, teachers have to apply an attitude of research particular to each unique setting. This process requires knowledge-seeking in each area as well as an openness to the relationships between the spaces and the investigations throughout the school.

In these multiple ateliers, teachers and atelieristi integrate their passions—language, storytelling, math, science, art—operating creatively, sharing a sense of play with children, intertwining their own expertise. Different areas of expertise come from different backgrounds; like weaving two distinct sets of threads, the warp and the heft, teachers and atelieristi interlace their different backgrounds, sometimes facing difficulties, resistance, and frustration in the process.

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–Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi

Atelieristi and children
In many educational systems, originality and creativity are not recognized as important in the field. As a result, teachers find themselves trapped in a standard way of doing things and sometimes they do not recognize their potential creativity. On the other hand, the atelieristi, with a background in the arts, are accustomed to operating with creative thinking. They realize that it takes time to appreciate the nature and the reward of creative work.

The influence of creative processes sparks creativity in other people, engaging with new ideas, provoking unexpected events, generating possibilities and alternatives, energizing the air through inspiration. Yet, discipline and persistence must also play a role in the creative process. Creativity requires the fusion of inspiration and technique. One of the roles of the atelierista is to combine materials with technique in a manner in which imagination finds a way of expression through the physical materials.

The atelier must support and ensure all the creative processes that can take place anywhere in the school, at home, and in the society. We should remember that there is no creativity in the child if there is no creativity in the adult. The competent and creative child exists if there is a competent and creative adult. –Carla Rinaldi (Gandini, 2005, p. 172)

The mind-set of lifelong learning furthers the interest in being open to new ideas, materials, and concepts, promoting the discovery of new languages, and learning them in order to offer new possibilities to the children. Even if the learning opportunities are present at any time, the beginning of the scholastic year is an especially favorable time for us to dedicate ourselves to professional development. We take classes offered in our communities, or we search for specialists to come to our school, in addition to atelieristi creating engaging opportunities where materials are available to explore and techniques are offered to try. Having the time to explore and learn together has a particular value for awakening a collaborative spirit that can endure for the entire year of working together.

While it may be easy to understand the importance of collaboration for achieving goals that are not possible to achieve when we are divided, the truth is that when it comes to putting collaboration into practice, difficulties begin to arise. Looking back at our work through documentation, more reflections were generated and understandings of what worked and what could have worked better were clarified. Vecchi clearly explained that errors arise due to allotting inadequate time for discussion and understanding: “This kind of journey led to us improving teacher’s sensibilities and my own and also improved the educational work we did with the children” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 120).

During the collaborative process, there is a risk that the work will be held up because collaboration becomes the sole objective rather than collaborating on a common goal. While the process of collaboration is essential, reaching a shared goal is also a valuable outcome, supporting a sense of solidarity among adults and children.

Looking back at our work through documentation, more reflections were generated and understandings of what worked and what could have worked better were clarified.

–Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi

In the past few years, we have noticed that when the teacher and the atelierista worked together in the classroom, offering different experiences to the children toward a common goal, the situation created a positive and energizing spirit between children with inspiring outcomes. Sharing this positive energy built a clearer purpose between teacher and atelierista. Having a comprehensive vision and plan creates a culture where people feel what is important: living in the situation, teacher and atelierista figure out together how to move the exploration forward.

Documentation and the Whole School as an Atelier

The ongoing reciprocal listening to children (and to adults) through documentation provoked and guided the shaping of the multiple atelier spaces in the school. In addition to the daily moments made visible to the community through documentation, the sharing and analysis of the documentation of children’s conversations and experiences
while working in all of the spaces in the school made learning—and change—possible (Rinaldi, 2006). As we worked together to interpret photos, videos, notes, and recordings to generate possible next steps for investigations, we became more aware of the relevance and value of the environments in the school related to children’s and adults’ evolving interests and learning. Visibility of children’s interests and areas for growth suggested to the adults that modifications in the settings were necessary for sustained inspiration in particular directions of our work.

For example, in wondering with 4- and 5-year-old children about the very complex topic of time, one child commented, “The earth does the job.” Revisiting this profound theory and having observed and documented on many occasions the children’s love of natural materials, the proposal for the outdoor installation for the study of “change over time” was initiated. Further images of the children working outside to create the very large installation piece revealed the care and intention of some children and the joy and spontaneity of others—and the true beauty of the transformation in the materials between fall and late winter. Ultimately, the documentation of this investigation spawned an interest in the creation of the atelier of living organisms.

Fortunately, the school hallway, classrooms, and indoor and outdoor ateliers provided spaces for the sharing of the documentation of learning processes and for the display of beautiful and intriguing children’s work. The presence of the documentation offered ongoing opportunities for the community as a whole to reflect and revisit and to re-imagine.

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–Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi
A Story Behind “Storytelling and Puppets”

Observation is a key element to guide teachers, atelieristi, and pedagogisti to choose wisely what is significant for the children to explore. The work of “Storytelling and Puppets” began with an observation that the classroom teacher made of a few children who methodically drew a character from a popular cartoon. As children sometimes do, they redrew the same subject in a systematic way to achieve a better result, enjoying the process.

Some reflection on the children’s drawings and comments—and the wish to open the children’s minds beyond the commercial world of contemporary cartoons—prompted the educator team to develop a proposal for the children, inviting them to create their own character. Teachers and the atelierista also noticed that the cartoon character was made of different animal parts, giving the children a structure on which they could create their own characters. As a result, 16 diverse and eclectic characters were brought to life by the children.

Following the children’s signals, the work began through different areas of exploration. Each of the character drawings was attached to a stick and moved around by the children, facilitating the development of the character’s personality and becoming early plot lines for stories. Early attempts at animation were also introduced by the teachers in the construction of the thaumatrope, a visual trick that delighted the children and offered the possibility to create an animation.

The drawings were then enlarged and transformed into mechanical paper puppets, but the fragility and limitations of these props made the children declare that they needed “real” puppets. Sometimes teachers challenge the children, and other times children challenge the teachers, making the work more interesting.

The embryonic drawings were further developed—with careful research into the different animals’ parts—in a representational drawing. This work was followed by the creation of real puppets and the realization of a series of animations with little gags that included more than one character for each gag.

The collaboration between children intensified in all parts of the work: the preparation for the animations and the sewing of the puppets united all in the joy of “doing together.” As the puppets started to come alive, children operated them, moving the mouths as they were talking and interacting with each other. The children’s idea of creating a puppet show began to become a reality.

The classroom soon became an atelier where a crew of children was working to create a stage out of blocks, another group was painting paper and then gluing it to the collage backdrop, a different team was operating the puppets, another was sewing the puppets, and, finally, one group became an audience. This took a tremendous effort by the children and the teachers, but no one complained. The outcome was rewarding for all the participants, including the parents, who were amazed by the results, which motivated the work even more.

The puppet shows took place in the outdoor area of the school, on one side of the playhouse deck, with an audience of the children in the school. One class at a time, children performed with absolute confidence; naturally, they created movement or dance to the rhythm of the music chosen by them for their character, spontaneously interacting with the audience and answering their questions.
Following the puppet shows, the children revisited their original stories with the teacher; however, with the fresh, rich experience in mind, the children were no longer satisfied with their own individual stories and wanted to create new, collaborative stories. And, because of this deep and creative investigation, the popular cartoon character that the children drew initially was no longer at the center of attention, but was replaced by the characters created by the children with original names, personalities, and stories.
Ongoing Reflections and Challenges

At Palisades Preschool, we are seeking to develop an attitude of research, not only in a metaphorical sense but rather, in our practical experience, through the existence of multiple atelier spaces throughout the school, mini-atelier areas in classrooms, and outdoor studio experiences, and with multiple atelieristi working collaboratively with teachers. In small groups of three to five children and one or two adults, these spaces cultivate multidisciplinary investigation, dialogue, and collaboration, as well as skill with tools and techniques and the freedom to test ideas.

The creation of a school that included spaces dedicated to children’s research with materials, with one another, and with their teachers has served not only to encourage learning processes within that particular space, but also to spread an attitude of research throughout the school. The presence of the atelierista has offered a guarantee of children’s access to the hundred languages and complex settings for learning.

Challenges remain regarding the collaboration between the classroom teachers and the atelieristi, particularly as we welcome new teachers to our community. Taking time to communicate, reflect, and think together is very important to the work. The development of understandings related to the role of the atelierista in the work with the children in various settings, from classrooms to studio spaces, requires continuity of focus, intention, and revisiting. Materials workshops, reading and research, visiting other schools (and having educators visit our school), guidance from the pedagogista and from consulting Reggio educators and scholars all contribute to the construction of understandings about collaboration and the potential roles for classroom teachers in studio spaces. And, the day-to-day work together, above all, offers valuable opportunities for professional growth.

The creation of a school that included spaces dedicated to children’s research with materials, with one another, and with their teachers has served not only to encourage learning processes within that particular space, but also to spread an attitude of research throughout the school.

–Nancy Sadler and Valeria Vacchi
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Call for Proposals for the September 2019 Peer-Reviewed Issue of *Innovations*

About *Innovations*

*Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange* is a quarterly periodical published by the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) that focuses on the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. *Innovations* was developed in 1992 through an agreement with Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia educational project, and continues to be developed in solidarity with the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers, Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy; Reggio Children; and the Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Center Foundation.

The mission of *Innovations* is to provide an ongoing professional development resource that respectfully represents the values and educational principles of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia as well as those of educators in schools, centers, universities, and colleges in North America and beyond who are actively engaged in the study of the Reggio Emilia approach with children, colleagues, and families in their community.

An Annual Peer-Reviewed Issue of *Innovations*: Rationale and Description

In an effort to include more and diverse voices in an increasingly democratic dialogue among early childhood educators who are engaged in the study of the Reggio Emilia approach, *Innovations* will publish one peer-reviewed issue annually. This annual peer-reviewed issue will include articles that are meant to support collaboration among teachers by integrating reflection and analysis of the shared and reciprocal research and inquiry of teachers, children, and families. In addition, the peer-reviewed issue will include reflections related to each article, written by one of the consulting editors with the goal of inviting readers to relate to their own contexts what they have read and experienced as members of a collaborative. Our intention is to support the work of Reggio-inspired teachers in North America by thinking together through deeper and more complex analysis of and reflection on our own work and that of our colleagues.

The peer review process has been designed to reflect a shared view of learning as a process of individual and group construction and to support the learning processes of children and adults through educational documentation, which includes listening, observation, and interpretation. Our goal is to establish collaborative partnerships among educators, children, families, and community members for systems change and social justice that recognizes the rights of children to quality education.
Educational research and professional development are two of the principles of the educational project in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The role of educational research is described in the publication *Indications - Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia* as:

Shared research between children and adults is a priority practice of everyday life, an existential and ethical approach necessary for interpreting the complexity of the world, of phenomena, of systems of co-existence, and is a powerful instrument of renewal in education. ([Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010](#), pp. 11-12)

Carla Rinaldi elaborates the view of research as interpreted within the everyday life and experience with the children in her essay “Documentation and Research (1999)”: 

“In Reggio, we feel . . . a new concept of research, more contemporary or alive, can emerge if we legitimate the use of this term to describe the cognitive tension that is created whenever authentic learning and knowledge building take place. (2006, p. 101)


By cognitive tension, we mean the tendency toward or movement toward knowledge. All human beings have this very strong tendency toward discovering the world around them, right from the moment of birth. Due to this cognitive tension, research belongs to every human being. Each time an authentic process of learning and knowledge building occurs, cognitive tension takes shape. . . . Research is the epistemological basis of knowledge and the key element in the democracy of knowledge. (2016, p. 4)

Margini goes on to discuss the school’s responsibility to promote research and the democracy of knowledge:

The school promotes the democracy of knowledge and research when it becomes a place that is able to interact with children’s ways of building knowledge, when it is able to produce circularity among the minds of children and adults, when it activates productive cooperation, when it promotes divergent and pluralistic ways of seeing the world, and when it nurtures the attitude toward listening, relationships, and giving value to the different potentials of each individual. (2016, p. 5)

The principles of professional development and educational research are closely aligned and transactive. Professional development is seen as an ongoing process that is also part of the daily life in the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia, as *Indications* asserts:
Ongoing professional development is both the right and the duty of each individual and of the group and is included and taken into consideration in the work schedule and organized collectively in terms of its contents, forms, and the methods of participation of each individual. Professional development is given priority within the daily activity of the centres and schools through the reflective practices of observation and documentation, with weekly staff meetings being the primary occasion for in-depth study and sharing. (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, pp. 13-14)

Carla Rinaldi describes the relational aspect of professional development as well as its meaning in the Reggio Emilia educational project in “Teachers as Researchers: Formation and Professional Development in a School of Education (2001)”:

Learning is and can be a value if we are aware that learning—which is pursued by each individual in times and ways that cannot be programmed—is a “relational place” that makes us reflect on the meaning of education itself and search for new paths in educating and personal and professional development. In educational practice, this means being open to the complex, conflictual, and unpredictable nature of human learning, wherever it takes place, both inside and outside the institutional contexts that are directly involved in education. . . . So what, then, do we mean by professional development? It is simply learning: our job is to learn why we are teachers. It means keeping our distance from an overriding sense of balance, from that which has already been decided or is considered to be certain. It means staying close to the interweaving of objects and thoughts, of doing and reflecting, theory and practice, emotions and knowledge. (2006, p. 141)

Rinaldi qualifies the essential role of listening and the value of differences in the process of professional development:

In order to educate ourselves, we must try to understand the differences rather than wanting to cancel them. . . . This means “listening” to the differences . . . but also listening to and accepting the changes that take place within us, which are generated by our relationships, or better, by our interactions with others. It means letting go of any truths we consider to be absolute, being open to doubt and giving value to negotiation as a strategy of the possible. (2006, p. 140)

The relationship between educational research and professional development within the Reggio Emilia educational project is addressed explicitly in the Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-Toddler Centres and Preschools:

To encounter this natural complexity and creativity of living and building knowledge, the early childhood educational services are structured around: . . . An approach to knowledge involving research with others and the exchange of knowledge, centered on the learning of the child in the group and with the group rather than an approach based on transmission/teaching. . . . The weekly collegial staff development meetings, an interdisciplinary context that involves the presence of all the professionals involved in running the
school, [are] a systemic vision of complementary responsibilities in relationship. In the weekly meeting, the documentation of the educational experiences becomes the subject of professional development for all the personnel. (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2017, p. 17 & 19)

Carla Rinaldi further elaborates on the relationship between professional development and research in “Teachers as Researchers: Formation and Professional Development in a School of Education (2001)”:

In fact, personal and professional development, like education, should not be seen as static or unchangeable qualities, achieved once and for all, but rather as a process, an ongoing path that we follow from birth throughout our lives . . . Personal and professional development and education are something we construct ourselves in relation with others, based on values that are chosen, shared, and constructed together. It means living . . . in a permanent state of research. (2006, p. 137)

The editorial staff of Innovations sees value in exploring within our North American contexts the “concept of shared research between children and adults” as a “priority practice of everyday life” that is “necessary for interpreting the complexity of the world.” We believe that the Reggio educators’ concept of research is a “powerful instrument of renewal in education” and a “key element of the democracy of knowledge,” and we are inspired by the way in which the educators in Reggio Emilia have organized professional development as an ongoing system that sustains pedagogy. In addition, we view the process through which educational research among and with children and educators in Reggio Emilia develops over time through professional development as being of special interest to readers of Innovations. Therefore, we are interested in manuscripts from North American educators that focus on the topic of “Exploring the Relationship Between Educational Research and Professional Development.”

We believe that through professional development initiatives in Reggio Emilia and North America along with Reggio Children publications and Reggio-related resources such as The Hundred Languages of Children and the Innovations periodical, Reggio educators have prompted educators in North America to rethink how to sustain the growth of teachers through a permanent, relational system of professional development. We believe it would be a contribution to the field of early education to share research related to professional development systems that support educational research in North American schools, particularly those with a long history of study of the Reggio Emilia approach. Manuscripts should include citations and references to published work by Reggio educators and others that support the authors’ ideas and are accompanied by a layer of interpretation by the authors.
We are interested in manuscripts that focus on some of the following aspects of this topic:

• What processes and strategies has your school developed to support children and teachers as co-learners and researchers?

Probes:

» In what ways have you found that authentic processes of learning and knowledge-building contribute to cognitive tension and a concept of educational research that is a key element in the democracy of knowledge?

» How do teachers in your school interact with children’s ways of building knowledge?

» How have you found ways to cooperate productively with your colleagues and promote divergent ways of seeing the world?

» In what ways have the educators at your school been able to develop an attitude toward listening, relationships, and giving value to the different potentials of each individual?

• What systems and structures have been developed to support the concept of ongoing professional development as a priority in the daily life of the school through reflective practices of observation and documentation?

Probes:

» When the educators in your school or center began to study the Reggio Emilia approach, what forms of professional development did you find most valuable?

Reflecting on the processes you used, what would you have done differently?

» What regular and ongoing opportunities do teachers have for meeting together for in-depth study and sharing of the learning processes of the children and teachers?

» What systems have been put in place for these meetings to be organized collectively and constructed in relationship with others based on shared values?

» How has it been possible to create an atmosphere in which teachers share documentation with their colleagues, who are encouraged to offer critique in an atmosphere of trust that develops over time?

» What strategies are employed to support educators’ abilities to listen to colleagues?

» How have you been able to shift the focus of these meetings to the meaning-making and learning of the children in the group and with the group?

» In what ways do teachers share what they have learned at the end of these meetings?

» What collaborative experiences do teachers share when they have the opportunity to negotiate and try out the ideas of their colleagues?

» How are new teachers supported in integrating into the existing system of professional development in your school?

» How have you documented the effectiveness of your professional development systems?
How do the processes of observation, documentation, and interpretation support the educational research of the children and teachers as well as the professional development of the educators?

Probes:

» What are the teachers’ intentions for the use of documentation in your school?

» What is the relationship between documentation and the environment of your school?

» What strategies or protocols are used to study documentation? How is this process facilitated?

» How has documentation of the educational experiences in your school become the subject of professional development for the teachers?

Proposals for Manuscripts

Interested educators must submit a proposal for the manuscript they would like to submit to Judith Kaminsky [judy@reggioalliance.org] by October 1, 2018. Those submitting will receive responses regarding approval by October 31, 2018. Proposals must include:

• title and a (1–2 page) summary of the documentation, research, and inquiry of teachers, children, and families to be shared in the manuscript;

• which aspects of the topic listed above will be featured in the manuscript;

• a summary of the images (photographs and children’s representations) that will support the manuscript;

• information about the authors and school, university, or center and community that is the context of the manuscript; and

• a statement regarding whether the manuscript has been submitted or published elsewhere.
Guidelines and Requirements for Submitted Manuscripts

Those whose proposals are approved must submit their manuscript by December 31, 2018. When submitting a manuscript to Innovations, please follow the following formatting and submission guidelines:

- Write in an informal, conversational style rather than in an academic style, characteristic of university term papers. Manuscripts written in active voice rather than passive voice are preferred.
- Submit unformatted, double-spaced manuscript in an electronic Word file in 12-point type. Typical manuscript length is 3,000–4,000 words.
- Include the name of the author(s) as well as title, affiliation, and history of interest in the Reggio Emilia approach. In addition, each author is asked to submit a thumbnail photograph (head and shoulders, 1.25” wide x 1.5” high, 300 dpi in original JPG or TIF file).
- Support manuscript with photographs and drawings/representations. Photographs should be submitted in high-resolution images (8” x 10”, 100% @ 300 dpi in original JPG or TIF file). Drawings/representations should also be submitted electronically in JPG or TIF files. Authors must submit written permission for all photographs from parents or legal guardians. The NAREA Photographic Release form is available upon request.
- Provide accurate and complete information for references and resources formatted in APA style.

Peer-Review Process

Details of the September 2019 issue peer-review process will be published in the September 2018 issue of Innovations and posted on the NAREA website.
REFERENCES


At a time when children’s rights at the U.S. border were the topic of international news, Boston, with its long history of welcoming both local and immigrant families, seemed uniquely poised to host the 2018 NAREA Summer Conference, “Crossing Cultures, Contexts, and Communities,” and “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. Boston hosted Reggio Emilia’s original traveling exhibit, “The Hundred Languages of Children,” in 1989, two years after its debut in San Francisco. Boston, like many network communities within North America, benefited from the volunteerism and dedication of persons who envision an optimistic future for children and adults and work to bring it about. And, Boston, like all of North America, benefits immensely from the constant collegiality and perseverance of many representatives of Reggio Emilia, Italy, who maintain a dialogue with North American educators and advocates. It seemed fitting that against this backdrop, the conference was held in the Boston University Law Auditorium where beautiful Elbert Weinberg sculptures representing truth and justice greeted us each morning.
Over the course of three days, 400 participants representing 30 U.S. states (and Washington, DC), four Canadian provinces (Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec), and eight countries (Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and the United States) came together to engage in dialogue and thinking about education as a common good. The featured speakers from Reggio Emilia, Tiziana Filippini and Barbara Quinti, along with their interpreter, Jane McCall, spent each day sharing presentations, offering historical and contemporary examples of work from the Reggio Emilia educational project, and exchanging with participants, while inviting participants to deeply consider both theory and practice together.

NAREA board co-chairs, Barbara Acton and Margie Cooper, launched the conference with a warm welcome to participants. Representatives of the Boston host community, Kelly Pellagrini and Megina Baker, added their welcome and shared some history of the decades-long collegial work in Boston, as well as the community’s projections for the duration of the exhibit’s presence in Boston. NAREA board members, David Fernie and Brenda Fyfe, reflected on the 10-year history of the exhibit project, the many collaborations with Reggio Emilia over those years, and the impact that 22 communities have made by welcoming “The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in their communities.

In the first plenary session, Tiziana Filippini, via video conferencing, set the context for our days together by sharing the first identity principle of the Reggio Emilia municipal education project:
Education is the right of all, of all children, and as such is a responsibility of the community. Education is an opportunity for the growth and emancipation of the individual and the collective; it is a resource for gaining knowledge and for learning to live together; it is a meeting place where freedom, democracy, and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted. Within the plurality of cultural, ideological, political, and religious conceptions, education lives by listening, dialogue, and participation; it is based on mutual respect, valuing the diversity of identities, competencies, and knowledge held by each individual and is therefore qualified as secular and open to exchange and cooperation. (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, p. 7)

Throughout the morning session, entitled “Reggio Emilia, Educating Community: The Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools as Laboratories of Citizenship,” Tiziana, from her many years participating within the pedagogical coordinating team of Reggio Emilia’s infant-toddler centers and preschools, discussed values, principles, and theories, while Barbara, an atelierista for 22 years, elaborated by sharing in-depth stories of experiences generated by children and adults. The two perspectives offered possibilities for observing the interplay between vision and research, theory and practice. Insights were further enabled through questions and dialogue between participants and speakers.

The first morning’s discussion drew from the experiences of the 2017-2018 school year through which infant-toddler centers and preschools not only recognized the beginning of the new three-year term of the community management vehicle, the City Childhood Councils, but also the overarching research of the year, “Piazza Piazze.” As Tiziana narrated the preferred stance of the infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia—as “always trying to update ourselves and to keep the school a live organism, not something getting old or separated, but able to live in the context lived in by our children,” it was interesting to reflect
on how determined the municipality and the system of education of the municipality is in facing contemporary issues and opportunities within society.

The message from the pedagogical coordinating team that greeted the children, families, and educators at the start of the 2017-2018 school year was shared:

A new school year is beginning and the greatest thing we can wish for each other is that, despite everything, schools all over the world continue to preside over democracy and participation as places of rights which are open to all—children and adults. On Monday morning, we will open the doors of the infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia with this message, a declaration, which is also a constant commitment to welcoming, to plurality, to free thinking: “Wherever you come from, you are not a stranger.”

Whereas Tiziana shared the backdrop and overall considerations within the Piazza Piazz project research, Barbara continued by sharing specific experiences of children and adults of the Bruno Munari preschool connected to this research. Mentioning that the Bruno Munari preschool is the only preschool without an interior piazza or square, Barbara captured the attention of the participants as she talked about the garden of the preschool and the connections children and adults of the school enjoy in the garden. Barbara commented that “these themes are dear to our hearts, and we will work for a long time with the values and concepts connected to them. Context is never indifferent or neutral. Context often gives us the premise for the work we are doing.”

As Tiziana narrated the preferred stance of the infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia—as “always trying to update ourselves and to keep the school a live organism, not something getting old or separated, but able to live in the context lived in by our children,” it was interesting to reflect on how determined the municipality and the system of education of the municipality is in facing contemporary issues and opportunities within society.

–NAREA Conference Team
The afternoon continued with Barbara sharing a presentation entitled “Crossing Boundaries: Nature and Digital.” The research of children and adults examined nature more closely at a time when children and adults are more and more immersed in the digital world. Stressed was the notion that the aim was not to look at nature versus digital but rather nature and digital.

Prior to the plenary session of the second conference day, NAREA was proud to honor the life and contributions of the late education leader, Carolyn Pope Edwards. Lella Gandini and Judy Kaminsky fondly recalled Carolyn’s contributions to education, including her years as a founding Innovations editorial board member and her receipt of the NAREA Lifetime Achievement Award. During her comments, Lella said:

What is very important is that Carolyn Edwards has been a very strong supporter of the Reggio Emilia approach. She brought “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in 1988. But the first meeting that she had with Loris Malaguzzi was in 1983. . . . The book The Hundred Languages of Children, which Carolyn, George Forman, and I collaborated in preparing, was recognized by Reggio Children as an important contribution and included many chapters by Reggio educators. . . . Carolyn’s voice, her smile, and her work will remain inside me and many other students, educators, and colleagues.

Following her comments on Carolyn’s essential role on the Innovations editorial board, Judy announced that after 5 years on the editorial board and 21 years as associate editor of Innovations, Lella will now assume the role of associate editor emeritus, continuing to offer her perspective and wisdom on the evolution of the periodical. Following an invitation to express their appreciation for her contribution to Innovations and the Reggio-inspired community in North America, the conference participants surprised and delighted Lella by giving her a standing ovation.

As Tiziana rejoined via live video from Reggio Emilia, the second morning delved into responding to written questions offered by participants throughout the first day. Tiziana began by commenting that the “processes of pedagogical documentation, together with the theory of hundred languages, could be the big contribution of the Reggio Emilia approach to education in the world.” Continuing, in
response to a question regarding the origins of research topics, Tiziana reflected on the rhythm of a new school year:

When the school year starts in September, every center is welcoming new children and families and the ones who are returning. The pedagogisti of the coordinating team are working side by side with the staff of the centers they are coordinating—trying to find out what could be the general, overarching themes of the year. . . . Gathered together to start working on some hypotheses and ideas to characterize that school year, we ask: Who are we? What would we like to improve? What is important to update? Or, we take inspiration from what is happening in the world. What is happening in Italy? What is the debate about immigrants? What is the debate about cultural, ethical, and social differences? This year, we thought that the idea of Piazza Piazze [a focus of the 2017-2018 school year discussed in depth by Tiziana and Barbara on the first day] could be something good to work on because it would allow us to support the idea of dialogue, of coming together to contrast the tendency to separate and isolate that is so strong in our society these days.

From Tiziana’s discussion of Reggio Emilia’s theoretical context, particularly related to processes of choosing topics of research, Barbara continued by sharing experiences that contributed to the mini exhibit, “The Magic of Paper.” Through these experiences with paper, Barbara reflected, We were in the realm of the teachers’ professional development—trying to raise our own level of culture vis-à-vis a topic we think we are going to work on with the children—we are trying to equip ourselves with thinking and ideas before we work with the children, trying to raise our own awareness of various issues. In Italian, we call professional growth formazione or formation, forming yourself, becoming. You may call it a formative experience. Very often, for us, formazione is actual experience and not sitting and listening to a lecture. Loris Malaguzzi used to say, “Your hands think.” So we have always worked with this idea that children’s and adults’ hands construct thought—the hands and the mind together. The hands feed the mind with thinking.

Sharing images and narratives of the children and adults as they built up an experience later titled, “Migration of Color,” Barbara offered insights into the style lived within the infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, which are always tethered within processes of progettazione. The starting point of this particular research was a desire to “kidnap
the paper and take it to a place where we could see how enchanting it is.” The thinking generated during the morning session stimulated participants’ engagement in the afternoon *atelier* sessions.

Interrelated concepts, “The Hundred Languages/Relationships/Understanding/Communities,” served as a springboard for the *atelier* sessions, which gave participants an opportunity to think with their hands. *Atelier* facilitators—Julie Bernson, Emma Boettcher, Katie Higgins-White, Amanda McCracken, Marla McLean, Kendra PeloJoaquin, Marina Seevak, Nora Thompson, and Maggie Van Camp—along with a host of volunteers, crafted contexts on the following: “Mapping Our Journeys and Meeting Others at Crossroads,” “The Stories We Weave Together,” “Weaving as an Act of Love,” “Creating Cross-Cultural Conversations Through the World Cup,” and “Creating Dialogue through Movement and Graphic Expression.”

Concurrent with *ateliers*, Lella Gandini and Karyn Callaghan, NAREA board members, offered a session entitled “Reflections on Dialogues with Loris Malaguzzi, A Living Legacy.” It was an opportunity for Lella to share many insights, memories, and reflections from her decades-long role as liaison for the dissemination of the Reggio Emilia approach. Those gathered took a special opportunity to celebrate and honor Lella’s birthday!

The final conference day began again with Tiziana responding to written questions from participants, such as “What are you documenting and why?” to which she commented,

“I imagine that many of you are very curious about how our teachers become such good observers, and even more, so able to document in such a thoughtful way. But, I assure you that it is not something that happens quickly; it is something we never give up, no matter the subject we choose as the main project to work on in a school year. We still pay a lot of attention to how we are going to observe, how we are going to increase our competence in interpreting what we have observed and analyzing what we are collecting, how we can use this analysis and reflection to move forward in order for our project to continue to evolve.

If we believe that our profession mainly has to do with what happens in the interaction—the interaction that the educational context we offer to the children provides—you can understand that in talking about interaction and relationship, we are always dealing with something that we can prefigure, that we can think about ahead of time. But we will...
never be sure until the moment in which the interaction takes place. So, our job is not that of transmitting; it is not that of working with a boxed curriculum, but it is a way to be side-by-side with the children, a job that will never really get to the point in which you are sure that you know exactly what you want to do or what you are able to do, because the relationship, the interaction may always surprise you, may always bring you the unexpected. So, you must be ready to be flexible, to have a lot of hypotheses, to handle the situation.

Steeped in the centrality of education as relationship, Barbara shared a final offering from the Bruno Munari preschool in a presentation titled “The Hundred Languages of Children: Between Research, Poetry, and Beauty,” which included documentation of the project “The Hospital, a Place in the City.” Barbara’s final comments summarized for us all the mission and vision of our collective work,

We have something we can share. We can share the point of view of the children. We can credit the children who have something to tell about places in which they live. This is a school that has a strong identity—a school that really believes it is an important place. It is not just a place in which we take care of the children while the parents are working. We are seriously welcoming the right of the children to be citizens, to be a person, to be part of our community, in the dialogue with the city. By sharing this, we can build the identity of the city. The childhood culture can be very helpful to the community!

Barbara’s words seemed even more relevant as we concluded the conference by going out into the Boston community for the school tours. Participants used the “T” subway and bus system to navigate the Boston area to visit schools that had graciously offered to share their contexts and their work with us. Advent School, Charlestown Nursery School, Newtowne School, Peabody Terrace Children’s Center, Radcliffe Child Care Center, and Early Childhood Learning Lab at Boston University all welcomed dialogue and exchange with educators from the conference.

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network; the children, families, and educators of the Boston area schools who opened their doors and hearts to us; and especially to Tizana, Barbara, and Jane who spent three days with us in professional dialogue, exchange, and development.
Innovations in Early Education

The passion, and most importantly, for me, the clarity of delivery of the philosophy and practice of the Reggio teachers—the presentations supported and emphasized this. I am very much more clear on the process and practice of working with children in exploring and researching a topic.

It was amazing to have that many educators in one room who care about the importance of early childhood education.

We feel the following responses from several participants are reflective of the views expressed by those responding to the conference evaluation:

Thank you for a conference well organized. My participants felt inspired, recharged, respected, and welcome. The conference provided a venue to connect theory and practice as well as the tangible possibility of what’s possible in the U.S.A.

I continue to think about the role of the teacher as shared by Tiziana and Barbara. They carefully wove together the various responsibilities that the teacher has in each of their presentations. They were able to show the intentionality of the teachers and the specific ways that teachers plan for multiple possibilities in the classrooms.

—14th NAREA Summer Conference participant

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Tiziana was wonderfully inspiring. The quality and excellence in our center’s educational practices can only improve after such meaningful presentations. My entire staff advances by taking part in these conferences. I appreciate everything each of you do to make these special events possible!

The atelier sessions this summer were fantastic. I wish it would have been possible to participate in more than one.

I believe the deep discussions that evolved around documentation and project work were most helpful, especially if you had been exploring these areas for a period of time. It informed those of us that are very familiar with the process—like an advanced study. Tiziana’s discussions, in particular, were most informative on a theoretical side, while Barbara’s additions and presentations were very informative and thought-provoking.

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REFERENCE


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Reflections on the 14th NAREA Summer Conference Ateliers

Boston is one of the world’s most culturally diverse cities, with more than a quarter of the residents born abroad and a population that speaks more than 140 different languages (skywalkboston.com). The Boston host community chose “Crossing Cultures, Contexts, and Communities” as its professional development focus in connection with the presence of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. Because of Boston’s cultural diversity and in an effort to make a strong connection with the community’s professional development emphasis, which was also the title of the summer conference, the ateliers during the conference focused on “The Hundred Languages/Relationships/Understanding/Communities.”

Indications – Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia includes this statement about participation:

Participation gives value to and makes use of the hundred languages of children and of human beings, viewed as a plurality of points of view and of cultures; it requires and fosters forms of cultural mediation and develops in a multiplicity of occasions and initiatives for constructing dialogue and the sense of belonging to a community. (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, p. 11)

In “Social Justice and Multicultural Aspects in the Reggio Emilia Experience,” Deanna Margini, pedagogista, writes:

We want to conceive of welcoming as an experience, as an expression of intelligence and active involvement that includes the concepts of recognition and reciprocity… It is essential that we take into consideration the points of view expressed by those who are welcoming and those who are welcomed because it’s never a one-way relationship but always reciprocal…. the welcoming and integration of all cultures in the school must involve a rethinking of school as an agent of school change.

Within each atelier session, facilitators created opportunities to interact with and learn about people from other cultures and communities, in an effort to better understand different points of view and experiences. The intention was to enable participants to use materials and media as languages for expression and representation through collaborative experiences.

The ateliers took place on the second day of the conference at the Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development, Fenway Campus. “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit is located on another part of this campus through November 15, 2018. In this “Voices” column, the atelier facilitators share their reflections on the experience of the ateliers following summaries of each atelier, which were included in the conference folder.
Atelier 1: Mapping Our Journeys and Meeting Others at the Crossroads

Where are you from and where have you landed? Atelier participants will have the opportunity to use loose parts and other materials to represent their personal journey. Using inspiration from poetry, collage art, and self-reflection, we will think about how materials can represent memories, places, and experiences. Once participants have mapped their paths, there will be the possibility of identifying similarities and differences in the way we have chosen to represent our journeys.

Reflections from Amanda McCracken, facilitator

Amanda McCracken is a teacher in the 4-to 5-year-old classroom at the Newtowne School in Cambridge, MA. She works closely with the school’s atelierista in the recyclable materials atelier, empowering children by building familiarity with materials that support their abilities to bring their visions to life.

Marina Seevak and I worked together to organize an atelier session for the 2018 NAREA Summer Conference. Marina runs a nonprofit organization, the Beautiful Stuff Project, where she provides recycled materials and programming to teachers, students, and families in the Greater Boston area. I am always inspired by her cozy storefront, full of unique treasures sorted into their respective bins, some of which find their way to the shelves of the magical atelier at Newtowne School where I work. In our own contexts, we have both witnessed the way in which these collections of beautiful things provide opportunities for creating and engaging in unexpected and meaningful ways. We felt confident that with the use of loose parts, atelier participants would be able to tinker and experiment and perhaps reflect more deeply on their paths as educators while connecting with fellow participants.

We gathered on a hot summer day in a university classroom to discuss and experience the potential inherent in recycled materials to become “beautiful stuff,” using the prompt of mapping our journeys as a framework for our play. After offering inspiration and context to encourage thinking more deeply about how
materials might represent feelings, character traits, or memories, we challenged each participant to consider the journey they took to becoming an educator. The group was then asked to use loose parts to create a visual map, thinking about moments big and small that might have guided or redirected them and how an object could symbolize those turning points. As we dispersed to a larger common area to begin our mapping, participants gathered materials from long tables of boxes and baskets and selected workspaces, some settling on the floor or at tables covered in butcher paper.

Many educators got right to work, chatting and laughing with those around them as they became familiar with the materials. Others took time to write and reflect, organizing their thoughts before crafting their map. Regardless of the approach taken, various three-dimensional paths, designs, and creations began to form throughout the space. The maps were varied, beautiful, and—presumably—full of meaning, which could only be decoded by the mapmakers themselves. No prompting was needed as conversations began and connections developed when participants began sharing the stories behind their representational maps with those working nearby.

As a group, we returned to the classroom to view the video *Piazza Piazze*, which features the children, teachers, atelieristi, and pedagogisti of Reggio Emilia’s municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools. This video depicts children venturing out into the square near their school, musing about the meaning of *piazza*, and interacting with the people they meet along the way. The children also reflect on the *piazza* or gathering space in their own school, one child saying, “The square is a place for getting closer . . . at our school; it’s very important for encounterment.” Another child says, “In the square, people talk to each other; they tell each other things; they’re not strangers any longer.” Already, we had observed participants encountering one another and strangers becoming acquaintances, but we asked that they revisit the maps just once more to speak intentionally with neighbors about their work. We wondered what points of commonality and difference could be found in our maps and how we could perhaps reroute them to form a conceptual *piazza* of “encounterment.” The creative group embraced the challenge and returned to the common area.
Right away, participants began openly sharing and guiding others through the meaning of their map—the moments of enlightenment, difficult challenges, and experiences from childhood that led them to becoming teachers, directors, social workers, and educators in their own settings. Each group found a different way to connect, some rebuilding their maps entirely, or moving one pivotal object into the center of the table, or simply conversing and relating.

Later, we reflected all together, many participants recounting that they had initially felt overwhelmed by the challenge and by materials that seemed meaningless. They agreed to begin emulating one another’s strategies, began feeling inspired by those around them, and, soon enough, their work came together beautifully in diverse ways. Another participant admitted, laughing, that by the end of the afternoon her table was crying over the meaning of a rock and that strangers from all over North America and the world had made emotional connections. This seems a testament to the possibilities of materials and media as languages but, even more so, to the natural capacity of educators to listen and connect with others. Perhaps we underestimated how personal and close to the heart our journeys related to Reggio-inspired education would feel when shared with others.

Atelier 2a: The Stories We Weave Together

“I see textile as a forbearer of linguistic traditions,” says fiber artist and weaver Francesca Capone. “Throughout history, textiles have been used as a place for recording information and for telling stories” (Salomone, 2016). Drawing on this rich tradition, atelier participants will explore the connections and intersections of their individual histories and cultural identities through the tactile process of weaving. Together, we will weave a tapestry that speaks to metaphorical trails that have led us to this place and that bind us together, creating a new shared story from fragments of fabric, string, and nature.

Reflections from Katie Higgins-White and Maggie Van Camp, facilitators

Katie Higgins-White has been the atelierista at the Peabody Terrace Children’s Center in Cambridge, MA, for 7 years, where she works with children and teachers in the studio and in the classrooms. Katie has a B.A in Art and French Literature and an M.Ed. in Arts in Education. Maggie Van Camp is currently a NAEYC accreditation mentor for Boston Public Schools, where she has also taught kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, and Sheltered English Immersion for Boston Public Schools. Maggie is working on a doctoral degree in play, child development, and sociology of public schools in contemporary society.
Crossing Cultures, Contexts, and Communities—what a rich, broad, and (truth be told) daunting topic on which to construct an experience with materials! The very process of arriving at our specific atelier within this subject was not unlike a weaving itself—full of back-and-forth, twists, knots, and varying strands. We began from the idea of metaphorical trails that run across the three “Cs” of the conference title, which we hoped to help participants identify through the work and play of our atelier process. The question then became: What materials, techniques, or experiences would best bring these to the fore? How could we encourage teachers to share their stories with one another and, thereby, identify the commonalities that linked them?

Once we had identified these questions, weaving stood out to us as a natural artistic language for our atelier, because it lends itself so well to storytelling. As in many forms of textile and fiber art, the materials that are used in creating weavings often hold meaning in and of themselves and can communicate deep historical and familial ties—a scrap of fabric may, in fact, come from a treasured blanket from childhood and a piece of wool may match a scarf that was knit as a gift. In this way, personal stories are often woven into the fabric of a weaving from the very beginning. Beyond this, the nature of weaving itself echoes the process of storytelling, with each thread acting as a potential character, plot twist, or theme within the “narrative” of the work. Herein lay our opportunity to bring these metaphorical trails—unseen, yet powerful connections weaving in and out of the personal and professional lives of our participants—into the tangible world.

It was important for us to offer these educators an experience that brought them together and provoked collaboration and communication, hopefully among people who had never met before, in order to connect not only to the community-based nature of the work of the schools of Reggio Emilia, but also to the collaborative processes we often try to facilitate for children.

–Katie Higgins-White and Maggie Van Camp

It was important for us to offer these educators an experience that brought them together and provoked collaboration and communication, hopefully among people who had never met before, in order to connect not only to the community-based nature of the work of the schools of Reggio Emilia, but also to the collaborative processes we often try to facilitate for children. As a result, we decided to begin with small group weavings on simple cardboard looms, with each group working together to fill their loom while discussing the materials they chose and the memories, thoughts, and ideas these materials conjured up for them. We also planned an open-ended outdoor weaving installation, where participants could feel free to add, subtract, and interact with each other once their group weavings were finished. Each of us called upon something different to help frame these experiences for people and connect them to a larger context and tradition of art and storytelling. Katie brought in
the work of the fiber artist, Francesca Capone, who created a dictionary for her weavings and asked not only other writers, but all of her viewers to literally “translate” her weavings in their own way, using this lexicon. This brought to the fore the idea of weaving as storytelling, as well as an interplay between multiple viewpoints, with each fragment playing a part in the creation of the whole. It also connected to the idea of the hundred languages of children, highlighting the unique ways in which the vocabulary of weaving can be used to communicate powerful ideas.

After reflecting on the construct of “The Wonder of Learning” exhibit and the topic of the 2018 NAREA Summer Conference, Maggie was reminded of the Fine Arts movement relational aesthetics that she had learned about as a graduate student at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Relational aesthetics is a fine arts practice made famous by Nicolas Bourriaud in 1996: “a set of artistic practices that take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.” This sense of co-constructed relationships connects almost seamlessly to principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, in which children are active participants in developing the trajectory of their learning. In relational aesthetics, the artist sets the stage by beginning an art installation, and the participants can interact with the work by adding to, taking away from, or somehow impacting the end product. The goal of relational aesthetics is to create a co-constructed social circumstance, which is what we often find when group learning is carefully documented and reflected upon. In the spirit of Reggio, we use observations and documentation to fuel future inquiry, much like the artists practicing relational aesthetics. The pedagogista is interacting, interpreting, and reflecting on the experiences of the group. Maggie and Katie found they had this exact experience as facilitators of the weaving atelier. The participants were interacting and building their own weaving, both individually, in a small group, and in a large group in a co-constructed, social way.

As soon as the participants formed their groups and began to weave together, it was clear that they had truly embraced the experience, although no two groups had the same approach. At the end of our atelier, each group shared a bit about their process and what ended up being embodied in their weavings. There were a variety of starting points: some groups dumped out the materials and began sifting through them right away, while others took a moment to discuss the natural materials they collected before beginning. In one group, each individual chose a material that spoke to a memory of their childhood right from the start, while other groups simply began weaving with...
materials they found beautiful and compelling, finding meaning in them as they went. One group talked about the give-and-take they experienced as their work evolved and the necessity of reaching a consensus on each decision. For many groups, shared understandings and themes arose—a love of nature and connection to the earth; a reflection on the endings and beginnings, loss and discovery that took place in their lives; the time and care they strive to give to the children they teach. And throughout it all was a sense of individuals coming together and becoming more than the sum of their individual parts. As one group put it, “Independent became interdependent.”

In the words of the educators of Reggio Emilia, “Participation gives value to and makes use of the hundred languages of children and of human beings, viewed as a plurality of points of view and cultures” (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, p. 11). It was this form of participation that was at work within our atelier, facilitated by the language of weaving and the willingness of the participants to open themselves up to one another throughout the process. As one of our participants reflected at the end, “What art does, especially in a group, is bring about collaboration, allowing us to communicate with each other and work through differences.”

**Atelier 2b: Weaving as an Act of Listening. Weaving as an Act of Love.**

This atelier session will feature the performance/poetry of Letta Neely, a Boston poet, playwright, and activist, who was named one of The Root’s top 30 black performance poets in 2012. Cornell West said, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” Through materials and metaphor, we will engage in making ripples of change within ourselves and our teaching.

**Reflections from Marla McLean, facilitator**

*Marla McLean is a Reggio-inspired artist/educator, who has been working for the past 21 years as an atelierista at School Within School in Washington, DC. Marla’s education includes a master’s degree in Studio Art from NYU, a B.A. in Social Art and Education from Goddard College, and an associate degree in Photography and Multimedia from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.*

On the last day of the 2018 NAREA Summer Conference, I skipped lunch to join Together and Free, a protest on the Boston Commons demanding an end to family separations at the American border. I was struck by a sign that said, “If you wouldn’t cross a border to save your child from violence and starvation, that says a lot about you.” Today in the newspaper are images of protest signs. One features a black and white photo of a child and the text: I AM A CHILD (a reference to the humanizing iconic protest signs of black sanitation workers in 1968 with a photo of an African American man and the text: I AM A MAN).

Tiziana Filipinini said during this conference, “Pedagogy, like all human science, is remade, reconstructed, and updated based on new conditions of the time—a declaration that is a constant recommitment to free thinking, to the beauty of all of us being interdependent. Wherever you come from, you are not a stranger.” I facilitated the atelier session, “Weaving as an Act of Listening. Weaving as an Act of Love.” with local poet, educator, and activist Letta Neely. I chose to intentionally address the “conditions of the time” through the one hundred languages with a group of Reggio-inspired educators, poetry, hula hoops, and a plethora of materials.
Educators, especially in early childhood, hold a societal power that is often invisible. Politicians come and go, but we, every year, welcome families and children into our environments immersed in the ever-changing conditions of our time. To name a few, fear of the “other,” which includes separating young migrant children from their families at the U.S. border, systemic racism which embeds itself as white supremacy culture in our government and institutions, as well as the denigration of our planet and the privatization of education. We have the power to not only create loving and intimate environments that are conducive to developing interdependent relationships with families; we are also the change agents. We are called to this work with young children because it is necessary, it is good, and it is urgent. Similar to the founding of the primary schools in Reggio Emilia after World War II as an antidote to the destruction of fascism and hatred, we are called now to act.

Poet Letta Neely began this interactive workshop of over 50 participants by reciting her poem, “What Water Breaking Feels Like.” Here are some excerpts:

I want them to know that parenthood demands quick reflexes to grab a bucket for projectile vomit or for catching you when you’re about to fall back off the swing. I want them to know that we can’t catch you all the time, but we know that ice or cherry popsicles for your busted lip makes you smile sooner than anything else.

I want them to know that letting a 5-year-old dance and sing, “Que sera, sera” loudly, repetitively, and demanding applause each time—all during the football game—is a lesson in patience and letting go to laughter.

I want them to know that most nights before I finally crash from exhaustion, I climb the steps of your bunk bed, stick a damp finger under your nose—that I don’t relax fully until I feel your breathing on my finger.

I guess I still feel like I need to carry credentials, produce them on demand to be validated by other people. But I don’t want your walk in this world to be laden with insecurities as your baggage. It is not your birthright. I know we can’t keep your luggage light forever, but the goddess and all the knots in my back can testify to how hard we try.

The participants then turned and talked to each other while I began to engage them with the slides I had prepared—images from documentation of my atelier at School Within School, a District of Columbia Reggio-inspired public school, which has been my home for 22 years. We viewed provocations that encouraged and urged participants to consider developing an atelier experience in their own context. The atelier gives us the vehicle to make expression an everyday habit. The atelier gives us the vehicle to make listening an everyday habit. Through materials and metaphor, we are able to engage in making ripples of change within ourselves and our teaching. The atelier is love made public; it is a place of deep learning and healing for children, their caretakers, and the school community. The by-product is a rich environment of joy and well-being.

The atelier gives us the vehicle to make expression an everyday habit. The atelier gives us the vehicle to make listening an everyday habit. Through materials and metaphor, we are able to engage in making ripples of change within ourselves and our teaching.

–Marla McLean
To pass forward the provocation experience, Letta facilitated an emotional, personal, non-judgmental, written response to prompts created to take participants through this journey:

1. A time (at any age) you felt seen, heard, understood, and loved or a time you felt unseen, misunderstood, and unloved

2. An action/intention you will set for creating your environment as a loving, listening, and intimate environment

3. A wish for a migrating child separated from his/her family at the U.S. border

Participants were asked to go outside and sit with their personal responses and, when ready, to edit, change, rephrase, or copy these feelings onto cloth strips. Outside, seemingly floating circles, warped with cotton thread blew in the wind. The light through the leaves made one aware of the living earth. Bags of beautiful stuff (plastics, fabrics, fibers, nature) of varying textures, colors, and translucency became the language of processing and expressing the participants’ responses publicly. With two to three people working collaboratively on these cyphers/hoops of expression, conversations both verbal and non-verbal moved, changed, and morphed into emotion and conviction—conversation made visible.

There is a word in the Japanese language that conveys what happened under the trees, on floating hoops, during this atelier session—yuugen. Yuugen is an awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses that are too mysterious and deep for words. After Kate
Spade and Anthony Bourdain committed suicide recently, there was such an overwhelming sense of: Why? What is missing and so depleted in our society that makes people feel so disconnected that they take their own lives?

This is what Loris Malaguzzi wished to create with atelieristi and ateliers in schools, a place with deep and varied possibilities of connection and interconnection. Loris Malaguzzi said, “We need to leap over the wall of the obvious, of the banal, and of the irremovable, to go beyond boundaries that separate places, ideas, and subject matter that breaks with conformity and that opens itself up to new courageous and passionate scenarios” (Rinaldi, 2005). And, as Tiziana exclaimed during the conference, “Working through a lens of interconnectedness, we have to decide to be on the side of the children. What kind of witness and value are we bringing to school? We need to ‘leap over the wall’!

Loris Malaguzzi invited atelieristi into the schools as disruptors and fire starters, and I challenge all educators to take on this role. Through the hundred languages, we develop the habits to listen to the unspoken and to witness and provoke deeper relationships. Writer Richard Morgan (2018), in response to the suicides of Spade and Bourdain, wrote, “Empathy is about undermining loneliness and flooding it with engagement.” I love this image of water, necessary for life and for giving birth, as a provocation. How can you undermine loneliness or otherness in your capacity? How can you create an environment where this rich flooding of engagement can wash over each and every child?

After an hour, the hoops became living breathing poetic expressions. Each participant individually wove their emotion and their yuugen in community with others. One participant from Ottawa, Canada, reached out to me. Her work is to create schools for the Indigenous native people, whose language and culture was eliminated through laws, fear, and oppression. With reparations, the Canadian government is now funding schools where her culture, which is passed on orally, is to be rebuilt and taught, which was once illegal. She looked at me and said, “I thought I could only do this work through my own Indigenous community. Now today, I see there are allies that I can work with.”

Often the beautiful images of materials and organization in a Reggio or Reggio-inspired atelier can feel overwhelming to someone just beginning her or his study of the Reggio Emilia approach. Take a breath. Find one small action, one small change you can make or create within your environment. And then watch and listen.

During the weaving, Letta collected the words that participants wrote on the strips of fabric and wove into the hoops together. While everyone else wove, Letta sat under a tree, listening to the words written by all the participants in response to the prompts, and created a new poem—a gift for all who entered into this atelier journey together.
Sometimes the words come easy. Sometimes the words come hard.
Listen. Listen. Listen.
I felt alone until I heard your story.
When I stayed with my father, things did not turn out the way I thought they would.
I felt alone until I heard your story.
Mom never came, because all she wanted was not to be seen doing drugs.
I had faith but was let down time and again.
As a college student, I often felt overlooked.
I felt alone until I heard your story.
They were always disappointed when I said anything outside of their image of what I should be.

I couldn’t be myself. I was invisible. When I was six years old, I felt unloved.
Listen. Listen. Listen:

What happened to me when I was a child . . . I wanted to run from my family.
The day Mommy and Jecca died, I wanted to disappear, but you just held me in your lap and cried with me. I felt lost and safe at the same time.

I know what love looks like: Love looks like when she believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself; Love looks like when my grandma used to hug me and make sugared grapefruit on a plate for breakfast; Listen. Listen. Listen: I can tell her awful things, embarrassing things. She will never make me feel small or stupid. Her love changed me. Love looks like when I had my daughter, when I met my husband. I am love when I am advocating for immigrant children in my community. I know love, because she said I would thread the needle, because my eyes were young eyes. I felt love with simple family time, with the fireflies, with the warmth of the sun. I know love, because she said, my teacher said I was going to do some amazing things in this world. I am love, because I create beautiful beings.

I want someone to tell me—you’re okay here. Things may be different, shifting, and ever-changing out here in the world or at home, but here you are loved, valued, and respected. You’re okay here. I want love in the midst of the hate. I want protection, justice, and courage.

I hope you find love and security or that it finds you. I want to tell the children, “This is not your fault.” My wish is that you know how important you are, how strong, how brave. That you know you have a voice. Our words should be healthy, intentional, full of love and acceptance. We must be present at all times.

We must expand the possibility and capacity
Of the soul. Of the soul.
We must listen more.
I heard you say—how we will take care of each other. I will vocalize my thoughts and feelings. I will listen to the child and give them attention.

I wish resilience to move forward and to make sense of the unjust world.
I wish a home full of light and laughter.
I wish reunification and justice.
I hope that someone shows you love in the darkness.
Listen. Listen. Listen.
Listen. Listen. Listen.
I hope you know that we are fighting for you.
Perhaps it will serve as wisdom for you to leap over that wall to become the disruptor, the fire starter, the listener—to flood the world through each child, with love.

It is with great humility that I thank Letta Neely and each and every participant for their deep vulnerability, creativity, and engagement. I’ll end this reflection with a quote from a 5-year-old child named Hope from School Within School: “We’re all changing. We’re not gonna be our moms and dads. We get to be ourselves.”

**Atelier 3: Creating Cross-Cultural Conversations Through the World Cup**

Throughout June and early July, people all over the world will be wearing the flags of nations they love and cheering them on as 32 national teams battle to win the World Cup. In this *atelier*, participants will learn about the international, diverse, and symbolic language of flags, the global competition taking place this summer, and how it is possible to engage in conversations about identity, difference, and bias across culture, language, nationality, and class. We will seek to have conversations on the street with people in the surrounding community about the World Cup and co-create a shared meaning of these games. Then we will design flags to represent our new understandings.

**Reflections from Julie Bernson, facilitator**

Julie Bernson is the deputy director for learning and engagement at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA, where she works in close partnership with the onsite, Reggio-inspired Lincoln Nursery School. Julie is also on the adjunct faculty of Brandeis University’s Education Program.

Kendra PeloJoaquin and I took the invitation to create an *atelier* experience based on the conference title, “Crossing Cultures, Contexts, and Communities,” and the *atelier* focus, “The Hundred Languages/Relationships/Understanding/Communities,” quite literally. I suggested an *atelier* that brought participants out into the neighborhood surrounding the venue as a way to move outside our usual educational confines. Kendra suggested the World Cup as a topic for engagement, as the conference took place during this important international event. Over the course of several weeks, we grappled with the outline of the 2.5-hour session, as we discussed the opportunities and challenges of sending people out into a community that would be unfamiliar to most.

How can we be sure to be respectful when engaging strangers on the street? What if people don’t know anything about the World Cup? What if people think we’re trying to sell them something? What if they won’t talk to us? What if it rains? How do we develop a protocol that participants can use in their own school community on a topic that is relevant to them? We grappled with these questions and many more.

Kendra drew from the incredible resources she had developed for her school that integrate thinking about the World Cup with issues of national identity, sports culture, women in sports, gender discrimination, and world politics, but also from her experiential knowledge of anti-bias curriculum. I drew upon experiences with photography involving teachers and children on both familiar and unfamiliar city streets and with visual expression and culture.
After a presentation of our inspiration and motivation for this atelier (including watching the video from the Reggio Emilia municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools Piazza Piazze and our personal understandings of the World Cup, we did a warm-up exercise on listening and then small groups went out into the community. Armed with a simple clipboard and pen, participants walked the busy streets attempting to strike up conversations with total strangers. Some conversations were immediately established. Some did not take hold at all. It was a teaching and learning experience regarding the mindset, intention, and technique necessary to boldly approach and engage strangers in dialogue.

Once back in the atelier spaces, participants were invited to share their experience through multiple languages. Between the silent mapping of thoughts, ideas, and questions regarding talking to strangers about the World Cup, openly discussing the struggles and rewards of these engagements, and designing flags that expressed the experience, the variety of options captured a range of emotions, content, and ideas for our work in schools. Some were emboldened to offer similar experiences to children. Others were not so sure. But all seemed inspired to think about how we envision ourselves as individuals, teachers, and schools/organizations in relation to our closest neighbors and potential collaborators.

~Julie Bernson
the tournament could be useful if we want to build relationships across cultural, national, or linguistic boundaries. I know this from my own experience watching the World Cup with people from different countries and talking with them. This topic compels conversations about politics, gender, race, class, ability, language, and immigration. Even the name of the sport evokes connection: Soccer is an abbreviation of “Association Football” . . . the rightful name of the sport. As such, the name soccer is closer to the experience of association which is the social pulse-beat of football, the collective action of the players and the fans. . . . football is not just some sport played mostly with the feet, it is the life and movement of human association.” (Crichtley, 2017, p. 1)

After much discussion, Julie and I decided our atelier would explicitly relate to anti-bias education and would be centered upon conversations about the World Cup with people on the street. Betty Jones and Renatta Cooper valued the skills inherent in the kinds of conversation we would be trying out:

Connected knowers develop procedures for gaining access to other people’s knowledge. At the heart of these procedures is the capacity for empathy. Connected knowers know that they can only approximate other people’s experiences and so can gain only limited access to their knowledge. But insofar as possible, they must act as connected rather than separate selves, seeing the other not in their own terms but in the other’s terms. (Jones & Cooper, 2006, p. 5).
On the first morning of the conference, Tiziana Filippini described a study of the piazza and articulated the questions Julie and I had wrestled with while designing our atelier: “What does it mean to meet? What brings us together? For what? We exchange upon what? What are our subjects?” I chewed on these questions for the rest of the day. She also unknowingly addressed my concern that our atelier was not as materials-focused as others. She assured the crowd: “The hundred languages are not just media . . . they are also differences among us. Each of us is our own unique language! Languages welcome differences!” Tiziana’s colleague, Barbara Quinti, described a meeting of teachers for professional development in Reggio Emilia: “[W]e call professional growth formazione or formation, forming yourself, becoming . . . Very often, formazione is actual experience and not sitting and listening to a lecture.” I was fortified by these and all of their words; they resonated with the atelier that we were planning.

The Atelier Experience

The World Cup, we told the participants of our atelier, is a global piazza. After a brief primer about this year’s tournament (with enthusiastic help from an Argentine participant!), we watched the film Piazza Piazze about a study of piazzas of the city, center, and school that Tiziana and Barbara had described on the first morning. In it, 5-year-old Francesco observes, “Squares at school and in the city are a bit the same, because squares are made of encounters.” Our encounters would take place on tree-lined streets in a cafe district of Boston, our local equivalent of a “square.”

We supported participants in preparing for their encounters by developing open-ended questions together and playing with different ways of listening. Then, they paired up and headed out with maps that Julie and I had created. They returned 40 minutes later to an invitation to silently, graphically think together on a whiteboard with a protocol invented by the School Reform Initiative called a “Chalk Talk.” People recognized and reflected upon their assumptions about passersby and their power to shape attitudes and conversations. They noticed their relative comfort with approaching different people and their various styles of approach. They recognized what worked (asking questions to which you genuinely want to know the answers,
People recognized and reflected upon their assumptions about passersby and their power to shape attitudes and conversations. They noticed their relative comfort with approaching different people and their various styles of approach.

—Kendra PeloJoaquin

smiles to encourage conversation, laughter with your partner when you’re rejected). They learned about the World Cup, too—about high-scorers, the permissiveness of referees, and how allegiances shift when your team is not in the competition.

After they had represented some of their understandings via colorful flags, we asked, “What are the implications of this experience for your work?” One teacher started with the mechanics of conversation; she’d practiced flexibility and picked up a variety of strategies to open conversations with new people. Another was reminded to be a co-learner on equal footing with her students: “I never want to think I know how this will play out, because I don’t know everything. If I know that, I’m a better teacher, a better human.” Another agreed, “It’s okay not to know.”

We marveled at how many various conversations grew from such a small seed. Teachers were eager to bring children into their local “piazza.” They recognized the value of an evocative question that elicited dialogue, such as “What does the World Cup represent?” One teacher described her and her colleague’s discomfort and how much discomfort is too much. Others discovered places “made of encounters”: an Uber, the train platform, the patio at an Irish pub. They noticed their own curiosity: “We didn’t know what we were going to get each time. We had to take the time to listen, to sit back when the answer wasn’t immediately forthcoming.” One pair returned early; they had been unable to engage even one person in dialogue. They reflected upon how often children experience failure as they learn and felt they had new and visceral insights into that experience.

One participant said, “I just want to say how risky this was for us, and how risky for the two of you to invite us to do it. That took a lot of trust—trust in one another to plan it and trust in us to do it.” She was so right; it had felt risky. I had butterflies in my stomach as the participants went out into the street! Another participant followed up with this comment: “That directly translates to children; one of the hardest things is to let go, to let the children go. That’s a good thing to take away: to let go.”
It was fun to walk around outside together, approach unfamiliar people, and talk about sports. But this work is also critical if we agree with Tiziana Filippini that “the school must provide a meeting place, freedom, solidarity, peace.” She explained that last year hanging from the front door of each school in Reggio Emilia were the words “Wherever you come from, you are not a stranger.” Some educators in the U.S. display in their schools Louise Derman-Sparks’ and Julie Olsen-Edwards’ pledge: “All children belong here.” For these words to be true, to create spaces for cross-cultural welcome and participation, we must be connected learners, examining our assumptions. We must discuss, discuss, discuss, even when it is uncomfortable or when we have already tried once and failed. We will ask curious questions and listen skillfully. In order to authentically welcome people across our differences, we need practice trusting, letting go, and taking real risks. Our conversations about the World Cup felt like “formation” into people who deserve the trust of context-crossing children and their families.

Atelier 4: Creating Dialogue Through Movement and Graphic Representation

How do collective experiences build a sense of community? Inspired by the Segni Mossi project, which seeks to understand the interaction between dance and graphic design, this atelier experience will similarly explore the connection between movement and mark-making. As educators, we witness the need for children to move, and we will use that often unhindered and joyful expression as inspiration for whole and small group experiences. How does movement influence design? How can collective experiences in these genres support the development of dialogue and community? Through collaborative art-and-movement experiences and observation and reflection, participants will explore these questions and discuss how we can translate these experiences within our own contexts.

Reflections from Emma Boettcher and Nora Thompson, facilitators

Emma Boettcher has worked at Charlestown Nursery School (CNS) in Charlestown, MA, for the past 9 years, primarily as a classroom teacher for both toddlers and preschoolers and also as the studio and Remida designer and coordinator. Emma has mentored new teachers at CNS as well as those from area schools. Nora Thompson has over 30 years of experience working with young children in home visiting, classroom settings, and consultation to teachers. She has a master’s degree in child development, a bachelor’s degree in special education, and a teaching endorsement in educational technology. Nora was an Innovations editorial board member from 2009-2015 and is a NAREA staff member.
Leading a movement atelier was a somewhat new experience for both of us, but we were bolstered by the creativity and inspiration of the Segni Mossi project. We felt as though experiences that combined these two somewhat separate genres—visual art and movement—could be powerful in connecting people from different contexts.

In addition to the many resources available on the Segni Mossi website, we were also inspired by an article by Paola Cavazzoni, Barbara Pini, Francesca Porani, and Annalisa Renieri (2007) titled "Corpo in Movimento: The Body in Motion." We shared many excerpts from that article in our presentation at the beginning of the atelier, among them:

> There has been a deliberate choice to bring the body inside the atelier. This confirms our tendency to not separate different fields of knowledge and to not separate the body and the mind.

> In his poem, ["The Hundred Languages of Children,"] Loris Malaguzzi puts forth the idea of a child that does not want to separate head from body, hands from thinking, reason from imagination. Malaguzzi is in favor of a whole child, who experiences and learns with all of his or her being.

We welcomed 120 participants in our atelier space and guided them through diverse experiences inspired by the Segni Mossi project and the Reggio Emilia approach. Specifically, we chose and designed encounters where dialogue could take place in both large and small groups and also with the intention that the experiences could be translated within the participants’ educational contexts.

We offered several large group experiences, such as “moving squares,” an interpretive scarf movement, and dancing in mirrored symmetry with a partner. During the moving squares experience, each participant wore a square of paper around their neck, fastened with yarn. Then, they moved (like waves of water) close together, passing each other, making marks
with a crayon on each other’s paper as they passed. They walked across the room in lines and then in a large group, sharing encounters as they went. Marks were left on the squares as traces of their encounters.

In small groups, participants rotated through four stations. Each of the experiences were designed to offer participants a chance to communicate and connect with a partner and/or group as they moved and made marks. The room was abuzz with conversation and laughter as pairs drew with a single oil pastel taped in the middle of a four-foot dowel, synchronized their movements in the air with those of their partners as they drew on a whiteboard, mirrored their partner’s movements while they were drawing on paper, and merged self-portraits using mirrors.

Through our own observations and those gathered from participants during and after their small group reflection time, we confirmed that these experiences were engaging and worthwhile. Participants had shared in collective processes that encouraged dialogue and built community.

We learned about the importance and power of creating dialogue by uniting two very different languages of expression. We invite and encourage educators to explore the work of the Segni Mossi project and engage in these types of experiences with children, families, and colleagues.

---Emma Boettcher and Nora Thompson---
REFERENCES


My fortunate encounter with Carolyn Edwards changed the course of my educational studies and professional life and gave me the confidence and the ability to integrate into a new society in the United States. When I registered as a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts in 1983, I transferred my credentials from the University of Naples in Italy, where I had studied for 2 years, as well as those from Smith College, where I had completed my BA in 1978 and my MA in Education and Child Study in 1982. At Smith’s Infant Study Program, I met Roberta Collard, a senior professor at UMass, who recommended that I study with Carolyn Edwards.
From the first time that I met Carolyn, I found her to be very welcoming in general and, in particular, of my cross-cultural education and my interest in child rearing in different societies. She also supported my choice of two additional advisers: Edward Tronic, a professor whose psychology class I was taking and whom I admired, and George Forman, a professor of education who worked with teachers studying young children in the construction of their learning in various schools, including the UMass Lab School.

In her work as a professor and doctoral advisor, Carolyn demonstrated her great knowledge of anthropology as well as psychology. She was keenly attentive and encouraging to her students, giving us the desire to move forward in our studies and research while considering other cultural and academic points of view. My dissertation, a comparative study of ritual at bedtime in a few regions in Italy and a few towns in New England, was completed and approved in 1988. Carolyn’s suggestions and constructive questions were always presented with kindness and a great awareness of the possible threads of research that could be followed.

My connection with the schools of Reggio Emilia and with Loris Malaguzzi became a catalyst for Carolyn’s and my visits to Reggio Emilia as well as Carolyn’s and George’s decision to invite Loris Malaguzzi to the University of Massachusetts and to host “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit there in 1988. Malaguzzi had a special affection for Carolyn, as he could see the sensitive child she may have been through her deep attention to process and complexities. Malaguzzi’s invitation to work on a collection of writing with Carolyn about the learning and teaching in Reggio Emilia, constructing a book with his interviews and the ones of his direct collaborators, was initially considered to be a continuation of the work I had been doing for *Zero to Six* (*ZEROSEI*), the magazine for teachers that Loris Malaguzzi directed. However, when Malaguzzi came to
I first met Carolyn Edwards when she applied for a faculty position in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts some 40 years ago. I was instantly impressed with her intelligent eyes and solid answers to our questions about her research and current interests. We knew she would bring recognition and quality to our program and well she did with advances through her infant-toddler research at our laboratory school and, of course, with the watershed event of bringing to our campus “The Hundred Languages of Children,” a giant traveling exhibit from Reggio Emilia, Italy. Carolyn not only recognized that what we saw therein was an exceptional testimony to the creativity and
By Brenda Fyfe, dean emeritus, School of Education, Webster University

In the book, *Good Work*, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) explored the relationship between high-level performance and social responsibility. They were interested “in learning more about those persons who succeeded in melding expertise with moral distinction” (p. x). After knowing Dr. Carolyn Edwards for over 2 decades and seeing the impact of her research and creative work in the fields of developmental psychology, quality early childhood education, cross-cultural studies, and moral development, I would dare to say that she could easily have been one of the people who Gardner et al. described in their book. Throughout her career and personal life, she has demonstrated excellence and ethics through collaboration with others to research, advocate, communicate, and educate.

Carolyn should be given credit as the primary force that changed early childhood in North America, as she helped teachers understand the Reggio Emilia style of constructivism through her writings, her collaborations, and her own research. Bravo, Carolyn. We will miss the opportunity to ask you new questions, but we will never tire of reading your answers to the ones you heard.

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–George Forman

Letter of Support to University of Nebraska ORCA Selection Committee, November 4, 2011

By Brenda Fyfe, dean emeritus, School of Education, Webster University

In the book, *Good Work*, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) explored the relationship between high-level performance and social responsibility. They were interested “in learning more about those persons who succeeded in melding expertise with moral distinction” (p. x). After knowing Dr. Carolyn Edwards for over 2 decades and seeing the impact of her research and creative work in the fields of developmental psychology, quality early childhood education, cross-cultural studies, and moral development, I would dare to say that she could easily have been one of the people who Gardner et al. described in their book. Throughout her career and personal life, she has demonstrated excellence and ethics through collaboration with others to research, advocate, communicate, and educate.

In every encounter I have had with Carolyn, up close and from afar, I have always been struck by her intense intellectual curiosity, her open-mindedness, and her whole-heartedness, the habits of mind that John Dewey described so many years ago as critical attributes for a great teacher.

–Brenda Fyfe
In every encounter I have had with Carolyn, up close and from afar, I have always been struck by her intense intellectual curiosity, her open-mindedness, and her whole-heartedness, the habits of mind that John Dewey described so many years ago as critical attributes for a great teacher. I feel very fortunate to have had many opportunities to hear Carolyn present her extensive research and to relish in the knowledge base that it has provided us. But perhaps even more impressive than her knowledge and expertise is what I have seen in her informal interactions in small group conversations with colleagues and friends. She is always seeking to learn from and with others and continuously supports and encourages others in their own good work. This is clearly evident in the number of grants and publications she has co-authored, co-edited, and co-researched.

While I believe that Carolyn is always inclined to be a collaborator, she is also highly respected for her individual contributions through publications and extensive keynote speaking at major conferences and gatherings around the world. She is viewed as a thought leader in early childhood education, cross-cultural research, social and moral development, and the internationally acclaimed programs of Reggio Emilia and Pistoia, Italy.

It is difficult to identify Carolyn’s most important work, since I view all of it as critical to my field of early childhood education. But three particular works that stand out for me are: 1) the first through third editions of The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Education, a book that she conceived and for which she served as the lead editor; 2) her research with Beatrice Whiting that was published in Children of Different Worlds: The Formation of Social Behavior; and 3) her fascinating and widely disseminated research on the importance of supportive relationships between educators, parents, and children, which was published in the book Extending the Dance in Infant and Toddler Caregiving: Enhancing Attachment and Relationships.

As Howard Gardner (1998) stated in his introduction to the second edition of The Hundred Languages of Children, “Midst the multitude of books about education issued these days, few stand out. This book that you hold in your hands does. . . . Anyone with an interest in the education of children should read it: few who do so will remain unaffected by the experience.” In all my encounters with early childhood educators and community leaders who have read this book, I know Howard Gardner’s statement to be true.

Although Carolyn’s cross-cultural body of work is extensive, I believe that Children of Different Worlds offered those of us in the field of early childhood education newfound understandings and insights about the critical importance of culture in the daily lives of children and families. This book also illustrated the power of cross-cultural methods of research.

Finally, Carolyn’s study of supportive relationships, documented in Extending the Dance in Infant and Toddler Caregiving, has opened windows of understanding for teachers, parents, and new grandparents (like me) around the world. The National Association for the Education of Young Children clearly understood the importance of this wonderful book by making it a comprehensive membership benefit in 2009 for over 100,000 members.

In my opinion, Dr. Carolyn Edwards ranks in the top 1% of scholars nationwide and, perhaps, worldwide in early childhood education and cross-cultural studies of children and families. Her creative, interdisciplinary focus; her high standards in regard to research and writing; and her unending search for knowledge puts her in a rank that only a few can claim to have achieved.
I write to place in nomination the name of Carolyn Pope Edwards of the University of Nebraska (emerita) for election to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Among the anthropologists of her generation, she is one of the premier contributors to our understanding of childhood cross-culturally, and in this field, she has made contributions to theory, method, ethnography, and educational practice. Her position at retirement was Willa Cather professor and professor of Psychology and Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska.

My co-nominator on this letter is Academy member Prof. (Emeritus) Robert LeVine of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Like Prof. Edwards, he is an intellectual disciple of John and Beatrice Whiting, and he has followed her work closely from her days as a student.

Edwards received her baccalaureate (1969) and doctoral (1974) degrees at Harvard and went on to postdoctoral work both in research (Educational Testing Service, Princeton) and as a clinical intern at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center (Worcester, MA). She was an assistant professor at Vassar, a full professor at the University of Kentucky, and a full professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, before moving to the University of Nebraska in 1997.

During her doctoral research on the children of Ngecha, Kenya, she was a research associate with the Child Development Research Unit, University of Nairobi. Her field research there, on moral development through young adulthood, made an impact through several published articles on our thinking about this important aspect of child and adolescent development. The then-reigning theory, that of Lawrence Kohlberg, had been subject to few or no cross-cultural tests, especially in a traditional setting like that of the village of Ngecha. In keeping with Edwards’ subtle and even-handed style of intellectual discourse, she did not take a no-holds-barred position, but showed that some aspects of Kohlberg’s “universal” model of moral development are indeed universal, and others are not.

Edwards remained involved in research in Ngecha through decades of dramatic change in Kenya, and in 2004, she was the first editor (with the late Beatrice Whiting) of the volume *Ngecha: A Kenyan Village in a Time of Rapid Social Change* (2004). In keeping with Edwards’ commitment to education, including higher education, in Africa as elsewhere, many of the book’s contributors were Kenyans whom she had taught and encouraged.

Edwards was mentored by John and, especially, Beatrice Whiting, two of the leading anthropologists of their generation and effectively the founders of quantitative cross-cultural research on childhood. Edwards continued working with Bea Whiting until Whiting’s death, and in 1988, they co-authored *Children of Different Worlds: The Formation of Social Behavior*, a landmark contribution to the scientific study of childhood cross-culturally. Based initially on the systematic and parallel quantitative and qualitative observations of six teams of anthropologists deployed in six very different cultures around the world, with the addition of eight more cultures in which later parallel studies of children were conducted by
students of the Whitings, the book analyzed data from children in a total of 14 cultures to address questions about sex differences, children’s and mothers’ work, sibling relationships, and more. It became both a model and a standard reference for such research and remains so.

In the late 1980s, Edwards turned her cross-cultural scientific lens on the unique and universal approach to toddler and preschool care practiced in northern Italy, especially Reggio Emilia, a town whose name is now virtually synonymous with enlightened early childhood education. Edwards’ first-authored book *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education* (1993) has become a classic in the field. It has been translated into many languages, is now in its third edition, and is only one of her many publications on the subject. In 2010, Edwards was given the Lifetime Achievement Award of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA).

When I wrote to NAREA to ask about the Edwards award, Dr. Margie Cooper, current standing chair of the organization, expressed “unflagging support” of Edwards’ contribution, referring to her “immense contributions” and “her significant influence in the field of early childhood education through her work with Reggio Emilia, Italy for more than 3 decades.” She noted that Edwards was alone in the late 1980s in bringing the eye of an anthropologist to northern Italy’s publicly-funded infant-toddler centers and pre-schools. She continued:

The early years of exchange between American and Reggio Emilian educators were hindered by a language obstacle. No written materials existed in English. The 1993 publication of the first edition of *The Hundred Languages of Children* book was a major contribution to scholarship in the U.S. That publication stands alone as the seminal resource for the education project of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The collegial work of Dr. Edwards made it possible for a global community to access the most important example of early childhood evolution in the last 100 years.

Dr. Cooper also states that, “Most important to share, is that Carolyn Pope Edwards is a kind, engaging, approachable, and giving human being. For that, she is in a rare class.” This has been my experience of her, from the time we were in graduate school together to the hours I spent talking with her and reflecting on our careers on a Mississippi steamboat during a break from the Society for Cross-Cultural Research (SCCR) meeting last spring.

Not surprisingly, given this description of her character, she has mentored many doctoral students with encouragement and constructive criticism. One of them, Prof. Jill Brown of Creighton University, herself a past president of the SCCR, wrote to me recently:

Carolyn’s role as a mentor to students throughout her career was interdisciplinary in the same way her scholarship over the years proved to be; she has mentored anthropologists, psychologists, family studies, and early childhood scholars. Her mentorship always had the same message, ask the important question by connecting your head to your heart in your work, through your relationship with colleagues, participants, and communities. She never said no to a research idea, only honored it and helped shape it into good social science. Her involvement in the Society for Cross Cultural Research spans over 30 years. She was awarded the Outstanding Research and Creativity Award (ORCA) from the University of Nebraska, which honors outstanding research or creative activity of national and international significance.

Edwards has done pathbreaking research in anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, and early childhood education and has made a direct impact on thought and practice in those fields. Her many books and very many articles have ensured her lasting intellectual as well as pragmatic impact, and she would be among peers if elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

–Melvin Konner

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Anthropologists see the world through the lens of culture. They understand the ways in which human behavior is socially constructed and transmitted by groups over the course of history. While anthropologists can be rightly critiqued for making ethnocentric judgments about cultures outside their own, I remember Carolyn Edwards teaching me in a class on cross-cultural child development about the differences between an etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspective. I vividly recall in that class watching films about a Javanese healer and reading beautiful ethnographies like Nesa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman (Shostak, 1981). Carolyn seemed to embrace the complexity and contradictions of culture, and this insightful lens was one of many that she brought to her scholarship and practice in the field of early childhood education.

Going back in time, I first communicated with Carolyn Pope Edwards in late 1987 by letter. I was in Australia writing my Master’s thesis about how young children seek out privacy and intimacy in group care settings. I had discovered a wonderful confluence of minds at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, including Carolyn, David Day (1983), and George Forman (Forman & Hill, 1984), who aligned with my own questions about children, and the opportunity to complete my doctorate there was enticing. I believe it was one of Carolyn’s many writings about moral development across culture that piqued my interest (Edwards, 1987). Later, I learned that Carolyn had studied at Harvard with the renowned moral development theorist Lawrence Kohlberg among other researchers who had been so influential in my own professional journey.

It is remarkable, of course, that Carolyn took the time to reply to me given that she was in Rome, Italy, where she was a visiting professor with the National Research Council. My letter had traveled from Australia to the United States and, somehow, on to Italy. I remember her reply was long, eloquent, and fascinating. I was immediately attracted to the way in which cultural context was interwoven into everything she had to share. Carolyn also spoke about many points of inquiry in her current work, including an innovative approach to education in a city called Reggio Emilia. From this first point of contact, I could see that Carolyn sought out intellectual vibrancy and approached her role as a “teacher” with great seriousness and care.

I arrived in Amherst in 1988 to commence my doctorate with preparations in full swing for the presence of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit and anticipation of the arrival of Loris Malaguzzi. Having studied with Betty Jones at Pacific Oaks College, I had long been engaged in a lively dialogue about the dynamics of emergent curriculum, and, in particular, the social and collaborative nature of inquiry. In my own research about children and privacy, I was also being challenged by the cultural meanings behind how children experience time and space away from others and had begun to think about the importance of connection and community in child care relationships. Carolyn shared with me an entrée into the inspirations from Reggio Emilia that was timely, provocative, and earth-shattering for my own thinking and development as an educator. I can still picture the time spent observing with and listening to Malaguzzi...
from the observation booth at the UMass Lab School where Carolyn was director and I was a graduate assistant. My mentorship had clearly begun.

Carolyn was a much admired and loved mentor. I was fortunate to follow some brilliant “students” who had collaborated with Carolyn on their own doctorates, including Lella Gandini, Patty Ramsey, and Nancy Carlsson Paige. Working with Carolyn was an opportunity to be taken into a scholar’s mind. In 1990, Carolyn, Lella, and I began preparing for a research project with the educators in Reggio Emilia and other sites in Italy that would focus on the role of collaboration, conflict, and community in early learning. Carolyn and I spent countless hours in a video editing booth discussing the selection of classroom scenes from video in Reggio and the U.S. We would use the scenes as a provocation to engage educators in cross-cultural dialogue drawing on the multi-vocal ethnography methodology documented in the book *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1991). Later we traveled to Italy for intense conversations with educators in Reggio, Pistoia, and Venice regarding their reflections and interpretations about what they saw in the interactions between children and teachers. As “research assistant,” I lugged our heavy video camera (remember, this is almost 30 years ago) on to the Italian trains, but I was also privy to how Carolyn thought critically about development, learning, children, and culture, and she engaged me as a valued thinker. With Carolyn’s encouragement and astute editorial skills, my dissertation on the ways early childhood teachers make meaning of community led to my chapter on these ideas in the second edition of *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Nimmo, 1998).

Carolyn is best known by the early childhood field for her seminal work in translating and broadcasting the wonders of the Reggio Emilia experience, most notably in her writing, beginning with *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993, 1998, 2012). But as noted earlier, I believe it was her grounding in cross-cultural studies and developmental thinking about social and moral development that caused her understanding of the significance of the experience in Reggio Emilia to be deep, nuanced, and always about context. Shortly before I arrived in Amherst, Carolyn’s book *Promoting Social and Moral Development in Young Children: Creative Approaches for the Classroom* was published (1986). In this book, she documented her work on developing “thinking games” in which young children were engaged in considering moral dilemma stories. From this book, I learned how deeply Carolyn was influenced by constructivism and a developmental approach to how young children make sense of the world. But in her own quiet and scholarly way, Carolyn was also able to critique and see the shortcomings of Piaget’s theories and, for that matter, those of other theorists.

Another book of Carolyn’s that may be less known in the early childhood field is her collaboration with groundbreaking Harvard anthropologist Beatrice Whiting in *Children of Different Worlds: The Formation of Social Behavior* (1988). This book represents the work of multiple researchers in Liberia, India, Kenya, Guatemala, and the United States. Carolyn spent her time in Nairobi, Kenya investigating the moral judgments of Kenyan secondary and university students, and she went on to spend almost a decade collaborating with Whiting in the analysis of the data in order to better understand the ways in which cultural and social context help shape children’s development. Carolyn brought this perceptive understanding of culture into her translation of innovations in Reggio Emilia in ways often lost on educators focusing on other, more explicit elements such as environmental aesthetics and the role of the arts.

As a mentor, I observed Carolyn’s wisdom and genuine desire to understand others’ perspectives. I clearly remember our many discussions about anti-bias education, a particular focus of mine, along with my colleague and co-author Debbie LeeKeenan, who also worked with Carolyn at the UMass Lab School. To this day, I am not entirely sure what Carolyn thought,
but I sense that she respected my beliefs and intelligence. She saw the value in what I was saying, while cautiously bringing her own knowledge about culture and children’s development to the issue of how we pursue a social justice agenda with young children in authentic ways. As a mentor, Carolyn was generous with her wisdom, asking thoughtful questions with empathy and the intent to create moments of intellectual exchange.

Over the years, Carolyn and I continued to touch base at NAEYC conferences and other events, both professional and personal, occasionally presenting together or simply checking-in about our families. By coincidence, in 2000, we presented at the same conference in Nanjing, China, and Carolyn took the opportunity to invite me on a bus ride with a Chinese colleague to see the fruits of her consultancy work at an orphanage in Hefei. Here, teachers were infusing inspirations from Reggio Emilia into an environment with limited resources and many challenges. I can still visualize how amazed I was by the depth of the teachers’ engagement in the ideas and also the pride and joy Carolyn found in their progress. Carolyn had a way of bringing people together. My colleague Debbie Lee-Keenan has gone on to collaborate with me, as lab school directors ourselves, as co-authors, and even presenting in China together in 2017 as a direct result of Carolyn’s mentorship.

My final collaboration with Carolyn in 2014 returned us to our beginnings 30 years ago. Carolyn emailed me about wanting to share with the field the entire transcripts of our amazing conversations with Malaguzzi and the educators at the Diana School. While we had written various pieces drawn from the experience, there was so much more to be mined through the intimate and profound opportunity we had to see Malaguzzi and other notable Reggio educators engage in spirited dialogue about the nature of collaboration and conflict in the early childhood classroom. Over the course of the year, we met regularly (via online video), shared edits, debated points of meaning, and essentially relived our time together so many years ago (Edwards, Gandini, & Nimmo, 2015). It is a time that I treasure with great fondness, working with a great mind in our field, respected as a peer, even though I knew in my heart that this was an act of caring generosity from my mentor.

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–John Nimmo
REFERENCES


Prior to the 14th NAREA Summer Conference, the NAREA board issued a statement of solidarity for the children and families separated at the southern border of the United States. NAREA’s commitment to children and families, while situated in North America, extends beyond and joins with myriad others who see people as dignified and deserving of care and safety. NAREA distributed our words of solidarity on our website, Facebook page, and the local host community’s exhibit website:

NAREA joins the rising chorus of human rights organizations, religious organizations, and individuals who condemn the willful acts of child endangerment and trauma unfolding in our country. Elected officials at local, state, and national levels are responsible to represent the people’s will in these matters. The people oppose and demand immediate reunification of children with their families and no further separations. As part of a robust and empathetic early childhood education world community, we are a profession that cares about and for all children. Children, families, and communities are our concern, and we speak with one voice against federal human rights violations against children.
Resources

Organizations

NAREA
North American Reggio Emilia Alliance
www.reggioalliance.org

Reggio Children
info@reggiochildren.it
www.reggiochildren.it

Reggio Children Publications

Resources published by Reggio Children are available:
In the U.S. from NAREA
770.552.0179
thresa@reggioalliance.org
www.store.reggioalliance.org

In Canada from Parentbooks
416.537.8334
orders@parentbooks.ca
www.parentbooks.ca

Bibliography

Visit the NAREA website for a comprehensive listing of resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy.

North American Study Groups in Reggio Emilia, Italy

Contact: Angela Ferrario, Reggio Children liaison in the U.S. for study groups aferrario@comcast.net

International Professional Development Initiatives in Reggio Emilia, Italy

November 11-16, 2018: International Study Group - The Reggio Emilia Approach to Education
Contact: Reggio Children
www.reggiochildren.it

“The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” Exhibit

June 21–November 15, 2018
Boston, MA
Hosted by the Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network, the exhibit is located at Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, Fenway Campus and accompanied by a series of professional development initiatives.
Contact: Kelly Pellagrine
kelly@charlestownnursery.org
bostonreggionetwork.org

January–May 2019
Madison, WI
Hosted by the Preschool of the Arts, Madison Public Library, and The Overture Center for the Arts, the exhibit will be located at Madison Central Library and Playhouse Gallery, Overture Center and accompanied by a series of professional development initiatives.
Contact: Ann Gadzikowski
agadzikowski@preschoolofthearts.com
wonderoflearningwisconsin.org

June–November 2019
Atlanta, GA
The exhibit will be accompanied by a series of professional development initiatives.

Peer-Reviewed Issues

See Innovations Peer-Reviewed page for the call for proposals for the September 2019 issue. For further information, contact Judith Allen Kaminsky, judy@reggioalliance.org

Note

In “The Relationship between Documentation and Design of the Environment in a Reggio-inspired School: Two Sides of a Coin” in the March 2018 issue of Innovations, the last name of Francesca Giorgioni was misspelled.
NAREA-Related Professional Development

Discount for NAREA members at all initiatives listed

The 10th NAREA Winter Conference
Ensuring All Children’s Rights to Education Based in Relationships and the Hundred Languages
Madison, WI
March 21-23, 2019
Speakers: Educators from Reggio Emilia, Italy
Contact: NAREA
www.reggioalliance.org

The 15th NAREA Summer Conference
Atlanta, GA
June 27-29, 2019
Speakers: Educators from Reggio Emilia, Italy
Contact: NAREA
www.reggioalliance.org

NAREA & Reggio Children Resources

We are pleased to announce NAREA’s new role as official distributor of Reggio Children resources for the United States. We thank Learning Materials Workshop, official distributor for many years, and will perform this activity along with other collaborations between NAREA and Reggio Children within the International Network framework. These collaborations include organizing conferences and seminars with participants from Reggio Emilia, Italy, and ”The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit project.

If you are interested in purchasing these resources, please visit the shop section of the NAREA website: www.store.reggioalliance.org

Echoes: Environment, Spaces, Relations
In celebration of the 25th anniversary of Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange, NAREA published the inaugural volume of the Echoes: Environment, Spaces, Relations, highlighting voices from Reggio Emilia, Italy, and North America. A compilation of previously published Innovations’ articles is curated into this themed volume.
Cost: $35 + S/H

Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools
Through the combined efforts of Istituzione, Reggio Children, and NAREA, we bring you a resource from Reggio Emilia: the English translation of the Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools. This book is given to every family as they begin in the infant-toddler centers or preschools to qualify the public services. Included are descriptions of how a school day is organized, the culture of the atelier, the way the kitchens work, and the priority access for the children with special rights, for example.
Cost: $15 + S/H

Postcards – 25 Pack
A series of 25 postcards designed with quotes from each year of the NAREA periodical, Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. The front of the postcards highlights a key word from each quote. The format is perfect for writing a welcome note to parents and children, a thank-you note to a community sponsor, a solidarity note to a colleague, or a request to a policy-maker. Bulk pricing available upon request.
Infants and children in all places in the world cannot continue to have rights only on paper; the right to have good parents, good housing, good food, good schools, good teachers, and good government is what they ask for and what is urgently needed. If we adults will keep in mind that the children are always the holders of new possibilities and perspectives—and not only in the field of learning and of knowledge—perhaps we will not carelessly dissipate, with guilty nonchalance, the good that they, along with we, possess.

– Loris Malaguzzi, Innovations, v.1, no. 1, Fall 1992