Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange

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Introduction

In the Summer 2019 Innovations issue, we focus on the significant role of participation within the Reggio Emilia educational project. Participation is elaborated on in Indications – Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia:

Participation is the value and the strategy that defines the way in which the children, educators, and the parents are stakeholders in the educational project; it is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived day by day in the encounter with others and in the interpersonal relationships.

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.

Participation generates and nurtures the feelings and culture of solidarity, responsibility and inclusion; it produces change and new cultures that contend with the dimension of the contemporary world and globalization (Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, 2010, p. 12).

In the first article, we feature “A Different Future” written by the Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Center Foundation. Since 2011, the Foundation has worked in participation with organizations to improve the lives of children and communities through education across Italy and internationally. NAREA is one of the promoting founders of the Foundation. The Foundation describes the aim of their work:

[to promote solidarity projects through research by building up a relationship of deep interdependence where the know-how of the Foundation is open to and in dialogue with the knowledge of different cultural partners so as to create a relation of research in terms of new hypothesis and solutions.

“Voices: Conversations from North America and Beyond” features the article “Water Pathways and Research Tributaries” from Canadian Reggio-inspired educators Julie Kelly, Sophie Anne Edwards, and Sharon Speir. The authors share their participation with children in researching the northern Canadian natural environment where they work and live. In particular, the authors share the value of the hundred languages of children as an integral aspect of their research process. They describe how participating together in research leads to new pathways and understandings.

In the second “Voices” article, Reggio-inspired educator Nancy Sadler shares how she continues to participate in early childhood education beyond retirement. Her many years of experience contribute to her current work in higher education and with early childhood communities in her area.

This issue also includes a book review by NAREA board member and Innovations consulting editor, Jeanne Goldhaber, on Shoe and Meter, which was published by Reggio Children. Goldhaber notes how the book inspires readers to consider not only how to listen, observe, and record children’s thinking processes, but to also participate with colleagues in making meaning of the documentation.
The “Perspectives on NAREA” column in this issue includes three features. First, BARIN (Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network) share the importance of participation from all members of their community during the presence of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in the Boston area.

Next, Margie Cooper, standing chair of NAREA, reflects on the significant and rich 12-year history of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in the United States and Canada. During this time, the exhibit has traveled to 24 cities in North America; representing 20 states in the United States and two provinces in Canada.

Through the stories of the exhibition, the educators of Reggio Emilia have shown us the importance of recognizing that childhood matters, education matters, citizenship matters, children matter, parents matter, and educators matter. We are reminded that ways of seeing childhood must be placed in relationship to the culture of the community.

Lastly, “Perspectives” features reflections from NAREA staff on the 15th NAREA Summer Conference, “Defending Spaces for Creative Freedom: Spaces of Joy, Trust, and Solidarity.” The featured speakers from Reggio Emilia, Claudia Giudici, president of Reggio Children, and Marina Mori, tutor teacher who works as a mentor to teachers, along with their interpreter, Jane McCall, spent each day sharing insight into the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia, Italy, through presentations and dialogue with the participants. The conference also debuted the new exhibit “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials,” and accompanying atelier from Reggio Emilia, Italy.

This issue concludes with an invitation from Innovations to contribute to the 2020 peer-reviewed issue. In recognition and honor of the upcoming 100th birthday of Loris Malaguzzi, the focus will be on the daily life of children and adults engaged in moments of shared research and discovery that reflect the JOY AND WONDER OF CO-INQUIRY AND INVENTION. Proposals are due October 1, 2019.

Margie Cooper writes:

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— Margie Cooper

REFERENCE


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The Origin and the Mission

Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi was established in 2011 with the aim to promote solidarity projects through research by building up a relationship of deep interdependence where the know-how of the Foundation is open to and in dialogue with the knowledge of different cultural partners so as to create a relation of research in terms of new hypotheses and solutions. The mission is to improve children’s and communities’ lives through the promotion of a quality education in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and worldwide.

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Italy. We exist for the rights of children, and consequently of young people, women, and men to a better education and life no matter where they live, starting in Reggio Emilia. The Foundation’s mission is urgent and necessary because these rights are ignored and trampled all over the world. One only needs to browse through a newspaper or read its online version to realize that childhood and humankind are betrayed and cast away in terms of their most essential needs.

The issue is not only economic, political, and ecological. The issue includes all these aspects; but the crisis is even deeper. This is also an educational crisis because the confidence in succeeding through educational actions is itself in crisis – not able to create an effective and mutual relation to research and build together the meaning of life and our being in the world. Too many children in the forgotten and neglected suburbs and in the rich urban centers in the Western world lost the possibility of growing up in schools and places that are educational due to the qualities of their schools. Reggio could not help but listen to and take up this appeal that comes from the world of the forgotten, of the invisible, of the last.

It is time, as Loris Malaguzzi urged us in the past, to have a “nostalgia for the future.” Nostalgia does not only refer to the past but also to the future. It includes not only what is no more but what could be, in the tension of time that opens up to future. It is an invitation to have the courage of the future, to be open to new significances of what our past was, to look for new paradigms, and to embrace the unexpected and unknown. It is the recommendation to not be overwhelmed by indifference, political apathy, and above all, by resignation.

The essence of our Foundation is not only to improve the lives of children and communities by fostering a quality education worldwide but also to improve oneself in this process so as to imagine, develop, and concretize futures even where it seems to be difficult or almost
The essence of our Foundation is not only to improve the lives of children and communities by fostering a quality education worldwide but also to improve oneself in this process so as to imagine, develop, and concretize futures even where it seems to be difficult or almost impossible.

impossible. With this attitude and this awareness, our Foundation carries out its projects by facing new challenges and possibilities, by building up new relationships or intensifying the consolidated ones. By opening new research horizons such as taste, food, and nutrition, or investigating recurring themes with new eyes, such as the quality of educational contexts or new technologies as possible tools for solidarity and alliance of the human being, or the participation dimension in socially problematic contexts, just to mention a few, we build awareness that comes along with the courage of making mistakes.

Having the courage to make mistakes, the courage of imperfections, of acting with generosity, and of being amazed and surprised is something we learn from children and youth. This is the strength we would like to apply to the experiences we build up in the world so that the world doesn’t lose its childhood, the significance of childhood, and therefore its own significance. We continue to construct a different future by promoting research projects that define and redefine the very meaning of research. With the spirit and the reasons above described, the Foundation is like a cultural laboratory whose quality is built through the research, meant in a broader sense, which includes academic and scientific research but it also introduces a different concept and form of research that takes place whenever original learning processes occur, as we learned from the experience of the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia.

An existential and ethical attitude highlights, once again, the value of research but also the search for values – research that appreciates and valorizes diversity and the “and/and” rather than a dualistic approach of “or/or.” So, a research that does not exclude an investigation and a quantitative evaluation but that highlights the qualitative dimension where the meaning is not rebuilt only by looking and observing; it isn’t only in the surrounding nature waiting to be revealed but instead is built through the process.

The Foundation promotes solidarity projects and activities, detached from welfare attitudes, through its willingness to look for new paradigms, embracing the unexpected and the unknown, and developing transformative dialogues in foreign contexts.

The Foundation promotes solidarity projects and activities, detached from welfare attitudes, through its willingness to look for new paradigms, embracing the unexpected and the unknown, and developing transformative dialogues in foreign contexts. Our research strategy and dialogue mode among partners aims to improve children’s and communities’ lives by fostering a quality education.

The Activities

Research projects explored by the Foundation include: the relationship between pedagogy and architecture; the opportunities derived from the use of new technologies in educational contexts including technologies that are based on solidarity and partnership with human beings; the participation and the construction of education communities; eco-empathy; and sustainability. Recently, we also added the topic of food, taste, and wellbeing to the focuses explored by the Foundation.

The following are descriptions of the main projects promoted by Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi.
FARE SCUOLA - Project with the Preschools and the Primary Schools

The name of the project, promoted along with Enel Cuore Onlus, is based on the idea that the school is not something given once and for all, but a right which is built day by day, brick by brick, by practicing it in the spaces; in the didactics; and in the relations with people, the environment, and territory. The goal of the project is to intervene and improve the quality of school spaces – interpreted as learning contexts. Over the course of five years, the Foundation has worked with 89 state preschools and primary schools within the national territory of Italy.

The possible interventions aim to qualify the school environment by proposing new and different sensory qualities by means of colours, lighting, furniture, and communication proposals. The research has involved more than 30 different professional designers and architects, which has allowed us to re-think with them and the teachers the spaces for the daily activities such as classrooms, labs, and outdoor areas and also spaces that are generally misused or neglected such as corridors, lobbies, and entrance halls. The entire process also offers formative opportunities that engage the officials and teachers of the schools involved in a dialogue with the educational experience of Reggio Emilia.

FA.C.E. - Becoming Educating Communities

The project FA.C.E., Farsi Comunità Educanti (FA.C.E. – Becoming Educating Communities), is developed in response to the Call for Proposals “Prima Infanzia” (Early Childhood) promoted by the social enterprise Con i Bambini. The project aims to enhance the access to educational and care services of children ages 0-6 by promoting the participation of the families, starting from socially disadvantaged families in particular families experiencing economic hardships. The participative paths and co-designing teams establish or amplify the networks of the stakeholders involved in the educational and care services in early childhood within the territories involved: Reggio Emilia, Teramo, Napoli, and Palermo. For each city, areas of complexity have been identified in relation to particular social issues such as a high presence of immigrants, post-earthquake conditions, relevant numbers of early school leavers, or high illegality rate among young people.

The first year of the project has allowed us to map the needs of all the cities involved by engaging the families and to create local participation paths to integrate the early childhood educational services. The results will be shared at both the local and national level. Then, through co-designing, pilot activities will be implemented in every territory to support the key role of the families and of the communities.
opportunities for every day learning and that children actively build, through reciprocity and sharing, their own vision of the world by means of play. In our digital age, scintillae represents a learning context characterized by a natural and playful approach to digital technology where the physical and digital worlds mingle, creating unexpected and unusual encounters while learning, designing, and constructing knowledge.

scintillae - Play and Learning in the Digital Age

scintillae is an experimental research project exploring the relation between play and learning in the digital age. It is developed in partnership with The LEGO Foundation, at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center. scintillae creates and offers contexts where the expressive potential of play and digital tools generate ideas, connections, and new knowledge. The project is based on the assumption that the playful dimension offers
TIDA - Tinkering in the Digital Age

TIDA is a research project promoted by the Tinkering Studio at Exploratorium in San Francisco and LEGO Idea Studio at the LEGO Foundation, in collaboration with the Lifelong Kindergarten at MIT MediaLab in Boston and the Fondazione Reggio Children-Centro Loris Malaguzzi. At the local level, our Foundation has created a research group involving Isti-istituzione Scuole e Nidi d’Infanzia and Officina Educativa of the Comune di Reggio Emilia, and the Reggio Children company. This local group has jointly developed, each one in its own capacity and facilities, local research in coordination with the international partners.

This project that ended early in the year aimed to explore how the integration of new digital technologies with traditional physical materials can enhance children’s play and learning through tinkering. The research was focused on tinkering experiences in relation to coding through light play, a combination of lights and movements that can be programmed through an app on a tablet. Four residencies were held during the two years of the project in each of the partners’ facilities allowing researchers to better know each other and enhance mutual understanding.

The project outcomes included the development of computational tinkering activities and documented moments of play and learning. All of them were shared during conferences, public workshops, publications, and social media.

Cluster - Educating City

Educating City is an industrial research project funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The project, developed between 2014 and 2018, has involved the Foundation as a partner in a network of more than 20 partners among information and communication technology companies, universities, and research centers. The project aims to investigate possible modes through which processes of construction of knowledge take place thanks to digital technologies. The attempt was to propose innovative contexts integrated in the daily life of children, teachers, and schools, where children relate to the devices in a complex way by sharing research hypothesis, elaborations, and common constructions.

Pause - Atelier of Tastes

Pause, located at the restaurant and coffee shop within the Loris Malaguzzi International Center, is a project dedicated to food and a place. The experience with food becomes poly-sensory, creative, and curious. The project has its origins and inspiration from the kitchens of the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia where the choice of having in-house kitchens has a strong pedagogical and cultural meaning.

It is a place where it is possible to experiment and participate in a rich experience with food, also through ateliers about the languages of food conceived for both children and adults. Included in the collaboration are the cooks as well as professionals coming from other facilities. The focus is on the quality of raw materials, on tradition and innovation, on local and seasonal food, and on food biodiversity. In 2017, Pause-Atelier of tastes was transformed when it became a limited liability company and now the Foundation owns 100% of the shares. It becomes a new research lab with new objectives and new projects consistent with the mission of the Foundation.

Following its international nature and the idea that research is developed through solidarity in a mutual exchange, the Foundation is also partnering in projects of decentralized cooperation in both cases co-funded by the Italian Agency for Development cooperation (AICS).
PARTICIDADE

Promoted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia together with a broad network of institutions and associations both in Italy and in Mozambique. The project started in April 2018 and will last for two years. It aims to improve the systems of territorial governance and services through institutional strengthening and the expertise of the Municipalities of Maputo and Pemba following three lines of action:

• urban planning interventions and regeneration processes based on an integrated urban and social methodology, involving local communities together with local authorities;

• re-definition of educational services and design of extra-curricular activities with the active involvement of teachers and staff from the third sector; and

• strengthening the ability of municipalities to offer professional development to adults and youth.

PACE - Partnership for a New Approach to Early Childhood Education

Promoted by Reggio Terzo Mondo in collaboration with the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers – Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, the Palestinian Ministry of Education, the cultural association Ibd’a and the Latin, Greek-Catholic, and Greek-Orthodox Patriarchates of Jerusalem. PACE is committed to promoting the activation of an integrated public-private education system starting from three main areas. The role of our Foundation is to work with local partners in order to create conditions for the creation of early childhood national policy, forethinking the quality of educational spaces and the design of welcoming places for parents, teachers, and children. PACE supports educational activities for the opening of a Pilot Center for Creative Reuse of natural and waste materials in Bethlehem. The Center will also offer professional development initiatives and workshops for teachers.
REMIDA - The Creative Recycling Centre

REMIDA is a cultural project focused on sustainability, creativity, and research on scrap materials promoted by Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers – Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Iren, and run by Fondazione Reggio Children – Centro Loris Malaguzzi. It fosters the idea that scraps, usually defined as imperfect, are holders of an ethical message, able to stir reflections and to propose themselves as an educational resource, thus avoiding the definition of “useless” and “waste.” REMIDA is a political, economic, and social message about sustainability. Over the years, REMIDA gave life to a network of other centers that share the same objectives and values and that is now composed of 14 different facilities (eight in Italy and six abroad).

Reggionarra

The Foundation Reggio Children signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” between the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres – Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Farmacie Comunali Riunite (Municipal Pharmacies), the Foundation I Teatri, the National Ballet Foundation Aterballetto, the Istituto di Alta Formazione A. Peri, and Reggio Children Srl to promote and co-design Reggionarra. Reggionarra is a cultural project born out of the idea that every person has a natural narration talent, which can transform every smallest daily event into an extraordinary life experience. The project takes place in the course of the year with different appointments including training paths for parents, narrative moments in the schools, and public events such as the annual La Notte dei racconti (The Night of Stories) that occurs on February 20. In the spring, La Notte dei racconti is an event that engages the whole city and turns Reggio Emilia into the “city of stories” during which professional narrators and theatre companies, along with parents, perform as storytellers. Different venues transform into narrative spaces dedicated to the listening of accounts, fairy tales, and animated readings.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Note

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Protagonists in the Research:
Children, Adults, and the Land

This research spills out from the tiny art studio in a kindergarten classroom and the forest at the back of the playground at R. L. Beattie Public School, located in Sudbury (also known as the City of Lakes) in Northeastern Ontario on the traditional territories of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. It builds upon a year-long “pathways” study engaged in by Julie and the twenty-eight 4- and 5-year-olds in her class. The children have been developing theories about “pathways” through investigations into balance, movement, and directionality, and then pathways inside bodies (digestive, respiratory, nerves); pathways of natural and man-made materials; and pathways of electrical circuits and electricity. In the spring, the children display a newfound interest in exploring the water pathways flowing into the playground. Julie wishes to tap into the children’s capacity to document their thinking through art media as a way to deepen and reveal their learning. She wonders, “How does the choice of material and the approach change what and how things are learned?” She invites Sophie to join her and the children in researching this question, and Sharon to document the research process.

Julie’s process with the children emerges from her observation and documentation of their thinking and theories, as they engage with materials and each other. To our research, she not only brings her knowledge of these particular children, individually and as a group, but also her capacity to identify and connect the big ideas they have been exploring. This year, she is quite aware of the children’s capacity to sustain research over time.
from?” The children tell us they are interested in learning more about water pathways. Specifically, they are curious how the tree gets water and moves up the tree to the leaves and branches. “What are water pathways?” Together, Julie, Sophie, and Sharon consider ways to follow these questions.

Reggio Emilia Pedagogies and Ecological Research

Rinaldi (2003) encourages educators to consider “research as an attitude and an approach in everyday living, in schools and in life . . . as a way of thinking for ourselves and thinking with others, a way of relating with others, with the world around us and with life” (p. 2). These reciprocal relationships are what connect us to the northern place where we work and live, and to others (human and non-human) that live alongside us. Just as Rinaldi (2006) states, “We see ourselves as a small part of a broader, integrated knowledge that holds the universe together” (p. 65).

Reggio’s pedagogy of the hundred languages upholds the right of expression in many forms and reminds, “there are multiple ways of seeing and multiple ways of being” (Reggio Children, 2019). By introducing art materials and field research, we hope to provide many languages of expression that signal “something different is going on,” as the artist creates new strategies, a different way of thinking, new methods of research, and an encounter with learning and ecology. Learning through natural materials also invites different strategies and thinking – different pathways that link to place and ecology.

The Research Context

The creek that runs through the small forest at the base of a small rocky mountain is part of the watershed of Lake Nepahwin, visible from the top of the mountain. The movement of water that overflows into the school playground in the spring has changed over time due to land use and construction, including housing, the school, and the surrounding suburban neighborhood. In the spring, the freeze, melt, and runoff from the terrain create water pathways on the school playground. The children often follow the small streams, peek through the fencing, and ask, “Where does the water go?” and “Where does it come from?” The children tell us they are interested in learning more about water pathways.
The Water Pathway Research Process

In response to Julie’s intentions and observations, Sophie sketches a process for the week that includes research in the forest-creek behind the school as well as introducing charcoal, graphite, drawing pens, and watercolors as means to observe, listen, learn, and document. Where the children had begun by looking down at the streamlets in the schoolyard, Sophie invites looking below (where does water come from and go, what is under the soil), looking up (how does water travel from the ground to the trees and circulate back again), and looking from above (what is the canopy, what systems and connections can we see). She proposes a series of daily walks for each of the directions and the children are invited in teams to think about their water pathways questions. During each walk, a range of materials and long “field books” are used for documentation. Each day a layer is added. This layering invites engagement with the complexity of the ecosystems.

We take field walks, gather natural materials that reflect our observations and questions and that provide clues about water pathways. We also spend time studying with art materials as a part of our research process. At least two circle meetings in the day are scheduled with all of the children. During these meetings, Julie proposes a topic or question for discussion based on our observations, new media are introduced, children’s work is revisited, and individual or small groups of children are asked to share their learning and thinking. Adults meet two to three times per day – in the morning, during breaks, and at the end of the day after the children have left – to reflect, shift, and prepare materials in response to new directions and questions.

Macro and Micro Research: Different Vantage Points, New Relationships

On the first day, we begin the research by re-posing the children’s questions back to them, “Where does the water come from? And where is it going?” These questions are interesting to us because they are ecological questions pertaining not only to water, but also to materiality and the learning process. When Sophie introduces the charcoal, she asks the children to consider, “Where does it come from?” Keason responds, “This is from a fire pit. It starts like wood and then you burn it. Then it looks like this…. I know because we have a fire in my backyard.”

As children’s bodies make contact with charcoal, they form what Julie calls “visceral relationships.” These encounters, between human and non-human bodies, create what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call assemblages, a network of new relationships. These new relationships are immediately evident to us. Julie reflects:

As they darken their hands and blacken the papers with the earthy charcoal, their faces expressed curiosity, happiness, interest, and intent. They gazed at their hands in awe as the charcoal smattered and impregnated their skin... As they begin to use different techniques such a rubbing, smearing, fingerprinting, and smudging. These spontaneous techniques interested me because the children are so naturally curious that there are no inhibitions and no pre-conceptual understanding. They instinctively use light and dark, rubbing, texture, perspective, reflective light.
Sophie shows the children how the charcoal can make different marks depending on how it is placed (on its end or on its side) and how it moves on the paper. She positions a branch collected on our morning walk in the middle of the table so the children can see the charcoal drawing in relation to the branch and its bark. In so doing, she creates another relationship.

When we go to the forested area behind the school, to draw in pairs what we see on the ground on long pieces of paper, some of the children use tracing paper and Conté crayons to make bark rubbings, thereby forming a new relationship with the tree.

Different vantage points along the creek, in the bush, and on the small mountain behind the school as well as drawing from a distance and up close create alternative possibilities for noticing and forming relationships at macro and micro levels. These new discoveries appear in the children’s work.

Sophia and Ava notice the underground water visible under the ice melting in the creek and collaborate on an “Underground Water Pathway” drawing (an example of macro-level research). Their drawing “makes visible” connections between the pond, creek, under and on the ground, and the trees and speaks to Sophia and Ava’s attentiveness to these relationships. As Sophia describes their drawing, she traces the water pathway with her finger. “This is the pond at the start and then it goes like this. It is underground.” She describes the small lines on either side of the creek as the roots of the trees. We display all of the “on-the-ground” drawings and invite the children to view the variation in their interpretations.
The next day, we project Sophia and Ava’s drawing onto an 8’ x 4’ sheet of paper on the wall, and place pastels below the paper. Sophie also posts a topographical map of the local lakes, along with a map of the watershed as a further provocation. We wonder if the projection and the scale of the underground pathway drawing will invite children to think about where the water is going and how it connects to other bodies of water, such as the ponds and the adjacent lakes. Sophie is curious to observe if the children will make connections between the puddles and runoff in the school and these macro-scale water pathways and circulations. Within minutes of the children arriving in the morning, the paper is replete with beautifully filled circles and swirling, interconnecting lines.

These interconnections of bodies of water reappear later in the research process when Cohen paints “all the lakes” using watercolors. His use of lines and blues depict the relationships between the many lakes present in this locality.

Similarly, yet unique to her observations, Zoe’s dramatic “Underground Water Pipes” watercolor painting, with its black background and red and blue man-made pathways, displays thinking at a macro systems level. The red is the “hot” water and blue the “cold” water that travels in the underground pipes to the house from the lakes.
Same Materials, Different Research Processes

The children’s individual research processes highlight for us the constantly changing network of relations that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) speak of, and how the materials are also “in relation,” in this case, to the bodies they encounter, each affording different research pathways and trajectories.

Using black, fine-tipped markers the children document (at the micro level) what they notice about the water, moss, bark, sticks, and leaves that they collect on a walk along the creek. Although all of the children use the same medium, each child researches and observes different elements, develops different theories, and comes to different understandings. Such close observation leads to new discoveries, such as the seeds hidden inside a pine cone and the rotting inner wood of a stick.

Zoe and June look at the pinecone together, comparing what they notice and how they will each approach the task of drawing it:

Zoe: Look it goes around and around and around.

June: I think I can draw it if I make it go into a circle.
June: I first drew it like this (standing it up)...then I drew it from the pointy side (top view)...then I drew it from the bottom. I started from the inside out and then I drew the outside of the circle and then the inside of this one.

June's research focuses on three different perspectives and her approach to drawing. In contrast, Macy's research focuses on the various kinds of lines she notices in the bark. First, Macy draws three different versions of the bark, while exploring the small lines and dots that she notices. Then, she explores the texture of the bark by shading with the edge of the charcoal in the final version. Next, using a method for recording demonstrated by her teacher, Macy records line types – straight, slanty, dots, and squiggly (found at the top of her page as well as at the bottom left of her page). With a check mark, or an X, she includes or excludes the line types, saying, “not a dot, not a squiggly line....”

As the children draw a branch with a rotted center, an earlier question – “What can water go through?” – now becomes a more defined question – “Can water go through wood?” This question is taken up several times in circle discussions, which leads to hearty debates about what water can and cannot go through. After our week together, Julie takes up this question by providing different materials so that the children can test their theories.
The Strong Desire to Connect and Interconnect

One of the 4-year-olds, Finn, is a big thinker and contributor to the overall research project. Finn elucidates for us a desire for connection that children in their research and in this pathway project appear to be seeking. From an outsider’s perspective, Finn’s work is different and might appear to be unrelated to the work of the others. We attempt, however, to not privilege one way of thinking over another, but actively seek to understand each expression and the relationships that exist for children and for ourselves. Rinaldi (2004) cautions that the attitude of research, so evident in young children, can be easily destroyed with quick answers and certainty. Intuiting that this disruption of regularity might be quite important, Julie wants to document his thinking. Her openness to divergent and unexpected directions is critical at this juncture.

Using photo and video, Julie leans in. Other children finish working with the large-scale drawing on the ground, but Finn is not satisfied. He works diligently to make sure every line that the children made is touching or connected to another. Some of these connections require him to go off the paper and onto the floor.

Julie identifies similarities between Finn’s drawings, what he is describing, and his movements outdoors. She recalls an experience during our walks when Finn noticed an ice block that formed inside an old car tire. The tire was partially embedded in the mud and dirt at the bottom of a small ravine. When he stood on it, the tire rocked back and forth, and pushed out the water.

Finn incorporates this memory of the pump into his drawing. He pumps his foot on one of the circles that he has drawn, and describes how the pump connects to spiraling lines to make clouds:

Finn: So I made a pathway with all of this paper… now I am thinking that I should make it real like a real machine… This is where we pump it with our foot then all of this works (pointing to the pathways around the paper). This real machine that I make will work and I won’t give up until it works… I need to finish drawing it and then I am going to make it real.

Julie: How?

Finn: A real life machine that uses parts.

Finn: Pump the air and then it goes through the wire and then it goes all the way around the whole thing. Then the machine pushes the air out the tube. It’s a puff of smoke and that makes a cloud. The air then shoots up the tube into the air.
Pivot Moments: An Intensification of Life

There are junctures in our research that are pivotal, where a comment, an idea, or a question creates energy in the room that cannot be denied. Such a moment occurs when Julie brings Finn’s ideas to the circle. Finn describes his project and expresses a desire to make his cloud pump “3D” and “real.” The children are intrigued! Davie, one of the children expresses this desire, “Don’t you wish you could make something real?” A lively discussion erupts. The children pursue this idea of making something real, with vigor, thinking about how they could create in 2D, 3D, 4D, and even 5D!

After revisiting his work with the other children in circle, Finn immediately begins to build his cloud machine using materials in the classroom.

Finn: This part turns on the light. You push the switch and then the electricity goes up the wire and into this light bulb. It would be great if it would turn off those lights... (he is pointing at the classroom lights).

These wires are all connected with this (pointing at the clips in his hands). You need to make sure that the ends go into something or they are not connected. If it doesn’t work you need to try all kinds of different things to make sure that it fits.

These tubes are good for making sure things can go across. See! If the air or water wants to go to the other side you need to make sure that you use these.

Later when we – Julie, Sophie, and Sharon – meet to discuss Finn’s work and his thinking, we recognize that he is highlighting the interconnection of all things, linking the ice in the water pathway to a complex and interconnected system that creates clouds.

In our research process there are many such moments where life is intensified. A question is asked, a comment shared, and the energy in the room changes. We are captivated. Sometimes these moments underscore what we have all been thinking and experiencing, such as when later Henry exclaims, “Everything is a pathway!”

This intensification of life represents junctures, places to pause and consider significance, moments for decision-making regarding the directions the research could take next. We adapt, change directions, and plans in response to these junctures. For instance, after seeing the effect of working with small drawings, we introduce large-scale drawings (on the wall and on the floor) as a way to engage the children differently with larger collaborative compositions. We bring clay on one of our walks as an invitation to interact with the mountain by creating work in, on, and with the hill and trees. Clay is of the earth. It molds around it and reveals traces and patterns. In another example, the children speak of movement up and down. Coincidentally, we introduce stitching as a stitch goes in and through the material like a water pathway weaves in and through the playground and forest, and up and down through the ground like a stitch up and down through the material.
We also decide that interviews with particular children will provide yet another way for the children to reflect and articulate what they have been learning and observing. Julie presents children with their collected work from the week and revisits their experiences using different media and what they discovered.

The Potentialities in Layering Languages of Expression

Vea Vecchi (2018) reminds us about the potential of multiple languages and the transformation from one symbolic language to another that offers clarity and something new. We observe that the art materials have indeed invited different perspectives and observations of the land and its topography as well as of the entire circulating water pathways from the earth to the sky, through the plants and trees, under our feet, and in our hands. Charcoal and graphite enable children to discover textures, as they make comparisons between the textures of charcoal and the tree of the bark and the coal in the earth. The pen affords thinking about the outline and details such as the seeds of a pine cone, the veins of a leaf, or the lines on the bark of small branches, lines which the children identified as pathways. Painting with watercolor on long paper facilitates making long strokes, of pathways defined by color, and using water as a medium. Pressing clay into the rocks allows children to see the cracks or pathways in the rock and the patterns in tree bark. Clay dries and changes with exposure to the air. Stitching, using their drawings of natural materials as a design, creates new pathways that go up and down, in and out. The overlay mapping enables children to think about the intersections of pathways and to see the connections between the water pathways on the ground, the pathways of trees under the canopy, and eventually of the lake visible from the top of the mountain located behind the school. Drawing on a large scale evokes thinking about the connections between waterways – the stream, the water under the ice, under the ground, in the lakes, and in the clouds. The materials allow the children to articulate felt knowledge, embodied knowledge, and observations through tools that invite this expression, when verbal expression is not available to them or when they cannot express what is needed to be expressed. As an artist, Sophie finds this in her own practice:

Sometimes a drawing can express what I am trying to say, sometimes a series of lines makes connections that words don’t express, and sometimes I lean into another language to speak to things that are difficult to define or speak. Each material has its own expression.

Revisiting Julie’s wish for this research, our intent was to tap into children’s capacity to utilize the languages of art media, to explore how the materials might deepen their thinking or take it in new directions, and to determine whether their art making would serve as a form of documentation.

Julie: I saw in children’s documentation and art making clear indications of the meaning they were constructing, their theories, their understandings about water pathways. I was surprised and delighted by how the children used media to express their ideas and make new connections. As the children began to discuss their ideas and understanding of pathways in reference to materials, we could see and hear them making reference to their artistic experi-
ences with Sophie as a way to further their thinking and ask new questions.

Sophie: Thinking through the materials and art making is research and documentation in process. The artworks are not separate “objects.” And, just as the children could express what they were thinking through their hands, I could teach through the materials, through the possibilities of each, and through the process in verbal and nonverbal ways. The different works express the material, the making, the thinking, and the ecology.

Sharon: Often, the children expressed their understanding of pathways through their bodies; drawing in the air or on a page the way the pathway goes. Through video we saw this embodied way of understanding the world, as meaningful to the children, and interconnected with the physicality of the water. Through video, photo, and audio we create “assemblages,” more complete re-presentations of this experience for our own reflection as well as to share with parents, children, and other educators.

Co-researching and Professional Development

Our stance, informed by the Reggio Emilia approach, views schools and classrooms as places of research; the children, adults, and land as protagonists; and the research that occurs in these places as relational in nature and tightly tied to its context. Rinaldi (2006) reminds us that “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” (p. 137). We argue that the research process itself is pedagogical and also ecological. It is pedagogical because it is in the process of exchange with others that teachers are able to continuously question and verify their theories related to practice (Rinaldi, 2003). It is ecological because when research is embedded in its natural context (land, water, rock, forest), we are immediately engaged in considering broader ecological relationships and the implications of our human presence, and also because, by its ecological process, it is organic. Our project also demonstrates that “in education and child development, linearity and progression are valued qualities but when, as in the [research] rhizome, there is a multiplicity of interconnected thoughts going off in other directions, linearity and progression are no longer applicable or useful” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 117).

Reflecting about how this experience supports her professional learning, Julie shares:

This week was a unique opportunity to pose my own questions, to engage with people with expertise different from mine, who were willing to support me in my journey to dig deeper with the children, particularly in this inquiry of water pathways. When we research with children, and we have an attitude of curiosity, we are co-learners. We live in uncertainty—we don’t know what will happen or what direction the research will take. There are feelings of vulnerability, and for me, pushing against the comfortable is where there is growth. Professional growth.

Teachers as researchers who work in new ways with new languages are thought of differently, promoted from practitioners and implementers to “authors of pedagogical paths and processes” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 99). In our work we view the teacher/artist as active rather than passive, one who prefers to construct knowledge with others, and one who understands learning as an evolving and changing process. As Julie points out, accepting our vulnerability, our doubts, and our mistakes, creates space for learning, and creating. Not being certain opens us to take on an attitude of research and develop the requisite skills of listening to another, in this case, the children and the land.

Deep Listening to Ecologies: Each Other, the Land, and the Water

When we review our documentation of children interacting with the forest, creek, and mountain through their hands and feet, and with art materials, we see their capacity for deep empathetic and ecological listening. This “radical dialogue” described by Dahlberg and Moss (2004) occurs when we enter a space where “both teacher and child are actively listening and trying to construct meaning out of the situation” (p. 101). Julie reflects on how this deep listening to interrelationships affected her:

The process gave me a deeper understanding of what it means to listen. It allowed me to be present with the children in a different
way and to really listen to the verbal and non-verbal communication of the children during the exploration of materials and new ideas. Being present means really being able to listen; taking the time to go deeper with the child or children. Being present allowed me to see even the smallest intricacies that might go unnoticed. For example, when June moved the acorn slightly to see another perspective, or to observe Finn’s small movements pumping his drawing with his foot and making connections to what I had seen him do outside.

Through this article, we describe our research process as well as its structure. One that allowed for the flexibility to ask new questions and to establish new lines of research. Being in a research stance means being present, open, and attuned to the energies and potentialities in moments of research that shape trajectories. Julie describes:

Being present allowed me to connect to seemingly simple ideas that eventually became big ideas (e.g., don’t you wish you could make it real). Being present helped me act in the moment, as when Henry said “everything in the world is a pathway.” I responded to a buzz amongst the children; a noticeable energy... taking that moment and re-stating it for the group, I think what Henry said is pretty important. What do you think about his idea that everything in the world is a pathway? I listened to the children discuss these ideas, documented their conversations, and then later brought what I heard back to them for further discussion.

At the Ontario Reggio Association Conference in London, Ontario in October 2019, Tiziana Filippini referenced Loris Malaguzzi’s view that the ecosystem is central to the Reggio Emilia approach. This long-standing ecological perspective recognizes that, like a spider web, we must first recognize that we are not isolated but rather connected and interconnected within an ecosystem. Our life journey in this earthly realm moves in relation to the environment, the universe and the cosmos.

In our research, we see children’s embodied relationships to the land through their slow movements in the forest. Their hands and feet communicate deep listening, as does their work. Their understanding of the interconnectedness of all things is evident through their art as documentation, and as shared by Julie:

After the week was over, the children continue on this pathways journey, and I witness the complexity of their ongoing research. The children ask, “How can we make a pathway into the forest using bricks that we found? We want people to know that we were here and that they can follow the pathway to the forest.”

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What Does Retirement Mean for an Early Childhood Educator? Exploring New Possibilities

by Nancy Sadler

Nancy Sadler recently retired as the director and pedagogista of Palisades Preschool, an independent, nonprofit school in Santa Monica, CA, after a 12-year collaboration with her colleagues in the school’s Reggio-inspired transformation process. Nancy 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, shifting to work in private schools, including toddler, preschool, and elementary school settings; working as a teacher and as an administrator. She has participated in study tours to Reggio Emilia and in a variety of learning opportunities associated with “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. Her own childhood play experiences, which included the freedom to make choices about time, interests, materials, settings, and friendships, helped to shape her identity as an educator who holds an image of children as curious, competent learners, and capable creators of culture. Nancy continues her relationship with Palisades Preschool, collaborating with teachers and with the new director, and contributing to the development of the school’s evolving identity as a Reggio-inspired school.

In conversation with Innovations, Nancy reflected on her new endeavors.

How are you supporting new teachers through your work in higher education?

(Since “retiring,” Nancy now serves as an adjunct faculty member at College of the Desert, where she is currently teaching a class in Child Growth and Development, and also serves as an adjunct faculty member at the Palm Desert campus of California State University, San Bernardino, supervising student teachers and intern teachers who are candidates for a California Special Education Teaching Credential.)

At College of the Desert I am inspired to include relevant theory and practice related to the Reggio approach, examples of documentation, and materials experiences in the Child Growth and Development course – an introductory early childhood education class for college students. The large library of images and videos from my years at Palisades Preschool has been very useful. I am able to share with students the theory behind the practice as we analyze videos and photographs that illustrate children’s engagement in rich learning environments.
In these settings, I try to offer a perspective that is “counter-culture” in the field of special education in the United States. Instead of talking about children with “special needs,” I use the phrase, “special rights.” I share suggestions for materials, groupings, and learning environments based on the values of the Reggio approach. For example, in a high school Special Day class of students with Down syndrome, I suggested that the students be offered cameras to photograph their campus and its views of mountains and desert. The photographs were developed into a slide show, making visible their ideas and theories about their school and surroundings. I have also brought copies of articles from Innovations about the Reggio educators’ way of working with children with special rights and encourage student teachers to reflect on these readings.

The dominant culture of special education in the United States is very entrenched in an image of children as having “disorders” and “deficits.” Bringing change to special education settings is quite challenging. Even though some teachers may be interested in trying new strategies, materials and environments, many administrators hold strong beliefs that do not encourage change. Fortunately, at the university level, I have encountered a more open attitude.

What other ways are you supporting early childhood initiatives in your new community?

(In addition to developing her new role with Palisades Preschool as a consultant, Nancy has also been fortunate to create connections with the early childhood community in her new community of Palm Springs, California. Nancy is working in a consulting role with a nonprofit organization, Literacy, Language, and Cultural Centers, Inc. (LiLaC). LiLaC is dedicated to supporting parents of very young children whose home language is Spanish in the Coachella Valley. Through home visits, Parent Partners provide information and
noticed how the little boy responded with a big smile to his mother’s voice as she sang to him; for the next visit I brought a small CD player and a Jose Luis Orozco CD with traditional Spanish language children’s songs. This has led to more observations about the child’s musicality and to further musical learning experiences during the visits.

I also use photographs to create Family Stories that become part of the Family Portfolio kept in the home and archived at the LiLaC office. Additionally, I share the video from the previous visit with the parent and the child to listen to their responses and to provide continuity between visits. The use of the documentation in this setting has been very interesting, and serves as a very beautiful interpretation of the Reggio approach.

Ultimately, LiLaC aspires to have about 60 families and several Parent Partners, and to create a Cultural Center that might include a space for toddler/parent classes, an atelier, and spaces for offices and parent meetings. Besides the home visits, the plan is to have small cohorts of families meet together at the Cultural Center and in the community, forming learning groups beyond that of the family. The executive director is exploring new funding opportunities.

What intentions do you have for your new work as an early childhood educator?

After moving to the desert, I never imagined I would really be “retired,” nor did I expect that I would be working this much. At this point in my career, I am primarily interested in sharing the gifts I have received through my past Reggio Emilia inspired experiences. I also see my work with LiLaC as an opportunity to return to my beginnings as a bilingual kindergarten teacher as I reconnect with Spanish speaking children and their families. My hope is to help bring a fresh image of the child to my new community and to unlock the beauty and poetry of the Reggio approach for educators, parents, and children.

Wonderful opportunities have presented themselves and I have chosen to embrace each one, listening and looking for ways to introduce a different image of the child. In each setting, the opportunity for sharing my perspective is a little different.
How do you imagine your work may develop in the coming year(s)?

I think that like a Reggio-inspired investigation with children, I am not entirely sure of where the work will take me. I am open to possibilities, but also, at this point in my life, I am protective of the time I spend with my family and friends and also of my time in the beautiful desert environment. However, in Loris Malaguzzi’s words:

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 contents 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 (Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 334).

What advice do you have for early childhood educators entering the field today?

When I first began my service as director of Palisades Preschool, I came across a sign that I placed near the school’s entryway to guide us during our transformation and to remind us that our change process continues. The sign reads, “See the Possibilities.” I believe this is good advice for me at this transformative time in my career, and also for other educators who are engaged in the uncertain process of educational change.

REFERENCES

Review of *Shoe and Meter: Children and Measurement*

by Jeanne Goldhaber

Jeanne Goldhaber Ed.D. is an Emerita faculty member in the Early Childhood Program at the University of Vermont where she worked closely with faculty, teachers and students at Campus Children’s School. She is a NAREA Board Member and an Innovations consulting editor. Jeanne is co-author of Pinching, Poking and Pretending: Documenting Toddlers’ Explorations with Clay as well as articles and book chapters that reflect her interest in the process documentation and the role it plays in the promotion of reflective practice and professional development. In 2014, Jeanne and a group of Vermont early childhood educators met regularly to discuss and analyze Shoe and Meter to further their understanding of the role documentation plays in supporting both children and teachers as co-researchers. This book review reflects much of what they learned together during these sessions.

If we are interested in exploring the genesis and meanings that children construct in their encounters with reality, if we want to know more about the procedures of thought and action used by individual children in their learning processes, then we must document not only that which took place around the child, but above all that which we think has taken place within the child.

– Sergio Spaggiari (Castagnetti & Vecchi, 1997, p. 11-12)

*Shoe and Meter: Children and Measurement* is one of Reggio Children’s earliest publications and I would argue, one of its most powerful. It documents a group of preschoolers’ efforts to figure out the measurements of a classroom table so that the school carpenter can build another one to serve as an additional worktable. He says, “I need the measurements…. Do you know how to make measurements?” To which the children reply, “And what about you? Do you really know how to make a table exactly like this one?” (p. 16). With that provocation, the children embark on a 10-day journey that leads them to a shared understanding of the concepts of and relationships between measurement and number.

*Shoe and Meter* is one of Reggio Children’s first “little” books (all of 103 pages, with half of them in Italian!) that documents the children’s journey with an extraordinarily high level of detail. It is particularly noteworthy
that this complex, highly interactive investigation was documented without the support of digital cameras and modern computers, but rather with the use of 35mm cameras, audio recorders, and pen and paper (an important point to note for programs today that do not have access to sophisticated technology).

Yet, these 103 pages weave together the complex evolution of the thinking of the children and teachers, offering the reader the opportunity to think alongside the book’s protagonists. Transcripts of the children’s discussions, images of the children’s interactions with each other and materials, and the inclusion of related and increasingly representational artifacts narrate a story of invention and collaboration. These photographs, transcripts, and artifacts serve as a visual record – sources of data – for readers to study, ponder, and discuss. For example, early in the experience, the children decide they need to draw the table that is serving as the model so they can “understand it” (p. 21). A series of photographs document the children as they discuss this decision, including one photograph that captures a moment when the children are gathered around a table, two of the children sitting with paper and pencil before them and three looking on. One of the seated children, pencil in hand, is looking down intently as he draws, while the second child has stopped for the moment to watch him. Their drawings, detailed studies of the table as primarily a surface that holds a bottle, glasses, and a computer are included on the next page. Together, the images of the children and of the two drawings capture not only what the children “understand” about the table at this stage, but also the level of shared engagement, attention, and interest in each others’ ideas that they brought to the experience.

As the experience unfolds, the children invent several different strategies to move toward an understanding of the need for more invariant and conventional tools, a journey that includes the use of their body parts, kitchen tools, shoes, multiple “meters” and finally, “the” meter. The children’s drawings become increasingly representational and reflective of the group’s shared learning. Readers can recognize in the final blueprint prepared for the carpenter not only the children’s extraordinary intellectual accomplishment but because of the detailed narrative, photographs, and artifacts, we can also appreciate the relational and dynamic process that propelled it.

Thankfully, we are not left entirely on our own to interpret the children’s experiences, as the authors share the teachers’ insights into the children’s theories and meaning-making that ultimately lead them to pedagogical quandaries, decisions, and actions. With every reading I am struck by the generosity of the educators who shared this work with us so that we learn not only about the children’s experiences and developing theories, but also about the very act of documenting. As the children’s understanding of and ability to manipulate the concepts of measurement and number develop, we the readers are invited to study the progression of the children’s theories documented in their debates, highlighted by moments of clarity and confusion, and in their drawings that evolve from pictorial representations to a highly symbolic blueprint. In short, this little book offers the reader insights into how one might record, analyze, and share in a public format the extraordinary world of co-invention that occurs in the daily lives of children and their teachers.

In short, this little book offers the reader insights into how one might record, analyze, and share in a public format the extraordinary world of co-invention that occurs in the daily lives of children and their teachers.

Before closing, I would like to bring your attention to a short and easily overlooked passage entitled “Preliminary note” that you can find on the backside of the Title Page. I like to read it as a whisper: “...the comments on the project and images were edited from texts written by Loris Malaguzzi and recordings of conversations with him, brought together to form an integral text” (Preliminary note).
The authors explain that Malaguzzi “often met with the teachers to discuss and interpret the documentary material together with them.” And so we learn that the guiding voice of Loris Malaguzzi, the pedagogical founder of the Reggio approach, is present throughout this book. For those of us old enough and fortunate enough to have heard Malaguzzi in person, this book reminds us of his genius—his ability to articulate unfamiliar concepts in terms that made them accessible to those of us less knowledgeable in subject matter such as physics, mathematics, and psychology and to relate those concepts to children’s determined efforts to make meaning of their physical, logico-mathematical, and relational worlds. The authors of Shoe and Meter describe the conversations between Malaguzzi and the teachers as “precious occasions” (Preliminary note). This little book then, is a precious trace of the depth and breadth of the legacy of Loris Malaguzzi.

And so with Malaguzzi on our minds (and in our hearts), I would like to revisit this review’s opening excerpt from Shoe and Meter in which Sergio Spaggiari, director of the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia when this book was published, urges us to “document not only that which took place around the child, but above all that which we think has taken place within the child” (p. 12). Spaggiari is crediting the child with an inner intellectual and emotional life that we adults can too easily overlook and/or discount. Children are meaning makers: their efforts to relate what they know to what the world presents are serious acts of discovery and invention. This image of the child requires us to pay attention, to listen, to observe, to record. But we mustn’t stop there. Spaggiari is inviting us to take a leap, to move beyond the simple recording of what we observe to the always subjective posit of what we think. This leap requires courage, the courage to give voice to one’s theories and to invite others to listen and to offer alternative perspectives. Perhaps this little book can serve as a leaping off point—a provocation if you will—to pay attention, to listen, to observe, to record, and to gather with colleagues to make meaning of “that which we think has taken place within the child” (p. 12). It is exactly in this spirit that the children embarked on their journey, driven by the shared joy of discovery and invention, and the willingness—the courage—to voice, and to borrow, and to debate their ideas, theories, and uncertainties with each other.

Children are meaning makers: their efforts to relate what they know to what the world presents are serious acts of discovery and invention. This image of the child requires us to pay attention, to listen, to observe, to record.

It is exactly in this spirit that the children embarked on their journey, driven by the shared joy of discovery and invention, and the willingness—the courage—to voice, and to borrow, and to debate their ideas, theories, and uncertainties with each other. Surely we can too.

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Reggio Children’s Unheard Voices of Children Series

Sergio Spaggiari, then director of the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers, offers the following words to convey the meaning of Reggio Children's Unheard Voices of Children Series:

Very few writers (perhaps Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll, and Ian MacEwan) have been able to give us the true voice of childhood without falling into falsifications or distortions. In books written by adults, in fact, the words of children often take on a strange artificial sweetness that makes them lose their freshness and originality.

Who could claim, then, to have ever heard or read the true, direct voice of children? Only a few adults could give an affirmative reply to this question, also because in all of the world literature children have certainly been the most gagged and silenced subjects. It seems to be an authentic, though perhaps unconscious, conspiracy of silence. But children talk, and they have always talked, though their words are rarely listened to and leave no trace. The words of children may at times seem strangely similar to our own, but they recall faraway and unknown worlds and meanings to which we as adults too often remain deaf and insensitive.

Giving a voice to childhood thus means recognizing children’s right to be the primary authors of their lives. Giving a voice to children is the courageous adventure of this editorial series that urges us to open our ears and listen to this “unheard voice.”

Note
Please visit our store at store.reggioalliance.org to purchase copies from the Unheard Voice of Children Series (Tenderness, The Fountains, A Journey into the Rights of Children, The Little Ones of Silent Movies, and Shoe and Meter).
"The Wonder of Learning" as Professional Development: Insights from the Boston Family, A Reunion

by Stephanie Cox Suárez, Susan Twombly, Megina Baker, Isabela Garcia Senent, Charlene Sherbourne, Lisa Porter Kuh, Marina Boni, and Amber Lowe

Stephanie Cox Suárez is a clinical associate professor in special education at Boston University, Wheelock College of Education and Human Development. She is also the founding director of the Documentation Studio which has been serving teachers in the New England area since 2009.

Susan Twombly is a member of the Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network (BARIN). She recently retired as the director of the Infant Toddler Children’s Center in Acton, MA, and is an instructor in early childhood education at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA.

Megina Baker is a lecturer in the Early Childhood Education program at Boston University’s Wheelock College of Education and Human Development. She is a former researcher on the Pedagogy of Play project at Project Zero, and taught in preschool and kindergarten for over ten years. She is a co-author of Children at the Center: Transforming Early Childhood Education in the Boston Public School and collaborated in coordinating professional development for local educators in conjunction with “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition in Boston.

Isabela García Senent is the founder and executive director of Fundación PLAY. She is an adjunct professor in early childhood at University of Massachusetts Boston and a board member of BARIN and Writers, Inc.

Charlene Sherbourne is the education manager for the Worcester Child Development Head Start Program where she successfully instituted the Reggio approach within the programs. For the past 20 years she has been adjunct faculty in early childhood education for Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State University.

Lisa Porter Kuh, Ph.D., is the director of early education for the city of Somerville, MA. She has over thirty years experience in early childhood as a classroom teacher, professor, teacher trainer, researcher, and district leader.

Marina Boni is a program director in the department of early childhood (P-2) of the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Her work encompasses coaching teachers, facilitating professional development, and collaborating on the development of the Focus curricula used in BPS. Previously, Marina taught children ages 15 months to six years in Cambridge.

Amber Lowe is a former teacher and current manager of Strategic Partnerships and reggio-inspired Programs at The Advent School, a reggio-inspired progressive elementary school with a social justice mission. Amber is also the president-elect of BARIN.
school districts and invited professional development organizers from these districts to the planning table including: Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and Brookline. We widened our scope to educators in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut; inviting them to a variety of professional development events that surrounded “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. Student interns contacted every licensed childcare provider in the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont via phone calls and mailings. As a higher education institution we were able to provide continuing education units for conferences and 10-hour courses we called, “Wonder of Learning 101” and “Wonder of Learning 102.”

Preparing for Wonder:
Outreach to Find our Host Site

Sue Twombly, BARIN board member, and instructor at the Graduate School of Education, Lesley University  

I fondly remember when an earlier exhibit from Reggio Emilia came to Boston in the 1980s. After that momentous visit, I began to learn as much as I could about the Reggio Emilia schools. My vision for what quality education could look like was forever changed. It therefore seemed only fitting that “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit should come to Boston. I hoped that another teacher (or many) would encounter the exhibit and find their view of what is possible completely changed.

This reunion with an old friend was long overdue, but since the 1980s our family has grown and the simple grassroots exhibit I saw years ago would not work in the overpriced and overdeveloped city that Boston has become. Where were we going to find an attractive, accessible, and inexpensive space for six months to fit a 7,000 square foot exhibit? Who would be interested and able to host an exhibit about early education in a city that hosts many fine art exhibitions and state-of-the-art interactive experiences for families? Could a small group of volunteer educators actually pull this off? Thus began the search for a home for this exhibit. With measuring tape and clipboard in hand, I recruited my husband to join our small band of volunteers in search of a home.

Introduction

Stephanie Cox Suárez, special education faculty, Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development

It can be exciting to have a beloved relative visit and to reconnect with family. “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit was that Italian relative who some of us had not seen in many years, and for many others had never met but had heard so much about. The exhibit coming to Boston felt like a family reunion bringing together educators from across the New England region and beyond who relished the joint excitement of finally being together. The “reunion” planners came from a variety of contexts and this article provides a glimpse of what we experienced as members of this family and ways we want to provide future support to nourish children.

I am the family reunion organizer in my large Mexican-American family. We meet every other year and June 2019 will be our 10th reunion in Tucson, Arizona. I love bringing people together and do this in both my personal and professional lives. As a teacher-educator at Boston University Wheelock, I was grateful that the newly merged Boston University and my beloved Wheelock College agreed to host “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in collaboration with the Boston Area Reggio Inspired Network (BARIN) – a group dedicated to bringing the Reggio approach to educators via workshops and seminars. This collaboration between higher education and local educators was a significant effort and we made conscious decisions to invite as many to the table as possible. Kelly Pellagrini, the unassuming but true leader of these efforts, is a member of BARIN. Two years before the exhibit arrived, she organized coffee and conversations to discuss possibilities of what “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit could bring to Boston. She instilled in us ideas of opening the outreach as wide as possible and making this exhibit free and accessible to everyone. We reached out to other university colleagues at Lesley University, University of Massachusetts Boston, Hebrew College, Harvard University, Tufts University, Bunker Hill Community College, and Greenfield Community College, among others. We targeted public
for this reunion. We measured and walked through all kinds of spaces, at colleges and universities, in public buildings and malls with large lobbies, and in unused schools. Just as we were about to give up the search, we happened to be talking with colleagues at the Wheelock College campus. They did not have a large exhibit space but they did have a campus of closely connected buildings with sunlit spaces. Could we divide up the exhibit to fit into these spaces? With some creative thinking and wonderful timing, housing the exhibit here began to seem like a reality. As it turned out, dividing the exhibit into sections in different spaces actually made the material more accessible to more people. We were able to add seating and reading areas to many of the spaces allowing for small groups to gather and spend quality time with just one portion of the exhibit. The space allowed us to add loose parts inspired by the exhibit topics to each area to help relate the themes to what might be possible in anyone’s classroom.

Magic began to happen. The exhibit became a gathering place for old and new friends in the early childhood family. It became a place for the exchange of ideas and exciting connections. As the momentum built, I wanted to share this magic with others outside of our family and began inviting friends who were not educators. I told a neighbor about the exhibit one day and she brought a parent group from her school to visit. She told me later that she not only could see the relevance of this pedagogy to her children’s education, but that she saw a connection to being present and responding to signs of interest as a new way to relate to her mother who was suffering from dementia. Another artist friend was inspired by the participation of children in the life of the city. She re-conceptualized a project she was working on and invited children and adults to create art together as a way of learning about the animals in our local environment. Their creations will be a prominent part of a parade beside the Charles River in a few weeks.

And, the magic will continue. The fact that a small group of determined volunteers could pull off such a big event has destroyed the idea that early childhood educators are not significant players in our world. We saw the power and the magic of this at “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit, and will continue to find connections and possibilities in more and more ways.

Engaging in Wonder: Collaborating to Design and Provide Professional Development

Megina Baker, lecturer in early childhood education, Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development

As we worked to reconnect with the Reggio Emilia approach, and bring a new “family” of community members into our work, we knew that we not only needed space to facilitate these dialogues, we also needed a format. In our planning we were encouraged to find multiple entry points to facilitate inclusive, accessible, and meaningful connections to existing and emerging relationships.

With Stephanie Cox Suárez, I helped to organize the “Wonder of Learning” Boston Professional Development Committee, which met regularly in the months leading up to and during the exhibits’ stay in Boston. I’d like to share how we worked together to create a menu of professional development opportunities that were well received by educators around the region in hopes that others might be inspired to do this kind of work in their communities.

We reached out to Reggio-inspired colleagues from across programs and contexts – early childhood educators, members of community-based organizations, public schools, faculty in teacher education programs in various colleges, and more. A core group of about 20 people representing all of these groups began meeting monthly. Together, we envisioned and implemented a broad menu of profes-
Inquiry groups. Several members of the professional development team co-led inquiry groups with a particular focus, such as considering documentation-driven learning for older children. These groups met regularly over the course of several months and some continue meeting today long after the exhibit has moved on.

Conferences. In addition to the NAREA conference that was held in Boston in conjunction with the exhibit, we also organized a number of day-long conferences for the local community. For example, when the exhibit arrived in June, we organized a “Community-Policy Dialogue” to elevate the importance of considering an image of the child as a competent, capable citizen. This event brought educators from across the region together in conversation with policymakers. As part of the day, participants created recommendations for the policy community that would support this image of a competent child.

These offerings were developed for and attended by a wide array of contexts and communities. In the next section, we hear from members of several of these communities about their encounters with the exhibit and related professional development experiences.

Isabela Garcia Senent, faculty member at University of Massachusetts Boston, and BARIN board member

In Boston, our family has grown so much since the first exhibit came in 1981. We are a much more diverse and rich city. We measured our success in not only nurturing our current circle of educators but we explicitly reached out to new communities; some of my most meaningful and impactful work was with family child care providers.

Sue Twombly and I developed a full day workshop in English and Spanish for educators. That day was one of my most meaningful teaching experiences. As a Spanish speaker who arrived in Boston a little over 12 years ago, speaking almost no English, I recalled facing the challenges of living in a new context and I felt that many of my early childhood educators and family child care providers in our area also faced similar challenges.

Sue Twombly and I were able to collaborate with colleagues from Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education, whose long-standing collaboration with Reggio Children has been a valuable presence in the Boston area, to offer visitors to “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit an opportunity for facilitated conversations. Drawing on Making Learning Visible (Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001), Project Zero created protocol cards using the “See, Think, Wonder” thinking routine to guide visitors in some slow looking and discussion while viewing the exhibit. We offered workshops to train facilitators, and used the “Wonder of Learning” Boston website to inform visitors about the option to request a facilitator.

Introductory workshops. We co-created a two-hour workshop to introduce newcomers to the core principles of the Reggio Emilia approach. Many members of our team facilitated this workshop over the duration of the exhibit so we were able to offer workshops at least twice a month and more often when requested by visitors. Creating one set of materials in a Google drive that we could share among us made it easier to offer multiple workshops by multiple presenters – another way in which we were able to collaborate with each other. At times, we offered the workshops in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, two languages frequently spoken by early childhood educators and family child care providers in our area.

Wonder of Learning 101 and 102. For educators who had no prior encounters with the Reggio Emilia approach and wanted to take a 10-hour course, several of the members of our professional development team offered a workshop series we dubbed “Wonder of Learning 101”. Held in public schools or community settings, we collaborated to develop a shared syllabus and course materials that formed a more in-depth introduction and included 10 Continuing Education Units. The “Wonder of Learning 102” course focused on how documentation can inform teaching and learning.
country and trying to advance professionally in a language that was not my own. I empathized with their stories as we communicated with ease in our mother language. We shared our passion for education and also discussed the influence that the Reggio Emilia approach had had on me, personally, in thinking about how children best learn and what we do as educators to help promote their development. I remember their enthusiasm and appreciation for having someone who could listen to them and engage in dialogue about philosophical and pedagogical practices in Spanish. This community of early childhood educators had many good ideas about early childhood education, but unfortunately felt that there was not a broad system of professional development and support for them. Of the group of 30 educators, none of them had ever heard about the Reggio Emilia approach. In particular, the discussion about relationships and the role we as educators play in strengthening them among children seemed to really resonate. I thank the family child care providers for so generously sharing their experiences and being open to the ongoing discussions about how we continue to create the best learning environments for all children.

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Head Start Implications for Practice

Carlene Sherbourne, education manager for the Worcester Child Development Head Start Program, Worcester, MA

As I consider the family reunion metaphor, I believe that my staff and I would be the excited cousins coming to meet our wonderful extended family that we have heard so much about. I will say, we were not disappointed in our reunion!

Our program recently committed to aligning our mission and vision to that of the Reggio Emilia approach. We are currently working with a cohort of 30 staff consisting of teachers, teacher assistants, educational coaches, and administrators who applied and were accepted to be part of the cohort. In June of 2018, 10 administrators and educational coaches attended the NAREA conference and were able to tour “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. From this experience, our group was able to develop the framework of the changes that would be put into place for the fall, including the design of pedagogista and atelierista positions. The exhibit helped to define the lens of the Reggio Emilia approach for us; that children are co-creators of their knowledge and that we have the responsibility to bring to life the idea of extending children’s thinking and wondering past the traditional borders into more meaningful learning opportunities.

In late August of 2018, we were able to bring all 30 members of our Reggio cohort to Boston to visit the exhibit and to take part in professional development. The group had a facilitated tour and asked to “See, Think, and Wonder” about what they observed. This allowed the group to truly internalize what they were viewing. They were able to ask questions of our knowledgeable guides related to applying what they saw in the exhibit into practice in their own classrooms. They gazed in awe at the space, time, and freedoms that they saw children had from the detailed panels. They questioned how it would be possible, with the strict regulations of our federally-funded Head Start program, to bring this to life for our children and families. The dialogue was rich and meaningful and productive. What was most important was that we did not leave that experience in Boston having all of our questions answered, but feeling more united than ever to find our own path to make these opportunities come to life for our most at-risk children and families.

As we continue to move forward, “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit may have left Boston, but the impact it made on the practice of our cohort is far reaching. We are about to welcome 15 new members to our cohort. We are collaborating with BARIN to provide several professional development opportunities for the entire group, including visiting programs in the Boston area that are Reggio-inspired. The culture of our program is changing. Our classrooms are now places of collaboration not only between children and teachers, but among teachers, families, and our community. This year we will be hosting our first community art exhibit titled “World of Provocation: Making Learning Visible” at the Worcester Art Museum, where children, families, teachers, and community leaders will come together to celebrate the
Overall, our teachers came away inspired and almost immediately we saw the seeds of projects and inquiry being planted.

Languages of Children” exhibit, and ended with two more hours of learning and debriefing.

Public School Participation

Lisa Kuh, director of early education, Somerville Public Schools, Somerville, MA

Somerville Public School teachers, preschool through second grade, climbed on a big yellow school bus and made the trek to “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit. The journey was only a few miles but in many ways it was light years. Public school norms about how environments look, what curriculum is like, and what freedoms children and teachers have are strong. It can be daunting for a teacher to think about doing things differently and creating new expectations for themselves and children. Our staff prepared for this visit by offering a module called Learning about Reggio Emilia Practices. The module began with two hours of learning about Reggio Emilia, followed by the visit to “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred

Questions from Somerville Public School Early Childhood Educators

Overall, our teachers came away inspired and almost immediately we saw the seeds of projects and inquiry being planted. Bulletin boards began to look different as they reflected children’s learning and told the story, using beautiful artifacts and photographs, of learning experiences. In some rooms, materials became more accessible to children, shifting the opportunities towards independent learning. In addition, two of the teachers involved presented at a day-long BARIN conference, sharing their forays into documentation and its impact on their own and their

children of Worcester Child Development Head Start as capable, contributing members of our society! We are forever grateful for our opportunity to be at this treasured family reunion, for NAREA, for “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit, for BARIN, and for our wonderful bond with Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development.
receive a letter from the mayor inviting to them to think about what would make Boston fairer and more interesting for children. After brainstorming, children construct a model of their idea. For the past couple of years, the models have been exhibited at City Hall, at the Boling Building, and this year they will be at the Boston Society of Architects. Our curriculum puts forth an idea of children as capable, competent citizens with ideas and rights. Through this project, we can see how children think about resolving issues of homelessness and climate change, to name a few.

Over time, we have noticed that teachers have been listening to children's ideas more carefully and have used documentation to guide the process. Similarly to our partners in the nearby Somerville Public Schools, we are continuously challenged by this hard work and ways to sustain the inspiration by supporting teachers as they listen to children and make their learning visible.

**Reflecting on Wonder: Impact on our Communities**

Amber Lowe, president-elect of BARIN, school administrator at The Advent School, Boston, MA

“The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit shares the experiences of children in the preschools and infant-toddler centers in Reggio Emilia. It shows us what is possible when we believe in the full potential of children, when we value and support the knowledge and professionalism of teachers, and when the community, as a whole, invests in early education. Our hope in bringing the exhibit to Boston was that it would inspire and provoke a dialogue about the educational experiences of the youngest citizens in our city. The goal was to cross contexts, cultures, and communities to have the widest impact possible.

During the time the exhibit was in Boston (June 2018 – November 2018), we welcomed over 5,000 visitors; visitors from 31 states and 21 countries. Teachers, educational leaders, policy makers, parents, and children visited the exhibit.

**Marina Boni, program director, Department of Early Childhood, Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA**

I attended the first exhibit from Reggio Emilia, Italy, in Boston 30 years ago. The current exhibit, “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children,” was a way for me to come full circle. Many years ago, the exhibit had a deep impact on me as a young teacher; now in my role in Boston Public Schools, I aspire for the “Wonder of Learning” to inspire teachers the way I was. These words from Loris Malaguzzi (1998) come to mind, “Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before” (p. 82).

In collaboration with my colleague Marie Enochty, we brought together a group of teachers for a “Wonder of Learning 101” course last spring and visited the exhibit with them a couple of times. It was exciting to see their perspectives about children evolve and their desire to try and document their learning. This fall, in collaboration with Melissa Tonachel, David Ramsey, and Brian Gold, we started a documentation seminar and guided a small group of teachers through identifying a focus or question to document throughout the year. In order to ground the teachers, we started out at “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit analyzing these questions: What questions are the Reggio educators asking? Why are the educators asking those questions? How do they ask their questions? What happens when and/or because they ask those questions? We will end the seminar at the documentation studio at Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development where teachers will present panels of their documentation. My hope is that teachers will carry the desire to be researchers and use documentation to deepen their understanding of children’s learning onward, but I have to admit that in a public school district this can be quite challenging.

Inspired by the image of the child in Reggio Emilia, every year in Boston kindergarteners receive a letter from the mayor inviting to them to think about what would make Boston fairer and more interesting for children. After brainstorming, children construct a model of their idea. For the past couple of years, the models have been exhibited at City Hall, at the Boling Building, and this year they will be at the Boston Society of Architects. Our curriculum puts forth an idea of children as capable, competent citizens with ideas and rights. Through this project, we can see how children think about resolving issues of homelessness and climate change, to name a few.

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Inspired by the image of the child in Reggio Emilia, every year in Boston kindergarteners
“The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit offered the educational and wider community in Boston a glimpse into what is possible when a community truly values and invests in the education of its youngest citizens. It is a mirror reflecting back to us where we are on this journey and where we still need to go.

Ultimately, the impact of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in Boston is not to be measured in how many people came or how many courses we offered, but rather in how we, as a community, continue to reflect on our educational practices, to dialogue and imagine new possibilities, and to advocate for high quality education for all children.

We are engaging in this work, this ongoing dialogue and reflection, as we strive to do better for our youngest citizens in Boston and beyond. We are grateful for the mirror that “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit has given our community as we continue on this journey.

In order to deepen the experience of the exhibit, educational leaders, professors, teachers, and community members came together to provide a robust professional development plan, which consisted of more than 60 courses, trainings, workshops, and hands-on experiences. This professional development was offered at low or no cost with the goal of educating the community about the philosophical and pedagogical practices of the schools in Reggio Emilia.

During the final week of the exhibit, Tiziana Filippini, a Reggio Emilia pedagogista and long-time “cousin” to the Boston family, participated in our closing events. We shared our information on the number of visitors and professional offerings but also asked her, “What’s next?” Tiziana offered us a metaphor to help us think more deeply about our work. Tiziana explained that the work of the schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, is not something to take and replicate, but rather it should serve as a mirror – a mirror to better understand ourselves, who we are, and where we want to go.

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CONTINUING THE WONDER:
Next Steps in our Journey

As a group, we were profoundly inspired by both the content of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit, and by the energy and engagement of the early childhood community across the region. We agreed to continue meeting as a leadership group, and are now considering creating a teacher-inquiry network across the region as a way to continue bringing educators across contexts and programs into conversation with each other to engage in inquiry driven by sharing documentation from their classrooms. We plan to start this process in the fall 2019. Interested educators should stay tuned.

REFERENCES


Circularity: "The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children" Exhibition

by Margie Cooper

Margie Cooper is the standing chair of the NAREA board, co-representative of NAREA within the Reggio Children International Network, and a member of the board of directors of the Fondazione Reggio Children–Centro Loris Malaguzzi. Margie is also the founder and executive director of Inspired Practices in Early Education in Roswell, GA.

"Either education is a research situation—and research produces new pedagogy—or it is the provision of a service given to small children, subjecting them within a message that in some way is already pre-fabricated or codified."

–Loris Malaguzzi, Introduction to “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” Exhibit

The North American journey of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition began in 2005 when the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) and Reggio Children entered into discussions as the digital version of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition was ending in the United States. From 1987 to 2005, the continual presence of different editions of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit contributed to the growing understanding of Reggio Emilia’s philosophies and experiences within the North American early childhood community.

As a new organization, the NAREA board debated its capacity to collaborate on such a costly and extensive project with Reggio Children and various host communities that desired the use of an updated exhibit as part of ongoing professional development work in North America. After two years of conversation, debate, and projections, the NAREA board voted unanimously in 2007 to fund and coordinate a newly created exhibition in collaboration with Reggio Children. With this decision, NAREA embraced a spirit of risk-taking and innovation connected to the major challenges that are facing our field of early childhood education. It was a decision to take advantage of a larger vision, which was to create a collaborative plan of study and advocacy for the rights of children, families, and educators in Canada and the United States.

After two years of conversation, debate, and projections, the NAREA board voted unanimously in 2007 to fund and coordinate a newly created exhibition in collaboration with Reggio Children. With this decision, NAREA embraced a spirit of risk-taking and innovation connected to the major challenges that are facing our field of early childhood education. It was a decision to take advantage of a larger vision, which was to create a collaborative plan of study and advocacy for the rights of children, families, and educators in Canada and the United States.
Over the course of 12 years, “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition has traveled to 24 cities in North America representing 20 states in the United States and two provinces in Canada. The exhibition has been a tremendous resource for helping people gain insight into children’s learning processes and how teachers and parents learn along with children. “They learn as a community to become a community” (Delrio, 2011, p. 9). Like the earlier versions of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibitions, the journey of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition in North America will draw to a close when community requests to host it are exhausted.

“The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition tells a story of innovation, research, and development within Reggio Emilia’s storied educational project. The idea of exhibitions came to Loris Malaguzzi and was brought to life through the strong collaborative work and the creativity of many minds, hearts, and hands. The first audiences for exhibitions were the citizens of Reggio Emilia. Giving public visibility to the values, efforts, experiences, and principles generating within the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers has been seen as a responsibility warranted by the community’s investment in them. Transparency, participation, dialogue, collective rights, well-being, assessment, documentation, and open exchange are some of the key concepts that continuously place the municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia in the public realm. As recently as 2017, consideration for the wider community of Reggio Emilia was met with the publication of Charter of Services of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools, which describes in detail the full framework continuing to give life to the municipal education project.

Years ago, when the very first exhibition from Reggio Emilia came to the United States in 1987, then-mayor Giulio Fantuzzi drafted the following words for the catalogue that accompanied it:

The Charter of Services of the Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools under direct management of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia is an instrument of dialogue with the community. Its aim is to enhance the quality of the educational relationships and increase the participation of parents and citizens in the early childhood educational services (p. 9).

The exhibit, originally called “L’occhio se salt ail muro” (The eye, if it leaps over the wall), has already made a name for itself in a number of cities in Europe where it has been shown. It has received praise from representatives of the scientific, cultural and political fields and now that it has been updated, enlarged and about to set out on [an] even longer and more complex journey, we hope that it will be greeted with the same enthusiasm and generate the same positive responses... The messages we would like to
deliver with this exhibit are many: ability and courage to look ahead; fundamental optimism [sic] in the potential of mankind in general and children in particular, confidence that, despite everything, new and wider horizons can be reached; that the rights and destiny of the child should be inseparably linked to those of the adults and finally, the awareness that the child’s need for self-expression and freedom of choice is more important today than ever before in a world where the child is increasingly forgotten and closed out by adults.

Our hope is that these ‘messages’, these values contained in our exhibit will enrich educational debates and studies in every part of the world and will work toward building future cultural relationships and exchanges on an international scale (Fantuzzi, 1987, p. 8).

That first exhibition of which Fantuzzi spoke, “The Hundred Languages of Children: Narrative of the Possible,” set out for North American soil and was welcomed initially in San Francisco in 1987. The exhibition did not arrive through education channels, but as part of a cultural exchange related to the Emilia Romagna region where Reggio Emilia is situated. “The Emilia Romagna regional government sent a variety of exhibits about the products, the crafts, and the art of the region to San Francisco. Loris Malaguzzi was invited to include the exhibit about the preschools of Reggio Emilia” (Gandini, 2000).

It did not take long for educators to discover the exhibition, however. “I saw the exhibit the first time it was in San Francisco, though it was not yet connected with the early childhood community” (Rankin, 2000). Thanks to the efforts of Rebecca New, Baji Rankin, Lella Gandini, Carolyn Edwards, and others, that first North American exhibition was in Texas, New York, and Massachusetts the next year (New, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Rankin, 2000). From there, the exhibition crisscrossed the continent at the request of individual organizations, staying for a few months at a time as an installation. Lella Gandini shared:

I went to 27 of 34 sites where the exhibit [first edition] has been so far. The exhibit has become a true friend, one to which I am attached visually and emotionally. In each place it looked as if it was wearing slightly different clothing and as if it told the story of the children and adults of Reggio with a different accent. I saw “The Hundred Languages of Children” renewing itself in each place as it reflected and reverberated the care and the interest of the people who set it up and prepared it to be seen in order that it could communicate respect for children and hope to everybody (Gandini, 2000, p. 14).

In 1999, educators in Reggio Emilia began to work on updating the exhibition with a new, digital version. The threads of hope and purpose inaugurated with the first exhibition became part of the next edition, known as the 2000 digital edition of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition. Five communities in the United States (Atlanta, St. Louis, Columbus, Oberlin, and Miami) hosted the 2000 digital edition for longer stretches of time to deepen opportunities for professional development within each community. The 2000 digital edition brought new technology to bear that subsequently enriched the 2008 design of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition.

Since its North American opening in 2008, “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition has beckoned more than 8,000 people to come together at NAREA conferences to participate in an open exchange of viewpoints aimed at deepening theoretical awareness of children’s and adults’...
Bringing the exhibition into various communities has served as testament to educators and advocates who were relentless in their commitment to building excellence in early education, curious and enthusiastic about innovative education, and determined to inspire new understanding of and realities for young children, families, and teachers.

In each community, the exhibition impacted the visibility of the learning and relationships of children, teachers, and parents within the education community in distinct ways. In Vancouver, British Columbia, for example:

“Teachers of young children, adult educators, and early childhood education students have developed a new working vocabulary for dialogue about engaging children and their families, and building community. The exhibition helped people to understand better what pedagogical documentation is and what it intends to showcase (“Exhibit Host Report, Vancouver, BC,” 2012).

Each host community has given witness to “the importance of learning contexts, of feeding a desire for research, for viewing things in solidarity, for relating things with intensity and empathy; and for aesthetic experience” by building up encounters and experiences with the exhibition (Pedagogical Co-ordination of Preschools and Infant-toddler Centres—Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, p. 15). Over the life span of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition, more than 250 professional development initiatives have been organized with an overall aim of giving more quality and excellence to young children’s early childhood experiences and relationships.
“The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibition brought the experiences of Reggio Emilia to a large audience, representing the diversity of cultural and geographical contexts. The project included public agencies, universities, museums, municipal governments, programs for disadvantaged children and families, public and private preschools, elementary schools, Head Start programs, and Reggio-inspired network groups.

The presence of the exhibit was the pebble tossed into the pond, bringing to the surface and forefront the image and rights of children and the critical importance of continuing to advocate for quality learning experiences for our youngest citizens (“Exhibit Host Report, Kapolei, HI,” 2013).

Through the stories of the exhibition, the educators of Reggio Emilia have shown us the importance of recognizing that childhood matters, education matters, citizenship matters, children matter, parents matter, and educators matter. We are reminded that ways of seeing childhood must be placed in relationship to the culture of the community. The exhibition served as a conduit for many conversations between those who encountered its narratives of possibilities. “By recounting the possible the exhibition becomes a place of liberty, of encounter and passion, a place of resistance which also aspires to bring a chapter of the future, dream and desire narrated and courted” (Cavallini, p. 192).

And now, the journey of the exhibition, with its extraordinary potential to transform and multiply paths of knowledge, will conclude phase two in 2020. The final host city of phase two is Atlanta, Georgia, where, in collaboration with Project Infinity, it opened in June 2019 in connection with 15th NAREA Summer Conference at Peachtree Presbyterian Preschool. The exhibit is displayed at SunTrust Plaza Garden Offices downtown, and will then move to Kennesaw State University Bagwell College of Education.

In the 19 years since Atlanta hosted the 2000 digital edition of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit during the annual conference of the National Association for the
Education of Young Children in November 2000, many Reggio-inspired early childhood centers and schools have grown within the Atlanta community. Project Infinity, a working collaborative of five schools, began in 2001 when interest from the presence of Reggio Emilia’s first digitized exhibition created a desire among several schools to understand more deeply the concepts and ideas of Reggio Emilia’s approach and to become interdependent in their ongoing development. Their work marked the beginning of Reggio-inspired thinking in Atlanta and has grown to support and welcome others as they begin new journeys of understanding and evolution.

As the educational project of Reggio Emilia evolves, so do the ways in which educators from Reggio Emilia communicate the richness of their ongoing experience. We look forward, with great anticipation, to a “new chapter of the future” and invite you to stay tuned to NAREA for important announcements about opportunities for local communities to collaborate with Reggio Children and NAREA through mini exhibits, ateliers, and conferences. If your community is interested in hosting the “Wonder of Learning” exhibit in phase three, or hosting a NAREA conference, please contact Thresa Grove in the NAREA office (thresa@reggioalliance.org).

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PERSPECTIVES ON NAREA

The 15th NAREA Summer Conference
Defending Spaces for Creative Freedom: Spaces of Joy, Trust, and Solidarity

by the NAREA Conference Team

When NAREA received word from Reggio Children that educator Marina Mori would be arriving in Atlanta to support preparations for the new exhibit and atelier “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials,” from Reggio Emilia, Italy, we knew we were heading into an extraordinary conference! For several days prior to the conference, NAREA staff, host volunteers, and Marina worked to ready the exhibit and related ateliers for debut in North America.

Atlanta, like many North American networks, benefits from the volunteerism and dedication of those who envision and work toward an optimistic future for children. In 2000, Inspired Practices in Early Education hosted the debut of the first digitized version of “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit during the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children’s conference in Atlanta. The following year, Project Infinity was launched by Inspired Practices to bring together interested early childhood programs for collaboration and shared learning about Reggio Emilia’s philosophies and experiences—a voluntary initiative that has continued for 19 years. Project Infinity boldly challenges the idea that schools are meant to compete, believing instead that we are destined to collaborate on behalf of the rights of children, parents, and educators.

Project Infinity boldly challenges the idea that schools are meant to compete, believing instead that we are destined to collaborate on behalf of the rights of children, parents, and educators. With this history of participation, Project Infinity, as the Atlanta host community, opened its heart and doors to 350 participants from 31 states, one Canadian province, and five countries for the 15th NAREA Summer Conference in June 2019, “Defending Spaces for Creative Freedom: Spaces of Joy, Trust, and Solidarity.”
The NAREA Summer Conference took place at Peachtree Presbyterian Church and Preschool. Peachtree’s generous contribution of the conference venue allowed for plenary sessions, small group sessions, collaboration, dialogue, and engagement opportunities. Peachtree’s active participation in preparations for the conference offered participants many opportunities for learning, networking, and engaging in a choice of experiences. Small tables dotted the space inside and outside the Lodge Café, which offered participants informal opportunities for dialogue and exchanging new ideas.

Over the course of three days, participants encountered concepts, reflections, and traces of experiences of children and adults from Reggio Emilia’s preschools and infant-toddler centers connected to supporting creativity as a quality of thought. The featured speakers from Reggio Emilia, Claudia Giudici, president of Reggio Children, and Marina Mori, tutor teacher who works as a mentor to teachers, along with their interpreter, Jane McCall, spent each day sharing through presentations and dialogue with participants.

The first day of the conference offered a variety of presentations and engaging ways of being together. NAREA board members, Barbara Acton and Karyn Callaghan, launched the conference with a warm welcome to participants and featured speakers. Project Infinity representatives, Jane Montgomery, director of Peachtree Presbyterian Preschool; Gabriela Garcia, founder and director of Grant Park Cooperative Preschool; and Kristen Watts, director of St. Anne’s Day School set the tone for the collaborative spirit of the conference on behalf of all Project Infinity schools and educators, “We look forward to spending time together with you and are inspired by your dedication to early childhood.”

In the first plenary session, Claudia Giudici shared the historical and current thinking around their choice of the atelier. “...[s]chools can provide these contexts... the atelier exists for richer and more complete knowledge, for new cultural visions with a knowledge that extends our new imaginaries, all contained in your imagination. The atelier is a declaration for a richer more complete knowledge.” The session was entitled, “The hundred IS there: The educational project of the infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia.” The speakers developed a flow whereby Claudia Giudici, psychologist and former pedagogista, offered a pedagogical, cultural,
political, and social framework, followed by Marina Mori, former teacher, sharing documentation from experiences of the children and adults in the schools and classrooms. This rhythm created a beautiful and tangible vision of theory and practice working together. This was particularly helpful to participants who are new to the Reggio approach because it illustrated concrete actions taken by teachers grounded in the principles of Reggio Emilia. Those who have been studying the Reggio Emilia approach for several years also benefited from this approach because they were able to deepen and expand their understanding. Claudia and Marina encouraged participants to write questions and reflections and share them, which enabled them to weave reflections into subsequent presentations. This style of evolving the presentations each day, based on participants’ curiosities, wonderings, and questions, reflects the reciprocal and collaborative spirit which was present throughout the conference and also emphasizes the desire to support the participants’ interests.

"Hearing from the teachers from Reggio Emilia is the best possible way to deepen our learning." –Participant Survey

The second day launched with a viewing of “A Story of NAREA,” which highlights the life of NAREA since its founding in 2002. Inspired by the collaborative efforts in North America between NAREA, Reggio Children, and over 24 host communities, the day offered opportunities for continued engagement. Marina began with “every teacher has a sort of keyboard of possible ways to work with children” underscoring the many possibilities, strategies, and ways of working with children that are open to educators.

Marina began with “every teacher has a sort of keyboard of possible ways to work with children” underscoring the many possibilities, strategies, and ways of working with children that are open to educators. The role of the teacher within creative contexts was a thread that was followed over the last two days of the conference. Marina reminded us, “Contexts are not environments only, they are the interactions between people, materials, and environments - in circularity.”

On our last day together, a lovely presentation about birthdays gave life to the notion of circularity. Marina highlighted the role of the teacher throughout her presentation by describing the experiences constructed between the children and teachers during the study of birthdays. Marina carried her role as tutor teacher to all of the conference participants as she gave invaluable insight into the ways adults and children continually work together in progettazione.

“There are so many ways to teach, so many ways to learn, and we, in any environment, should be able to learn from each other!” –Victoria Peltier, Participant

Each afternoon of the conference offered a wide range of choices for participants. One option for participants was a presentation by Claudia Giudici entitled, “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials,” focusing on the work from the new exhibit. The presentation was shared with a small group of participants, which allowed for opportunities to ask questions and share thoughts in an intimate setting. Claudia provided an in-depth description of the backstory to the exhibit and the accompanying atelier. In the session, Claudia spoke of the responsibility that teachers have in their own professional formation, “We are the authors of our own learning processes. The teachers, atelieristi, and pedagogisti, themselves, are the protagonists in the same way that children are.”
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“The “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials” exhibit and atelier was breathtaking and an open space to explore materials.”
–Participant Survey

Participants were also offered opportunities to engage in small group atelier sessions of their choice. These unique sessions were designed by atelieristi from the host community and by atelieristi who have supported previous NAREA conferences. The atelieristi had the pleasure of working earlier in the week with Marina in the set-up of the atelier for the “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials” exhibit. Afterwards, Marina and the atelieristi turned their attention to the conference ateliers to offer further connections and possibilities. Throughout the atelier sessions, the atelieristi shared with participants insights from working with Marina regarding the complex identity of each material, the design of the space, and the many possibilities for encountering the materials.

The small group atelier sessions were designed based on different palettes inspired by the “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials” catalogue, exhibit, and atelier. Each session allowed participants to actively explore and consider the concepts of creativity and expression through the hundred languages as encountered in the plenary sessions of the conference. Claudia’s words,

“Aesthetics and the epistemological are the foundations of knowing. We could add that this relationship between aesthetics and epistemology is a relationship that brings in ethics. These important aspects have required us to develop a dialogue between artistic thinking, the expressive languages, and pedagogy. This dialogue is part of our daily life that goes together. The culture of the atelier does not only belong to the atelierista or atelier. The culture diffuses out into every part of the school.”

“The unusual instruments atelier was very innovative and offered ideas I never

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had thought about. There were many uses of technology such as drawing on a tablet that was projected on 3-D objects in front of a screen. That was amazing.”

–Participant Survey

Another option for participants was to participate in a presentation offered by Project Infinity school directors entitled, “A Story of Project Infinity.” Educators interested in building collaborative working relationships between diverse schools attended the session. During the session, participants engaged in a frank discussion around challenges within the current educational climate and the potential solidarity educators and schools can create when they strive to work together. The session offered participants insights into how exchanges, shared pedagogical work, and long-term relationships between schools can lead to the development of living laboratories through collaborative study and mutual projects inspired by the preschools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia.

Participants were offered opportunities to encounter interpretations of Reggio Emilia’s approach within different schools during the host community school tours. The school tours illustrated different ways the community is working and studying together. Four Project Infinity Schools welcomed visitors by sharing the daily lives of the children, teachers, and families and the distinct identities of their schools.

Participants were also offered an optional evening tour and dinner at Freedom Park Preschool and The Highlander School, two community schools with strong histories and long ties to the schools of Project Infinity. Some participants decided to forgo the transportation provided and braved Atlanta traffic to visit multiple schools and also “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit located in the beautiful SunTrust Garden Offices Atrium designed by renowned architect, John Portman. The current location of the exhibit is a testament to defending creative spaces as it makes publicly visible images, works, and words of the children from Reggio Emilia, Italy, and serves as a reminder for what is possible within our own contexts. It is our hope that educators who encountered the exhibit in Atlanta will consider it a strong contribution of the conference and continue to reference it in their daily work with young children.
It is with sincere gratitude that we thank our colleagues from Reggio Emilia, Italy, Claudia Giudici, Marina Mori, and Jane McCall. We are grateful to Project Infinity and all their contributions to the 15th NAREA Summer Conference. In particular, we thank Jane Montgomery, director, and the staff and families of Peachtree Presbyterian Church and Preschool for their generous donation of space, time, and efforts. We extend our appreciation to the children, families, and educators of Grant Park Cooperative Preschool, Saint Anne’s Day School, First Baptist Day School, and The Nest Nursery School for all they did in support of the Summer Conference. We are inspired by all the educators from a variety of contexts who participated in the conference and who share the value of creative freedom as a right of all children and adults.

We are inspired by all the educators from a variety of contexts who participated in the conference and who share the value of creative freedom as a right of all children and adults. It is our hope that our time spent together will serve to support those who attended and that each participant will continue to be inspired by a Loris Malaguzzi quote shared by Claudia, “We maintain that all the languages of a child’s life are born together with the child. Imagination and logic, like socialization, feelings, creativity and aesthetic have a hundred roots and a hundred geneses…”

We believe the words of participants reflect our collective thoughts and inspire us to continue creating, in collaboration with Reggio Children and Istituzione, opportunities for encountering ideas, experiences, and optimism for the future.

“I really appreciated the atelier experience in conjunction with the “Marks and Mosaics” exhibit. I felt the experience of the atelier really helped me access the children’s work and their thinking. I would recommend continuing to create these connections. I also loved that the speakers included examples from the “Wonder of Learning” exhibit. These examples make the exhibit meaningful.” —Participant Survey

“My heart and mind are still full from the three days of the conference. It was so inspiring and rejuvenating. I don’t know whom to thank, but the planning and attention to detail is much appreciated. Everything seemed to go seamlessly, and I never felt like I didn’t know where to go. Thank you for making it such a completely enjoyable experience, on top of being intellectually and spiritually motivating.” —Lisa Hendix, Participant Via Email

“So happy for all of you who attended this event/conference! So many teachers never get the goodness of collaboration so enjoy all you take home with you. Keep going with all of those good things with children and yourselves. We are so enriched by how we work with children!” —Participant Survey
Call for Proposals for the September 2020 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 preschools and infant-toddler centers 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. 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.

Topic for the September 2020 Issue – The Joy and Wonder of Co-Inquiry and Invention

“Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before.”

– Loris Malaguzzi (Gandini, 2012, p.57)

In recognition and honor of the upcoming 100th birthday of Loris Malaguzzi, the focus for the 2020 peer-reviewed issue will be on the daily life of children and adults engaged in moments of shared research and discovery that reflect the JOY AND WONDER OF CO-INQUIRY AND INVENTION.

In the past, _Innovations_ peer-reviewed issues have focused on articles that feature long-term experiences that have unfolded over weeks, months, or even years. The 2020 peer-reviewed issue will be dedicated to articles that detail, analyze, and reflect on singular events or moments that occur within educational settings in the daily lives of children and adults (teachers, family members, pedagogistas, atelieristas, cooks, etc.). Educational settings may refer to the classroom, outdoor spaces, or other areas of the school in which children and adults are engaged in a state of co-inquiry.
The importance of a single moment as a source of reflection for educators in Reggio Emilia is detailed in the publication *The Hundred Languages in Ministories: Told by Teachers and Children in Reggio Emilia*:

Loris Malaguzzi chose several “ministories” to illustrate the extraordinary events that occur in the everyday moments in classrooms to introduce the philosophy and practice of Reggio Emilia in the first exhibit titled, *The Hundred Languages of Children: Narrative of the Possible*. In 1995, the Italian translation of the first edition of *The Hundred Languages of Children* appeared in print, one year after the death of Loris Malaguzzi. The publication included a collection of similar “ministories” told through images and words as an homage to Malaguzzi’s enthusiasm for making visible “the life experiences that were often utterly unexpected and yet capable of giving witness to memories, gestures, and ways of thinking from a world of childhood too often overlooked or forgotten when speaking about children and learning.” (2016, p. xv)

Malaguzzi celebrated these documented small, yet extraordinary, moments from the classroom that “allow us to see and observe children and perceive the image of the teachers being attentive and competent in constructing meaningful experiences.” (2016, p. xii)

Through this documentation, the relationship between teachers and children as co-inquirers and co-investigators is made visible. Deeper meanings are revealed when the documentation is shared with colleagues. Spaggiari states, “it is more and more essential that those who work in education learn to observe, to document, and to interpret, never getting tired of comparing and discussing with one another the possible meanings that could offer interpretations about what has happened.” (2016, p. xiv)

When we document, and pause to reflect and interpret the everyday life of our educational contexts, windows are opened to new understandings regarding what it means for adults and children to learn alongside each other. We wish to share and celebrate the JOY AND WONDER OF CO-INQUIRY AND INVENTION in the 2020 peer-reviewed issue.

The following are guiding questions to consider in your work to help illustrate the topic:

- What is revealed regarding the relationships of children and adults through the extraordinary events that occur in the everyday lives of classrooms? How are these moments given deeper meaning when documented, shared, and interpreted with children and colleagues?
- How does the role of teacher as researcher represent a way of thinking when approaching your partnership with young children?
- How do we learn alongside children as adults within an educational context?
- What does it mean to approach learning from a stance of inquiry? What does it mean to engage in co-inquiry with children?
- How and why do we strive to make children’s ideas visible? What is revealed when we make visible the creative processes of children?
- How do space, place, and process invite children to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas?
Proposals for Manuscripts

As in the past, we are asking authors to submit a proposal describing the context, focus, and key elements of the experience that will be more fully discussed and analyzed in their manuscript. Interested educators must submit a proposal to Thresa Grove at thresa@reggioalliance.org by October 1, 2019. Those submitting will receive responses regarding the status of their proposal by November 15, 2019.

Proposals must include:

• A statement regarding whether the manuscript has been submitted or published elsewhere – previously published manuscripts will not be accepted.

• Title and summary (1-2 pages), which includes information about the author(s); the school, university, or center; and the community that is the context of the manuscript.

• We hope this issue will represent a variety of contexts, a broad range of ages of children, and multiple perspectives of people who come into and who are part of the children’s world.

• Examples of singular events or moments may include morning drop off, small group work, encounters with materials, meal times, outdoor experiences, etc.

• The actual transcript, observation, image(s) and/or artifact(s) that will be analyzed and discussed in the manuscript, such as:

  » a transcript of a conversation (spontaneous or planned) among children, which may or may not include an adult; a conversation between a child and an adult; a child “in conversation” with a material;

  » an observation/image(s) of a child/children negotiating a social-emotional, intellectual, or physical challenge;

  » an observation/image(s) of a child/children exploring and/or investigating classroom materials such as blocks, water, sand, recyclables, objects from the natural world, etc.;

  » an observation/image(s) of a child/children interacting with each other and the natural world; or

  » an observation/image(s) of a child/children’s use of media and corresponding artifact(s).

• Questions and/or theories the author(s) have concerning the above transcript, observation, image(s), and/or artifact(s).

• A description of how the above transcript, observation, images(s), and/or artifact(s) will be, or has been shared and analyzed, with colleagues.

Guidelines and Requirements for Submitted Manuscripts

Authors of accepted proposals must submit their manuscript by January 15, 2020. We ask you to submit a manuscript that includes information detailed in the proposal (see above) as well as the following additional elements:

• A discussion of how you organized your transcript, observation, image(s) and/or artifact(s) to share with colleagues.

• A transcription of the discussion among you, the author(s), and colleague(s) regarding the transcript, observation, image(s) and/or artifact(s).

• A discussion/reflection on the major points or big ideas that came out of the discussion. For example, what questions, theories, interpretations were generated through the collaborative exchange of perspectives?
A projection of how you, the author(s), might respond to the transcript, observation, image(s), and/or artifact(s) under discussion based on the above reflection.

An analysis of the process as a whole, described in the manuscript in terms of your own professional learning and development.

Additionally, please follow these formatting 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. A 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).
- Any 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 2020 issue peer-review process will be published in the Summer 2019 issue of Innovations and posted on the Peer-Review Process page of the NAREA website.

REFERENCES


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
narea@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

To be announced.

International Professional Development Initiatives in Reggio Emilia, Italy

November 10-15 2019:
International Study Group
Contact: Reggio Children
www.reggiochildren.it

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

June–October 2019 | Atlanta, GA

Hosted by Project Infinity, a 19-year collaboration of five schools. The exhibit will be located at SunTrust Plaza Garden Offices in downtown Atlanta, and will be accompanied by a series of professional development initiatives.

January–May 2020 | Atlanta, GA

Kennesaw State University, Bagwell College of Education.

Contact: Thresa Grove
thresa@reggioalliance.org


Innovations

Innovations has an open call policy for article submissions for the March, June, and December issues annually. For information on the annual peer-reviewed issue published in September, please see the NAREA website.

Contact: Thresa Grove
thresa@reggioalliance.org
www.reggioalliance.org

Message from Reggio Children

The office of Reggio Children is pleased that there is so much interest in North America about our infant centers, preprimary schools, and educational philosophy. We note with pride the resources published and professional development initiatives organized about the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some resources and initiatives related to the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge publishers and producers of resources as well as organizers of initiatives concerning the Reggio Emilia approach to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Bligny 1/a, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, reggiochildren.it, www.reggiochildren.it.
NAREA Professional Development

Discount for NAREA members

The 11th NAREA Winter Conference
Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material
Greenville, SC
March 2020
Speakers: Representatives from Reggio Emilia
Contact: NAREA
www.reggioalliance.org

NAREA & Reggio Children Resources

NAREA is the official distributor of Reggio Children resources for the United States, 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” and “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material” exhibit projects.

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

Bordercrossings

In digital environments, as with all educational contexts in Reggio Emilia’s municipal infant-toddler centres and preschools, children act as authors and constructors of their own knowledge, and of their own individual and collective imaginaries, disproving the idea of anaesthetising technology at the centre of attention, and making visible a different amplificatory and generative idea. This catalogue recounts an exhibition, Bordercrossings – Encounters with Living Things / Digital Landscapes, which has gathered and exhibits projects realised in Reggio Emilia’s municipal infant-toddler centres and preschools: nature close-up, seen and investigated by the senses, theories, and actions of today’s children, and by analogical and digital equipment connected.

Cost: $40 + S/H

Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material

This catalogue presents the exhibition “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material,” a collection of works by children of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia. Drawing and telling stories means imagining, analyzing, and exploring spaces, forms, colors, words, metaphors, emotions, rhythms, and pauses, entering into a narrative dimension that is both internal and external to the self, playing on reality, fiction, and interpretation. Though drawing and words are autonomous languages, for the children words and stories, silent or spoken, almost always go hand in hand or intertwine with the drawing, creating an intelligent and often poetic mosaic.

Cost: $38 + S/H

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