Innovations

In Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange

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Introduction

The December 2019 issue of Innovations is the last issue of the year and also of the decade! By nature, endings offer opportunities to reflect on past experiences while also considering the future. This issue of Innovations focuses on communities that see reflection interconnected with learning and the possibility of transformation. As Loris Malaguzzi (1993) stated, “Our aim is to make a school that is a place of research, learning, revisiting, reconsideration, and reflection” (p. 9).

When done with others in a learning community, reflection creates opportunities to develop deeper understandings of experiences. Reflection is an important way to end the year and decade as we consider how to relaunch into the future that lies ahead.

We start with an article titled, “Below the street, in the soil: A journey of becoming in Johannesburg, South Africa,” from authors Judith Browne and Heather Barclay of the Mimosa School in Johannesburg, South Africa. The authors describe a community project in which a section of road is closed to cars and transforms into a space where people can move freely. The authors state, “We were inspired by this idea of reclaiming our streets as public spaces and turning them into a piazza.” Collaborative reflecting on documentation was essential for embracing uncertainty and seeing their community in new ways. The authors state:

Stepping into the unknown of the street forced us to pay closer attention to what and how the children were experiencing and exploring, and to engage more deeply with how our documentation of these explorations could be used to project forward.

Through reflection, they came to the realization that, “Where we adults might have only seen barriers, the children found possibilities.”

In this issue of Innovations, we reflect on the life and work of Canadian educator Susan Fraser. Carol Anne Wien and Patricia Tarr reflect on the many lives Fraser touched and also the great impact she continues to have on the field of early childhood education. NAREA was honored to present Sue with our Lifetime Achievement Award in October of 2014.

The “Voices: Conversations from North America and Beyond” column includes reflections from 14 educators from six states who were participants in the Five State Study Group’s recent study week in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The authors share their reflections on the meaning of the word rilauncio or relaunch as experienced during the study week and within their own contexts. Arizona authors Terry Acevedo, Sabrina Ball, Christie Colunga, and Mimi Gray state:
In the context of the study week, relaunch set a tone that grounded the philosophy, not of a state of mind being fixed in certainty, but rather, in an attitude toward openness and creative liveliness to think and generate change into action within a collaborative setting. Relaunch is the right to imagine a different way..."

The issue continues with a book review of Reggio Children’s newest publication, Bordercrossings: Encounters with Living Things/Digital Landscapes, by Brenda Fyfe, dean and professor emeritus at the School of Education at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri. Fyfe says of the book, “It articulates and beautifully illustrates a philosophy of education and research that recognizes and embraces bordercrossings of digital and nature.”

The “Perspectives on NAREA” column includes information on the opportunity to host the newest exhibition, “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material,” from Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Reminder: An Invitation to Participate in Research

In the September 2019 peer-reviewed issue of Innovations, readers were invited to participate in a teacher research project in collaboration with Reggio Inspired Vermont Early education Team (RIVET) 2.0. The group is requesting others join them in their study of “children and trees in relationship.” We would like to re-invite and remind readers to submit your documentation and research to Jeanne Goldhaber at jeanne.goldhaber@uvm.edu by January 15, 2020, to be considered for publication in the Spring 2020 issue of Innovations. If you are sending an image that includes children, you must include a completed and signed permission form for each image. To request a blank photography permission form, email Thresa Grove at thresa@reggioalliance.org.

Correction to the June 2019 Innovations Issue

In the June 2019 issue of Innovations, we shared an article from the Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Foundation titled, “Constructing a Different Future.” This article announced the University of Colorado Boulder as a promoting founder of the Foundation. We would like to announce a correction to this statement as Boulder Journey School and the University of Colorado Denver are participating founders of the Foundation.

Looking Towards the Future

For NAREA and Innovations, 2020 will be particularly important as we recognize the 100th anniversary of Loris Malaguzzi’s birth. We look forward to sharing our reflections on the work of Malaguzzi in the new year.

REFERENCE

Below the Street, In the Soil: A Journey of Becoming in Johannesburg, South Africa

by Heather Barclay and Judith Browne

Heather Barclay is the principal and Grade 0 teacher at Mimosa School in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. In 2011 whilst training a group of teachers to implement a birth to four curriculum, she was one of the facilitators and participants who were invited to attend the first African conference on the Reggio Emilia Approach, hosted by what was to become the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance. Stepping out, they all agreed that this was what they had been waiting for – a radical challenge to their image of child and of early learning. And so began the transformation of the pedagogy and practice at Mimosa School, a learning community seeking to ground itself in who and what it is in trying to truly live out the spirit of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Judith Browne is the atelierista at Mimosa School in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. Her deep feeling for the Reggio Emilia Approach is what drew her into early childhood two years ago (in 2017), but her relationship with it goes further back, to 2008, when her mother first introduced her to the approach. For her, it’s more than a philosophy of education; it’s a philosophy of life. Her inspiration extends into her work as a writer. Judith wrote the text for the Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance’s booklet, Reimagine Education: Reggio Emilia inspiration in Africa, published in October 2018, which is paired with the alliance’s professional development series for Reggio Emilia inspired educators.

I think that it’s a mistake to take any school approach anywhere and assume, like a flower, you can take it from one soil and put it into another one. That never works. That doesn’t mean at all that we can’t learn a tremendous amount from it, but we have to reinvent it... We have to figure out what are the aspects that are most important to us and what kind of soil we need here to make those aspects thrive.

– Howard Gardner in a CNN Impact interview, aired in 1995

What type of “soil” do Reggio Emilia inspired schools and teachers thrive in? What conditions ensure that their approach takes root? Are there contexts in which the approach thrives, and others where it might wither and die? These are questions that we have been living and working with since our first encounters with Reggio Emilia – questions we hold both as individuals and as a school. And the more we’ve lived them, the more we’ve realized the paradox: that to truly live out the spirit of the Reggio Emilia Approach, we have to ground ourselves in who and what we are. In our own genius loci, the spirit of the place we call home.

And So, Who Are We? Where Are We?

This is a story about our coming-to-know. An account of getting curious about the soil under our feet and the sky above our heads. Of coming into a relationship with that which is above, below, and around us in a new and different way. Of learning to encounter with more openness and honesty the people who gather in our learning community every day – our children, our parents, but also ourselves. We hope that in its specificity, readers might find a resonance, a reflection, a counterpoint to their own experience.
What were our children’s experiences of the city? And what were we doing to make the city more welcoming and friendly for them, to advocate for their rights as citizens?

A School in and of the City

Mimosa is a school that is both in and of the city. We are not a forest school, or a farm school, or a school in a gated community. And the city we call home — Johannesburg, South Africa — is a place of paradoxes. In a country with one of the world’s highest Gini coefficients (a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income or wealth distribution of a nation’s residents), the city embodies so much of the country’s inequality — in the spatial logic of the city, in people’s access to opportunities, and in their quality of life.

Our school sits on the edge of the city’s Central Business District, wedged between two of South Africa’s top universities and the headquarters of the state broadcasting corporation. On one side of us is a more middle-class, arty suburb, and on the other side a suburb with more of an urban working-class character. Our school in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, sits somewhere in between these markers, as a suburb in transition.

Auckland Park, like many Johannesburg suburbs, is characterized by high walls and electric fences, places where people don’t know their own neighbors. Even though pedestrian routes and cycle lanes have been allocated and demarcated, our streets still tend to be dominated by private vehicles and are not considered to be safe for children to play in. Street furniture, such as benches, are rare, and although a number of families live near the school the vast majority of children travel to school by private vehicle (Parker, 2018).

During her visit to Johannesburg in August/September 2017, Tiziana Filippini challenged local Reggio Emilia inspired educators about the implications of our history and spatial topography for children. She said, “While traveling around the city, I was struck by the lack of children. In Reggio, we believe that if a city is friendly for children, it’s friendly for everyone. Where are your children?”

Her words stuck with us. What were our children’s experiences of the city? And what were we doing to make the city more welcoming and friendly for them, to advocate for their rights as citizens?

Institutional change is a slow process, and while we wanted to advocate for more child-friendly urban architecture and policies across our city, we also wondered whether there was something we could do, right now, to enact change on our doorstep.

Toward the end of 2018, we shared Reggio Children’s “Piazza_Piazze” video with our families as an example of how some of Italy’s youngest citizens are connecting with each other in their city spaces. One of our fathers, Iginio Gagliardone, had this to say, “Maybe the Italian idea of a piazza can’t exist physically [right now, in our neighborhood], but maybe it exists between us, in the web of relationships.”

Challenged by this, and also equally wondering over what we could do to grow and expand the web of relationships between children, families, our school, and our wider community (without the shared public spaces that might promote this naturally), we were reminded of the idea and practice of “Open Streets.”

What is “Open Streets?”

During an “Open Streets” event, a section of road or neighborhood thoroughfare is closed to cars for a period of time and is opened up to people so that they can play, ride bikes, skateboards or other things with wheels, participate in art activities, or just indulge in general neighborhood chatter and sharing of ideas. A car-dominated street is reimagined (if only temporarily) as a public space. (Note for readers: North America is no stranger to this idea. The most rapid spread of “Open Streets” since it first emerged out of Latin America with Ciclovia has been in Canada and the USA (Browne et al., 2019).)
We were inspired by this idea of reclaiming our streets as public spaces and turning them into a piazza for a period of time. We wondered, could the inspiration we were finding in “Open Streets” lead to a useful and productive conversation in line with the deep inspiration we feel for the Reggio Emilia Approach? Could an “Open Streets” style event provide a useful framework for our school enquiries, a way in which we could better research and connect to our context?

Somehow, even without firm answers, the questions in our heads and hearts were just too compelling to leave alone. We had to try to answer them. Before we knew it, Mimosa’s learning community was co-organizing an “Open Streets” event in our neighborhood for early 2019 in collaboration with local government departments, non-governmental advocacy and activist organizations, and civic-minded and environmentally conscious individuals.

Exploding What Research Looks Like

As we began the planning process, we knew we didn’t want this to be a one-off event; we wanted the philosophy underpinning “Open Streets” to be a part of our everyday enquiries as a school. As teachers, we met to discuss this and agreed on a year-long inquiry across the whole school (encompassing children aged 18 months up to nine years old): How can we (as Mimosa) connect to our surrounding community via our city streets?

As children and teachers, we began co-researching connections, the community, and our city streets together. What did this process look like? It depended on the age group.

Our youngest children started with the idea of making connections through different materials and environments. They began by...
Each time they ventured out onto the street, they then came back in order to collate and share this information with each other in the classroom through different media (for example: data, stories, clay creations, drawings) to get a composite picture of a particular place and space in time. Together, they came away with a richer understanding of the diversity of street life and how the streets are used.

Whatever the research looked like at any age, it involved walking the streets regularly, finding what entranced, delighted, and grabbed the children’s curiosity, and then ‘projecting forward’ from there. Together, they’ve been turning these observations into documentation. On the day of the “Open Streets” event, we displayed the first fragments of these enquiries using our urban architecture as the canvas for a street exhibition of sorts.

As teachers who are inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach, we’ve said for some time looking at the world a little more closely by using magnifying glasses and mirrors. They ventured first into the school garden and then into the alleyway below our school to see what treasures they could find together.

Thanks to a parental connection, our oldest children were able to work with Alex Halligey, a theater-maker and postdoctoral fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand’s Spatial Analysis and City Planning (SA&CP) unit. Alex works at the intersection of performance art and urban design and uses the arts as a way of collecting and sharing both qualitative and quantitative information about the places she is studying. Together with Alex, Philip Harrison (a Mimosa father who heads up the SA&CP unit), parent volunteers, and children between the ages of six and nine studied two major roads in our neighborhood at different times of the day and on different days, observing who and what can be seen on the streets and what they are doing. They interviewed users of the street including student pedestrians, trash collectors, and local security guards in order to find out how they felt about their neighborhood. Each time they ventured out onto the street, they then came back in order to collate and share this information with each other in the classroom through different media (for example: data, stories, clay creations, drawings) to get a composite picture of a particular place and space in time. Together, they came away with a richer understanding of the diversity of street life and how the streets are used.

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ages and stages, has been hazy. Stepping into the unknown of the street forced us to pay closer attention to what and how the children were experiencing and exploring, and to engage more deeply with how our documentation of these explorations could be used to ‘project forward.’

Our ideas around co-research rooted in other ways. Given our location between two universities, many of our parents work in academia. These parents felt strongly that the “Open Streets” event itself was an ideal opportunity to research the neighborhood, and the impact of the event upon it. Alongside the children’s enquiries was an investigation into the event, its philosophical underpinnings, and its inspiration, which included what worked, what didn’t, and what we believe its implications to be.

This research has been compiled into a co-written report, which was launched at the University of the Witwatersrand on July 18, 2019 (Browne et al., 2019). It was a real honor and a privilege to work alongside researchers and practitioners from the fields of urban studies, media studies, education, and the City of Johannesburg’s transport and development planning departments to co-author the report, and to feel that adults like us had another way of honoring and processing the research the children were already undertaking. In other words, to honor the ways they helped us to be and see.

**Reclaiming the Streets**

It was only after our “Open Streets” day on April 7, 2019, and during the writing of the report, that we remembered Loris Malaguzzi used to turn schools inside out – taking children, teachers, and classroom supplies into public squares and “doing school” there. School in the piazza. These acts, to our eyes, were powerfully political. A reclamation. A declaration. “We’re here. We matter.” It was a way to make children, and the work of the school, more visible, more valued.
In the South African context, where around 25% of land area in cities is used for roads – even though this space serves “almost exclusively as corridors for vehicular traffic and for installed infrastructure” (Browne et al., 2019) – the act of stepping out onto our streets as part of our ongoing enquiries became a kind of political act. “We’re here. We matter.”

It was as if children took on the role of street ambassadors: greeting strangers they encountered, cheering trash collectors for their work, worrying about litter or broken pipes or pavements found during their journeys (and what they could do about it).

They wondered about the hidden life of a street – for example, do the trees talk to the streetlamps? Is an empty guard hut lonely, and where are its residents now? Are there dinosaur bones down the drain (and is that why it is so smelly)? Walking became an act of co-creation and reclamation, where we all became co-producers of the street experience rather than passive consumers of it.

Windows Through Walls

When we first started exploring our neighborhood, we had to contend with the reality of Johannesburg’s walls, security fences, and boundaries. With its stark divisions between private and public, welcome and unwelcome, safe and dangerous.

Where we adults might have only seen barriers, the children found possibilities. Their curiosity led them to feel the textures of the walls with their fingers, to peer through cracks and small windows, to find the hidden homes of snails, spiders, and plants, and the patterns found within our urban world such as diamonds, squares, and grids. They used all this information – the texture, pattern, and materiality of the street – to “leap over” the wall with their senses and with their imaginations. They created windows to the other side, picturing trains waiting beyond, ready to take us on new journeys of the imagination. They saw lush jungles in which wild animals such as lions and zebras could roam free.

They opened up possibilities for us as teachers. They opened our eyes. What was a forgotten and run-down alleyway where parents drop their children off each morning has become
filled with life: snails, flowers, crocodile paths across muddy puddles. A trip into the alleyway has now become a source of excitement and adventure.

Malaguzzi (2001) writes that there is a wall that prevents us from going beyond what we know, but “beyond the wall, there is always a beyond.” Our work as teachers is to look beyond “the wall of habit, of custom, of the normal, of the non-surprise, of assumed security” (p. 6). And with the children’s help, find the possible. Exploring our streets together has been an exercise in the possible. In the “what if.” And also, in the “what is” – what beauty, interest, and possibility is already in our street, which we’ve been missing.

It has made us rethink our relationship with the world around us. We are all spending more time walking, exploring, tending the garden, and generally making better use of our surrounding environment (whether that’s our school garden, surrounding streets, or the people and places in our neighborhood and wider community). We are no longer content with surface readings of things – a cursory look is the adult practice of inattention. The children are teaching us to look a little closer, to linger a little longer, to listen more wholeheartedly. They have shown us there is an abundance of life in the cracks, soil, pipes, and bones under the streets.

We are learning how to look at our surroundings through deep time – to wonder about what it was like here when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, or how our neighborhood might look hundreds of years from now. The children have opened us to the idea that the life of the street has a song all its own: the trees and the leaves have their own language if only we’re prepared to listen.

During this process, we are learning that something does not necessarily need to be pristine or beautiful to adult eyes to be of interest to children. The children are interested in everything, whether it’s litter, drains, construction sites, traffic, pedestrians, and signs both natural and man-made. All are investigated with the utmost curiosity.

It has opened my eyes to see what imagination and ideas have sparked within my group by just taking them to the alley. “Open Streets” have also given the Mimosa...
community a chance to interact with people beyond our gates and to see what lies beyond the Mimosa walls.

- Tasneem Pochee, a Mimosa teacher of children aged 18 months to three years

**A Piazza Called Participation**

We are learning that the more you explore your world, the wider your sense of both it and yourself becomes. There is a level of unknown, an openness to the unexpected, to being surprised when you step onto the street or into a public square. There are untold treasures in the soil beneath and the sky above. Serendipity, the role of happy accidents and unexpected encounters, has become a welcome visitor to our enquiries.

Somehow, learning to be open to unexpected surprises has allowed us to become more comfortable with inviting others into our enquiries, where we move beyond the model where the teacher is the ultimate expert and the classroom is his (or her) sole domain. Increasingly our work is collaborative as we turn to each other for ideas and insights into the children’s learning and processes (and where they might be headed). This participation is not just limited to other educators; it also draws on the insights, ideas, and expertise of parents, interested community members, and researchers at the local universities.

A good example is our gardening group, which is made up of our school caretaker, two teachers with an interest in permaculture and more sustainable livelihoods, a local permaculture activist, and an evolutionary biologist and parent with a passion for addressing “plant blindness.”

1 A term coined in 1998 by two botanists and biology educators, James Wandersee and Elisabeth Schussler, plant blindness is the “inability to see or notice the plants in one’s own environment—leading to (a) the inability to recognize the importance of plants in the biosphere and in human affairs; (b) the inability to appreciate the aesthetic and unique biological features of the life forms belonging to the Plant Kingdom; and (c) the misguided, anthropocentric ranking of plants as inferior to animals, leading to the erroneous conclusion that they are unworthy of human consideration (Schussler & Wandersee, 2001).”

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11 December 2019

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Guided by this group’s vision for redesigning our garden along more indigenous, sustainable, water-conscious lines, our children are coming into closer contact with the natural world around them. They’re composting, tracking the movement of the sun, harvesting seeds from their own lunchboxes to grow in the garden, and learning (and inventing) names for the plants.

The relationships grew among our parents and among the wider community of people and communities through organizing “Open Streets” together. These relationships continue to nourish us. For example, during the “Open Streets” event and thanks to a parental connection, we met local “reclaimers”—men and women who sort through the city’s trash to extract what can still be recycled. These people are often treated as a nuisance by the city, or worse, invisible, despite providing an invaluable service.

South Africa has a recycling rate of just under 60 percent, according to industry studies—a statistic that puts it on par with some European nations. But here, recycling is done by an informal network called ‘reclaimers’: thousands of men and women who sift through trash to identify recyclables to sell. This vast, labor-intensive system fits with the nation’s high unemployment rate, and, experts argue, a different model of innovation (Powell, 2019).

As teachers, we’ve started attending meetings with local reclaimers as we try to better understand how our school waste fits into a bigger picture, and what we can do to make the reclaimers’ work easier. Serendipitously, this is at a time when academic research (conducted at one of the institutions on our doorstep) on the role of reclaimers in our city’s recycling system is becoming more public (Harrisberg, 2019).

Step by step, as our image of our children, ourselves, our environment, and our families continuously shifts, we are learning how to identify the possibilities in people and things.

For some, it is easier to be part of or take part in the life of the school by helping with outings; for others, it is easier to come for meetings; still others are prepared to work in the school and to improve the environment. Even in Reggio, it’s not easy to get all our parents and guardians to attend meetings – parties are far more popular. Work with each of your parents where they’re at, the same as you would do for their children. Many things can be done with the help of parents, but you have to draw this potential out of them by preparing opportunities to meet, to foster information, dialogue, confrontation, offerings that value the knowledge and skills of everyone and promote the shared construction of meaning (Filippini, 2017).
A Practice of Everyday Democracy

Each time we step out onto the street we are conscious of our need to negotiate freedom and boundaries with our children. How should we behave on the street? What’s ok? What’s not ok? How do we show that we care and respect others – both human and non-human – in this space? How far should we walk? Should we take this route, or that route? How much do we trust ourselves and each other, and how much do we need clear and established rules before entering the space?

In our journeys beyond the school walls, we become conscious of ourselves, not just as children and teachers, but as pedestrians, street users, citizens – people who have a shared responsibility to keep each other safe, who want to experience a clean and welcoming street (and we began to collect litter as we walked).

This kind of ongoing negotiation is empowering for children as they take the time to sit, discuss, and make agreements or rules together regarding how to participate in the world outside the classroom. As a result, they take a greater sense of ownership of their choices and their actions. It also pushes us teachers outside of our comfort zones and into a space of generative discomfort, where we are evolving our approach and image of children (and what they’re capable of) as we work with them each day.

It strengthens our relationships with families, as we test what risks we all feel comfortable taking, thereby slowly becoming less risk-averse and more community-minded.

Working together as teachers, children, and parents in this way isn’t easy. It takes time, negotiation, cooperation, and a willingness to change your mind and admit that you’re wrong. There is a desire to stay in life’s big questions, in the space of “I don’t know.” A level of comfort, which is only achieved by stepping into discomfort.

Carla Rinaldi (2004) has written beautifully about this in previous editions of Innovations:

To be open to the others means to have the courage to come into this room and say, ‘I hope to be different when I leave, not neces-

[Image 19]

[Image 20]
Alleyway games invented by Mimosa Grades 1, 2, and 3 and shared during “Open Streets” Auckland Park. Photo by Bob van der Vleuten.

[Image 21]
sarily because I agree with you but because your thoughts caused me to think differently (p. 3).

Or as one of our 4-year-olds put it, when trying to work his way through a very heated debate among his peers about dinosaurs (as to whether they’re truly extinct, or whether they are still with us today, having evolved into chickens and eagles), “we can all think different things.” Being in an ongoing conversation regarding different ways of thinking, being, seeing, and making meaning in the world seems to us like a practice of democracy in the everyday. If we are to recognize children as citizens, we need to look again – not just at the architecture of our homes and cities, as Carla Rinaldi (2013) suggests, but at the very architecture of our relationships.

Which brings us back to Howard Gardner, and the “soil” in which Reggio Emilia’s inspiration thrives. What we’re finding is that you do not grow good plants, you grow good soil; you do not grow good children, you grow conditions in which the children thrive. And, you do not grow your Reggio Emilia inspired practice without growing your roots, and your connections with who, and what, and where you are.

What makes for rich, loamy soil in a school? For us, it comes down to relationships. To be in conversation, connection, collaboration with ourselves, with each other and the world around us. Below the street, below the surface, an invisible web of relationships holds us in place.

What is the Role of a School?

We think of school for young children as an integral living organism, as a place of shared lives and relationships among many adults and many children. We think of school as a sort of construction in motion, continuously adjusting itself (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 56).

Either a school is capable of continually transforming itself in response to children, or the school becomes something that goes around and around, remaining in the same spot (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 90).

The more we have walked, and talked, and inquired as to ourselves and our context, the more our image of learning and school has shifted. Mimosa has always had a socio-political character, a belief that schools should do more than simply reflect society; they should also challenge and begin to actively shape a kinder, more sustainable, more just world in which we can all live. But perhaps, for a time, our vision of learning was more linear. If we were to draw our learning journey now – the one we’ve seen and have been a part of this year – it would look like a circle, or a cycle, or a spiral, or an infinite progression of infinity signs.

We might live in a city divided, but our lives are connected. We feel what it is that Malaguzzi (1999) describes when he writes of a school as a living organism. As teachers, we can more easily see our role now: to nourish and sustain a rich ecosystem of relationships. For it is in relationships that people flourish and thrive, and it is in relationships that people learn. If a school is a forest, then relationships are the “wood wide web.”

In recent days, as we’ve been thinking about our “Open Streets” inspired enquiry for 2019 in conjunction with our ongoing relationship with the Reggio Emilia Approach, we have had a vision of the school as a compost heap and ourselves as seeds – as we’re being turned and turned, parts of ourselves are decomposing while others are reaching upwards toward the light. It is a hopeful, restless vision of a place where the old ways are dying out, and new ways are being born. For as Paolo Freire (2005), a long-time friend of the schools in Reggio writes, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72).

Who are we? Where are we? More than anything else, we are in a constant state of becoming.
REFERENCES


[Image 22]
Listening and wondering: “The street made a song for us.” Isla (5) “So we should make something to say thank you” Kayla (5). But what? Mimosa’s Grade 0 group deciding to make a gift for the street: A song. Photo by Mila Gould.
A Tribute to Sue Fraser

by Pat Tarr and Carol Anne Wien

Pat Tarr is Associate Professor Emerita in the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. She has been inspired by the Reggio philosophy since 1990 when a presentation by Lilian Katz about a project from Reggio caused her to rethink her image of the child and her role as an early childhood art educator. Her research and publications focused on implications of the Reggio philosophy for Canadian contexts, art education, classroom environments and documentation. Although retired, she continues to be involved in the Calgary Reggio Network Association that supports professional development for educators from preschool through higher education, while focusing on her second career as a fiber artist.

Carol Anne Wien is Professor Emerita and Senior Scholar in the Faculty of Education, York University, Toronto. She is widely known for her work on emergent curriculum and pedagogical documentation, inspired by the Reggio Emilia experience, and is author of The Power of Emergent Curriculum, and several other books, editor of Emergent Curriculum in the Primary Classroom: Interpreting the Reggio Emilia Approach in Schools, and co-author, with Karyn Callaghan and Jason Avery, of Documenting Children’s Meaning. She speaks frequently at conferences and workshops across Canada and in the USA. She loves the arts – traces of the creative spirit – and constantly attempts to build them into daily life.

We were startled and saddened to learn that our dear colleague, friend, and mentor Sue Fraser had died April 30, 2019, in Ireland, having embarked on a much-anticipated trip to Europe. We offer our tribute to her as an expression of gratitude for all the ways the spirit of her living intersected with ours. We trace both our intersections with her professional life and our relationships with her, because they were interwoven, not compartmentalized.

Pat: I met Sue on Galiano Island, British Columbia, in 1970 where she and Hugh had set up camp in a small cabin while they built a house. We drank tea by the ocean overlooking a small cove, with children and dogs (a Labrador...
were challenged to question our previous reliance on developmental stages in art and our more hands-off approach introducing art materials to young children.

Painting, beyond children’s art, comes to mind as well, for we shared an interest in watercolour painting and in the watercolour paintings by the German expressionist artist Emil Nolde.

The 1998 NAEYC conference session by Sue, Cathleen Smith, and Elvira Reid

Carol Anne: In 1998, Sue, Cathleen, and Elvira presented their innovative work in the early childhood education program at Douglas College, Vancouver. These three women were pioneers in Canada, the first to consider the challenges to our early years practice that the Reggio Emilia experience offers us and the first in Canada to create something new—an integration of several traditional courses and an opening up of the structure of time—in a large institutional setting. They created a day-long experience, occurring each Wednesday in the term, called “Children Teaching Teachers.” In that program, they combined several courses and broke down conventional uses of time and space in institutional settings, bringing children and their educators into the university to engage with students. At the 1998 conference, their presentation was in the last time slot of the last day. Nonetheless it was crowded, people spilling into the hall, and for many of us across Canada, it was our introduction to Sue Fraser in person.

After the session, many of us recognized we had heard something unique. How was it unique? Not simply in its content, which was radical enough, but in reflecting a different quality of experience, a different tone or disposition. This disposition was one of humility about what they had done, and enormous yet thoughtful respect for the educators of Reggio Emilia and attempts to learn from them. They were so very careful about what they said about those educators, so considered in their responses to questions, so humble. It was extraordinarily different from any other conference session we had ever attended, and this fact was recognized widely by many of us in attendance.
Sue and Elvira were both retiring the following June 1999. I was so stimulated by their approach in that conference session that I visited them at Douglas College to explore their work and interview them about it. When I visited in June of 2000, Sue had just submitted her manuscript for the first edition of *Authentic Childhood* (Fraser, 2000), which brought this work, and her visits to Reggio Emilia, into the wider public domain of education in North America. *Authentic Childhood* is now in its third edition (Fraser, 2012).

**Fraser’s provocation**

In that 1998 conference session, and in her book, and in an article written on her work for *Canadian Children*, Sue argued, “We’ve missed the boat [in North America] in putting play at the core of our programme, and educators of Reggio Emilia put relationships at the core”; Sue was “still thinking about that” (Wien, 2000, p. 21). Her work with four different early childhood contexts—the ECE program at Douglas College, a child care and a preschool program on Quadra Island, and the Vancouver Child Study Centre—demonstrated alterations to educators’ thinking and practice in ways inspired by Reggio Emilia. Learning to create documentation that makes learning visible and shows why that learning is important, to collaborate in ways that develop teams (rather than divisions of labour), to create provocations (rather than activities with set outcomes), and to remove piecemeal schedules and allow time to be unhurried (rather than timed and heavily scheduled) were some aspects of practice that changed for educators in these settings after working with Sue as mentor.

**Sue on play in North America and in Reggio**

**Carol Anne:** Sue talked in our interviews (Wien, 2000) about a difference in thinking about play between our North American view and that of educators in Reggio Emilia. She noted that our view of play is to see it as pretense, a symbolic stance in which one thing stands in for another—children pretend to be something else (p. 22). She thought that play, for the Reggio educators, was influenced by Gianni Rodari and John Dewey. Rodari (1996) treated play as the generation of creative ideas in response to hypothetical situations (suppose the birthday party is for a house). Dewey treated play as creation of a product in response to “playing with” ideas and emotions and producing something that reflected that play. [This was Sue's way of putting it in 2000.]

In my opinion [Carol Anne], although both North American and Reggio views support imaginative thinking and both support generating new connections and new relationships, the Reggio view is larger, wider, as it engages both children and educators in thinking (and feeling?) that goes beyond the known and engages a wider world. And the adult is part of the interaction in the Reggio view and removed in the North American, in which children are left uninterrupted.

The key idea here is the difference between our idea of play as looking back into the world of childhood and the idea of play as building relationships that look out into the world. “The [North American] focus on play was consistent with a child development focus on the individual child… A focus on relationship, however, requires us to look out into the world and consider children’s dynamic responses” (Fraser, as cited in Wien, 2000, p. 26).

“I really feel,” said Sue, “that if we could put relationship at the core of our programme, we’d get a better quality programme, and a higher profile in society” (p. 26).

She offered these thoughts 20 years ago.

**Sue as a home of safety for others**

**Carol Anne:** From the first moment I heard her speak, then met her in Vancouver six months later, I found I felt absolutely safe in her presence. Safe in the sense of being accepted as I was, that there was no judgment but a genuine sense of welcome. It strikes me she was not cautious: She took me into her home on that trip without question, took me to Quadra Island to visit the centres and meet educators there. She fed me, housed me, for at least five days. I think those of us who knew her felt her love for us, and our work, her trust in us, and her support for what we were attempting to build for children, families, and educators. This sense of belonging and psychological safety is what we understand must be offered to young children, and it was so lovely to receive it ourselves.
Pat: Sue mentored me. I have a vivid memory of Sue trying to explain Piaget to me during a talk by Eleanor Duckworth at what I believe was the first Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) conference in Vancouver in 1976. Piaget’s theories of cognitive development were beginning to have a major impact on early childhood education in Canada at this time. Later, mentoring became more reciprocal as we discussed her book and she read book chapters that I was writing or discussed issues in teaching early childhood education students. In 2002 we collaborated on a piece for Innovations, “Trees Dotting the Landscape,” in which we described current Reggio-inspired work in Canada but the difficulty of collaboration due to the distances that separated us across the country.

Multicultural education

Pat: Sue began her work in the area of multicultural early childhood education with research at Sexsmith Preschool for her MA degree, which she completed in 1984. During the 2002 Canadian study delegation to Reggio Emilia, Sue was invited to speak to a professional development session for Reggio educators because the preprimary and infant schools were experiencing an influx of immigrants from other countries, something new to a region where families had lived for generations. In her quiet, unassuming manner, Sue spoke about her work in multicultural settings and what she had learned from these experiences. Sue brought her Reggio-inspired lens to mentoring work at the Marpole Preschool in Vancouver. This was a multicultural program and Sue wrote about and presented this later work until 2007.

Editor

Pat: Sue edited 12 issues (1993–1999) of Canadian Children, the journal published by CAYC with the technical assistance of her husband, Hugh. This peer-reviewed journal was the journal that represented Canadian early childhood education across the country. Contributors included academics and practitioners, and in this way she contributed to our sense of ourselves in the field of early childhood education and challenged us to consider new directions in the field.

She published one of my first articles on Japanese kindergartens in 1996.

Carol Anne: She published my first article, too, in 1995. This gave me the sense that I could have a place in the Canadian landscape of writers for early childhood. She was so welcoming.

A risk taker? Or one who believed in building for others?

Carol Anne: Sue often extended herself for the good of others. In my 1999 visit, Sue told me she “was questioned by police, as a high school student in South Africa, for teaching Black girls (when education was forbidden them)” (Wien, 2000, p. 21). She did so at the encouragement of a local priest, and perhaps he was the one the police were after. But during a visit with her in 2015 I asked her how she got to England. She told me that after this questioning her parents sent her there, as a 16-year-old; they felt they had to get her out of the country. The police, during the questioning, had sat around a table; they made Sue stand in her dress on top of the table for the questioning, where they could all see up under her skirt.

Generosity without bitterness

Carol Anne: Women of her generation were seldom accepted into doctoral programs, actively discouraged by men—it was all men then—in positions of authority around them. Women’s interests did not match those available to supervise or were not seen as serious. This also happened to Sue following completion of her master’s degree. Given the fact she herself was not permitted to do a doctorate, I found her frequent support of other women, in later years, who were completing dissertations remarkably generous and without rancour. She had much to offer and did not seem to mind that she had never won a prestigious professional position that would give her serious academic credibility.

Pat: I last saw Sue via Skype, on February 28th. She was an audience member supporting a PhD candidate through an oral defense, having read her thesis three times. As the external examiner, I could only wave. So I
followed up a week later with a phone call. She was looking forward to her trip to Ireland and Portugal.

The shells

Carol Anne: Sue said she was packing up to return to Vancouver from Quadra Island once and put a big cloth bag of wrapped shells in the trunk of the car for a workshop she was giving upon her return. When she got to the workshop, she lifted the bag of shells onto the table and dumped it out and was shocked to find that she had brought her bag of dirty laundry instead of the shells. Horrified, she swept it all away as fast as possible, and had to make another quick plan for the workshop.

Without guile

Carol Anne: Another time she was to give a workshop for a Head Start program across the Canada/US border in Seattle and had decided it should be on working with wire. Unfortunately, this was shortly after 9/11. She had, in her car, all sorts of materials for the workshop—types of wire, scissors, and wire cutters, and so forth. Had this unassuming grandmotherly woman been duped into transporting dangerous goods into the US? Sue found it quite difficult to convince the border guard of her innocence.

The garden

Carol Anne: Somehow her surroundings reflected something of her personality in a rich, abundant way. I remember the climbing roses, up the back wall of her home with its magnificent view facing the bay. Somehow the view into a far distance reflected the way Sue could look beyond the obvious and think in a bigger, more expansive way, and the creamy, soft-coloured roses reflected the beauty and sense of belonging she conveyed to those in her presence. Hugh was part of that, too, and ready to welcome and be interested in us.

Colour

Pat: When I picture Sue, I see her dressed in blue, usually light blue or aqua, sometimes navy, or maybe pink, possibly in a Liberty flower print blouse. These colours brought out her blue eyes. I have an image of softness, reflecting her gentle and quiet nature. Sue and her colours connect her in my mind with her garden, especially the roses and hydrangeas. Yet in recent photos, she is dressed in a red sweater.

The right arm

Carol Anne: The last time I was with her was in 2015, when Karyn Callaghan, Jason Avery, and I were in BC for presentations, and Sue and Hugh invited us for lunch. Two years earlier, at another conference, she had told me her shoulder was bothering her a lot, and now in 2015 she could not use her right arm. She treated it as one would treat a mosquito bite or small cut covered with a Band-Aid, as needing little concern beyond the help required to serve her food. In other words, she kept her engagement with life bigger and more significant than her problems with a physical body in decline. When I learned she had died in Ireland on her way to Europe, a trip she was very much anticipating, I thought about how she sustained this huge involvement with life—no diminishing what she did—in spite of affliction. To me it is the stance of a warrior woman, someone with enormous courage and enormous attachment to living richly.

Pat: When Sue lost the use of her right arm due to cancer, she continued to draw and paint, teaching herself to do so with her left hand. Talk about tenacity!

Sue read widely and was a member of a book club. Over the years we shared many favourite recommendations. In my last conversation with her, she was looking for a book for her book club discussion. I had just finished reading The Gown by Jennifer Robson. My description of the book, a fiction account of two young women who embroidered Queen Elizabeth’s wedding gown, struck a chord with Sue. She
launched into a story of being in London for Queen Elizabeth’s coronation. She had not eaten all day and was beginning to feel rather faint. There was a tent with the most appetizing sandwiches. She grabbed a sandwich to discover Prince Philip giving her a dirty look!

It is a cliché to say Sue was an exceptional and special person who accomplished much with little fanfare and less ego. Her reach was broad, from across North America through her writing and presentations, to lectures in Taiwan, Beijing, and Abu Dhabi. She received recognition for the important contributions she made, receiving the Friends of Children Award from the Canadian Association for Young Children in 1991, The Child Care Award of Excellence for Lifetime Achievement from the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development in 2013, and the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

She was simply a blessing to us in every way.

Acknowledgements

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REFERENCES


The Five State Study Group is the result of relationships that have developed over many years. In 2008, educators from Arizona, California, Illinois, Missouri, and New Mexico formed the first Five State Study Group that collaboratively organized an encounter with Reggio Emilia, Italy. That trip focused on a common desire to build sustainability of the Reggio Emilia Approach in the participating states based on a strongly shared concern regarding the rights of all children.

The 2008 trip inspired ongoing interactions among the group members that contributed to deepening relationships as we continued our study of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Subsequent convenings included a 2012 retreat at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, and a conference on reflective practice during the “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2014.

In July of 2016, a group of educators, along with Reggio Emilia pedagogista Tiziana Filipi, gathered for a retreat in Door County, Wisconsin. The desire for a second Five State Study week to Reggio Emilia, Italy, emerged at this retreat.
In January 2017, a collaborative letter was written to Reggio Children requesting a 2019 Five State Study Group week. The group’s purpose and interest included an opportunity to study, in a deeper way, the image of the adult in relation to the education of young learners. Many of the programs in the five states were experiencing times of flux, and leaders within our communities were taking on new roles or moving into retirement. We were interested in studying together how Reggio educators address change within their system including new teachers, children, families, and cultural changes. As we acknowledged changes in our own communities, our hope for the 2019 study week was to deepen and grow ongoing relationships among state participants, as well as establish new relationships.

With our aims established, leaders from the five states met through phone calls and video conferences for over a year. During the summer heat of July 2018, Five State Study Group participants met at a retreat in Tucson, Arizona, including a group of educators from Reno, Nevada. The retreat was an opportunity to plan the 2019 Five State Study Group week in Reggio Emilia, Italy. In addition, we developed our “Five State Study Group Intentions,” which begin:

We share a commitment to advance our unified voice that values and advocates for the educational rights of young children, families and educators within the context of our communities.

The “Intentions” represent how we support each other’s work and the ongoing work of the group, which now includes the 170 educators from six states who participated in the 2019 Five State Study Group week in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Following the 2008 Five State Study Group week we created what was referred to as the “Dictionary of Experiences” (Kaminsky et al., 2008) to describe the range of experiences created and shared in Reggio Emilia, Italy. For our reflections on the 2019 study week, we revisited this idea. In what follows, each state collectively responded to the concept of relancio, or relaunch. Then, each state selected one or two more keywords that surfaced for their group as they reflected on their time in Reggio Emilia. The word “participation” emerged, as a common unplanned theme.
Our collaboration began in 2005, with Tucson Children’s Project hosting professional development initiatives and opening their schools to visiting educators. In the years since, the Arizona Collaborative has focused on sharing professional development resources, including visiting educators from Reggio Emilia and the United States. Lella Gandini, Tiziana Filippini, and Karen Haigh have shared their experiences, their time, and many aspects of themselves with the Arizona Collaborative.

Connected by the interstate and the internet, the Arizona Collaborative includes participants representing agencies, programs, and higher education: Head Start Child-Parent-Centers Inc., Tucson Children’s Project, Pinnacle Presbyterian Preschool, the University of Arizona, and Paradise Valley Community College’s Early Childhood Education (ECE) program.

Our participation in the study group was intended to bring awareness to and advance participants’ understandings and representations of how each of our unique learning settings interpret, construct, and foster current Reggio Emilia practices. Our intent was, and is, to provide a statewide sustained professional development approach for those interested in the educational philosophy and values of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

The shared experience of traveling to Reggio Emilia in 2019 was a compilation of years of intense work and dedication to early childhood education and the rights of children, but it was also a relaunching, or relancio and a re-commitment to continue our important work in our diverse Arizona communities.
The shared experience of traveling to Reggio Emilia in 2019 was a compilation of years of intense work and dedication to early childhood education and the rights of children, but it was also a relaunching, or relancio and a re-commitment to continue our important work in our diverse Arizona communities. Marjorie Ruiz, Deer Valley Unified School District Community Education preschool teacher reflected:

During the study week, I feel relaunch symbolized the continuation or the bringing back of an idea, project, or concept to reignite an interest and expand further and deeper with a different perspective or lens.

In the context of the study week, relaunch set a tone that grounded the philosophy, not of a state of mind being fixed in certainty, but rather, in an attitude toward openness and creative liveliness to think and generate change into action within a collaborative setting. Relaunch is the right to imagine in a different way. It is recognizing that as children use the language of imagination in their thinking, they are in a state of relaunching their own creative process.

Melanie Akins, atelierista at Pinnacle Presbyterian Preschool, shares with us this concept of relaunch in action as observed at the Diana School in Reggio Emilia:

I re-represented a complex proposal I experienced in the atelier. I remember seeing a suspended plant with light shining on it, projecting shadows of its leaves on a white backdrop. It was quite stunning and the longer I looked at the area, the more surprises I found. There were so many layers to it... I’m sure I probably missed something! There were different supports for designing the shadows in graphic ways, as well as, a digital drawing tool. For me, this was an example of the osmosis of indoors and outdoors and I thought of the many ways the educators had relaunched the relationship with this everyday house plant and its beautiful shadows. What everyday items do I give this much care and attention to?

Melanie continues to describe the sense of participation the study week generated, a key word that surfaced for the group:

Participating in this study week, I got the sense that I was a part of something big and very important for the future of early childhood education in the United States. Participation represents democracy, solidarity, and respect. Participation among teachers, children, and families is strong and extends to everyone involved in the schools and beyond. Participation is cooperating together. Therefore, the schools in Reggio Emilia ensure there are spaces (like their piazzas or "town squares") for children to connect with other citizens in their community. This is something I want to keep in mind as we move forward in our program.
Our reflections revealed the respect for intelligence and the rights of children is manifested through belonging and participation of children, families, all program staff, and the wider community. Beyond our time in Reggio, as we relaunch our own participation, we can, and should, seek answers to questions, just as we explore the meanings of belonging and participation for different protagonists in our local contexts. As Kelsey Vasquez, director of educational practices at Pinnacle Presbyterian Preschool reflects:

What resonated with me the most was the link between early education and civic responsibility in a democratic society, and that by listening to children, and honoring their thoughts and theories, we are celebrating their different perspectives and creating the foundation for shared understanding.

California: Participation in Citizenship

Kristin Sherman, The New School-West Preschool pedagogista and co-director, a California mentor director with CECMP, a UCLA instructor of ECE, and co-founder of Voyages in home school.

Roleen Heimann, co-founder/co-director of The New School-West Preschool and adjunct faculty at Santa Monica College as well as a California mentor director for the CECMP.

Since 2003, the West Los Angeles Collaborative (WCC) has been studying documentation and attending and presenting at conferences together. Teachers learn collaboratively across schools with the support of funds from an Annenberg Grant written by Ellen Khokha, founder of The Growing Place in Santa Monica. The WCC continues to grow and learn together, reaching into our communities for shared inspirations. We also seek ways to more genuinely involve parents. We include them in our planning meetings, we worked with them on teams around school functions, and we reach to them for their expertise. We believe that they are our strongest representatives in the wider community to make social change.

The 65 California participants in the 2019 Five State Study Group included teachers (experienced and newcomers), administrators, pedagogistas, atelieristas, higher education faculty from our local colleges, and seven parents. We agreed that bringing parents from our schools would lead to a stronger voice in our community.

Sabrina Tom, a New School West (NSW) alumni parent, confirms this sentiment:

I was only a parent. What could I contribute to this whole endeavor? And yet, being ‘only a parent’ was precisely the idea. The theme of the study week was ‘The Role of the Adult’ – all adults. Adults being one piece of a radical puzzle which connects children, schools, and community into a unified, democratic system. The idea that I, as a parent, could participate in bridging across roles and social contexts to value all children and all adults, was one that awaited my learning in Italy.

We came to understand how the word relaunch was used in Reggio Emilia for this reimagining. It, like many of the Italian concepts, requires a deeper interpretation.
into American culture because the intention behind the wording has to be unraveled. How do we invite new parents and other adults who have culturally inherited an individualistic mindset that values autonomy to value a shift into collaboration?

There is a reciprocity in all relationships that relies on exchange rather than starts, evaluations, and stops. Where we (as Americans) are analytical in our approach, the Italian approach takes a more organic viewpoint. Engagement with the idea of the other is an expectation in the Italian culture. How do we make room for others to participate more fully in our own culture?

Adriana Olivera, a teacher at The New School-West writes: “Participation creates new possibilities so that parents become essential in a school as a democracy. In a culture of co-responsibility, every choice goes through a process of ongoing dialogue.” We can cultivate this culture to include larger societal issues and local interpretations, revisited again through our choices in materials and language in the classroom. Christine Richards, a teacher from The Growing Place, adds that schools must, “welcome what is happening in contemporary society as a platform for connecting work in the classroom with the larger community.” This embracing of the whole child implies an engagement with discourse, or confronto.

Discourse or confrontation requires a trust and vulnerability that seeks to find out rather than to determine.

Discourse or confrontation requires a trust and vulnerability that seeks to find out rather than to determine. Micah Card, a teacher at The Growing Place reflects that:

We hope to provoke new ways of knowing children, families, and ourselves. School itself is our large-scale medium for artistic, political and philosophical progress. This work is not just about creating art at school. It’s about the art of school.

Our goal is co-learning with young children and families resulting in what Marcela Caceres, founder and pedagogista at Bright Start: The Early Years shares as:

A deep sense of belonging among the parents, teachers, and community. The schools in Reggio Emilia showed that the children’s and adult’s problems are discussed in community, creating a sense of belonging and relationships. As the children witness this type of participation it has the power to transform the culture of a school (and society) because the work can become collective and integrated.

These notions have many indications for reorganization within our schools. Working with parents more genuinely can feel confounding – how do we do it? Considering one of Sabrina Tom’s observations, we can grow to expect from this relationship:

At the Munari Preschool [in Reggio Emilia], they were working on building stronger connections among the families and the school. They held an evening for parents and asked them: What does it mean to be a parent today? Not a small question! They explained that the point wasn’t to reach consistency or agreements on parenting, it was to create a habit of sharing ideas that reinforces a belief that school must offer its members space to talk about their most intimate thoughts freely.

We rely on our parents and what they take from our context into their next school experience. What are their expectations of education and how that transforms what exists? As Melinda Tsapatsaris, a parent at The New School-West and head of school at Westland School, noted:

In one of our final lectures, a district administrator commented that it is the responsibility of schools to share with society the culture of children – that it is our duty to give our local communities the opportunity to learn about children through their work. How will our children ever be viewed as citizens if their work remains insular? Malaguzzi (Gandini et al., 2012) said working with children is one-third certainty and two-thirds uncertainty. His math provides comfort, oddly. We did not choose a profession with tidy endings and bottom lines. We chose – and choose – to live in a world of glorious uncertainty. It also helps to remember that the image of the child – in all its complexity, context, and even confusion – can be one of the most powerful forces to help us guide our work.
The Illinois delegation formed through the outreach efforts of Crossroads for Learning, an organization that emerged after the 2008 Five State Study Group. The mission of the organization is to “inspire, support, connect, and challenge early educators as they seek to understand the principles and practices of the Reggio Emilia Approach within their own contexts.” The 2019 delegation was composed of educators from non-profit, public, and private early learning schools, and included representatives from higher education. While some participants were at the beginning of their journey with this philosophy, others have been studying the Reggio Emilia approach and adapting aspects of the philosophy in their contexts for many years.

We were inspired by the concept of relaunching, a powerful instrument to extend children’s and adult’s learning. We came to understand the word relaunch as meaning to draw from all of one’s resources to reinvigorate an experience. It symbolizes furtherance by finding new entry points into a topic. This concept also relates to the municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia. The idea that Reggio has always been and continues to be adaptive to change crystallized for us during the 2019 Five State Study week. This study week was different from the 2008 Five State study week. Relaunch meant a lot to us because recently Illinois has been through constant and dramatic flux. Some of our public program models have restructured in response to changing funding and programmatic dynamics. This restructuring has challenged our thinking, attention, and skills as educators. It has also provided us with an opportunity to renew our beliefs and values about teaching and learning.

To open the week, Reggio educators discussed how, post-World War II, Reggio Emilia, Italy, deconstructed just about all conventional thinking—much like artist Lucio Fontana carved into a blank canvas rather than painting on it. Through reconstruction, the people decided to create schools for young children, in which particular materials provided a medium, and environments—especially ateliers—provided laboratories to create new meaning. The atelier itself was reconstructed from a traditional physical space to more of a “state of mind” in which materials are used to support children as they express ideas and build understanding.

After entering the La Villeta school, we were invited to sit in a circle in the entry area. As the atelierista, Matteo Vinni, was sharing the school’s history, he emphasized the great tradition of family participation. The concept of participation was discussed throughout the week in relation to children, families, educators, and the context of the community. Paula Cagliari, recently retired director of Istituzione, had referred to participation as the primary tool of change. Throughout the week,
we thought about the idea of participation and what it means for educators from six different states in the United States to engage in a dialogue with educators in this small northern Italian city. As we observed, our sense of participation expanded:

As Matteo spoke of the kitchen as the atelier of taste, I (Juana) glanced over and noticed two children approaching a very large window that opened to the kitchen. The children had just come down from upstairs to participate in the meal planning for the day. The cook joined them at the open window, perhaps to discuss how many friends would be attending lunch. I was struck by the substantial size of the unglazed window. It seemed to begin just below the ceiling and nearly reach the floor as it welcomed pre-school-age children to bend at the waist to see further into the kitchen. Earlier in the week Reggio educator, Alessia Forghieri, stated that cooks have the knowledge and disposition to create wonder in children through the material of food that they can share with their friends. It was important to note that the kitchen was not situated in the back of the building or in a basement space, rather it was adjacent to the piazza – the entry and heart of the school. The piazza and the kitchen shared several extensive windows. This amicable space reminded me of the piazzas in town that were flanked by restaurants and cafés.

Democracy is the idea of welcoming people to join in dialogue. Consequently, the piazza is a symbol of democracy. Participation is a value and strategy that defines the way in which the children, educators, and parents are stakeholders in the educational project. When thinking about participation in higher education and professional development, we are challenged by the notion that for people to participate, there must be something engaging that invites people to participate. For this reason, we must consider the question: How do we invite others into our settings to join us in this dialogue?

The presenters related that a child exploring materials is learning through experience and forming her subjectivity. There is a real need in our own context, especially in limited-resource communities of color, to elicit the child’s subjectivity through multiple pathways, including the graphic arts, and expand the child’s voice in the community. In many cases, the pathways are replaced by overly instructional methods. Teacher subjectivity, as we saw in the presentations is also fundamental in the humanity of teaching and learning. Participation is a collective subjectivity through which thinking gives shape to the tools used. As we think about relaunching on a grand scale in our own educational system, participation is the primary tool for change.

Malaguzzi (Gandini et al., 2012) said that education is made of complex interactions, many of which only take place if the environment is part of it. He also proposed that every place of education is a place in which research is taking place in search of the meaning of life. What are the implications for our own contexts? Our values and beliefs are evident in our practice. They provide a counter-narrative to the educational policies that disregard the joy and humanity of teaching and learning. Our challenge is to collaborate with one another to continue our active listening, dialogue, and action around our beliefs and values in education.

Our challenge is to collaborate with one another to continue our active listening, dialogue, and action around our beliefs and values in education.
A diverse group of educators represented Missouri during the 2019 study week in Reggio Emilia, Italy. There were professors from Webster University in St. Louis along with current students and graduates of our various early childhood programs from California, Illinois, Missouri, and New Mexico. There were also educators from The College School in St. Louis, which once served as the laboratory school for Webster University. Each group within the larger group came with their own particular areas of concentration for study while in Reggio Emilia. However, we were all united with the entire Five State Study Group in our focus on the image of the adult in Reggio Emilia inspired education.

We have highlighted our key words, leadership, research, and professional development, grounded in ideas of participation.

Student Participation

The Webster University professors have had the privilege of designing and conducting Reggio Emilia focused course work for many years. In relationship with Reggio Emilia, nearly ten years ago we launched a graduate certificate focusing on the pedagogical coordination in the Reggio Emilia Approach at the university. At present we hope to relaunch the certificate program to address the many forms of educational leadership needed in the field. Both graduate students who have finalized the certificate and those currently completing it participated in the 2019 Five State Study Group. Our students - many of whom are also practitioners, offered the following reflections, as Kim Shakespear-Jones stated:

Highlights included being able to hear directly from the teachers, atelieristas and pedagogistas within the preschools and infant-toddler centers. Examples of their significant interactions with children illustrated the key pedagogical principles at work.

Tanveer Alibhai wrote about how she felt during the study week:

Overwhelmed at the strength of the community surrounding the schools, the level of parent participation, the beauty in simplicity, the presence of putting children first, the value of differing perspectives, and the humbleness of growing and learning continuously.

Mike Ashcraft described what he would take back:

When I am back in my job, I am going to slow down, enjoy the relationships and practice the pedagogy of listening. Listening with my ears, heart, eyes, pen, and camera.

Engaging in Research

Several months prior to the study week, professors at Webster University had begun to focus on early childhood education and teaching English as a second language through a collaborative research study. The goal of this research study is to explore and document how preschool age emergent bi- and multilingual language learners and their families are supported in Reggio Emilia inspired early education programs in the six states of the United States and in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The topic of how the principles and practices of the...
Reggio Emilia Approach can support dual-language learners and their families, especially those who are immigrants and refugees, was identified as an area of interest by leaders of the study week, and provided the opportunity to relaunch our research by inviting others on the 2019 Five State Study Group to participate as researchers and participants.

While in Reggio, we requested all educators participating in the study group to contribute their own experiences with bi- and multi-language learners through a detailed survey. We also requested and engaged in a dialogue with educators from the Reggio Emilia school system concerning ways in which they support the development of dual language children in their infant-toddler centers and preschools. We are still analyzing the data but already feel the information shared by both the study week participants and Reggio Emilia educators has the potential to help relaunch bi- and multi-language learners’ opportunities to learn in our schools by reminding us to embrace our hundred languages.

The Missouri group shared a desire to consider the role of pedagogical leader during the 2019 study week. Namely, what might the role of coordinator, classroom teacher, specialist, or director mean in each educational context? This desire was and is based on the shared concern for sustainability of Reggio-inspired education and the rights of children in the United States. The continuous development of pedagogical leaders in Reggio Emilia inspired education is critical for continued growth of the Reggio Emilia Approach in the United States. Or, as Sarah Hassing, The College School atelierista reflected:

How can we have more avenues of dialogue to uplift those that do not consider themselves leaders… to help everyone recognize the leadership that each of us has within. Can the Five State Study Group (now six with Nevada) provide a context for supporting this dialogue concerning the many languages of educational leadership?

The presentations and conversations with varied Reggio Emilia educators certainly encouraged a relaunching of this dialogue within the Missouri group.

As we look toward the future, all of the participants from the Missouri group are intent on supporting each other as we continue to network and strategize ways to grow as educational leaders and advocates for children and their families within our diverse contexts. We also anticipate continuing our collaboration with the other six state members and benefitting from their contributions to our thinking and learning.
Many of our thoughts and reflections took place at our favorite gelateria, Re Ghiaccio, in the wonderful Piazza Antonio Fontanesi. Our gracious shopkeepers were always happy to see us.

The High Sierra Study Group, based in Reno, Nevada, includes classroom teachers, parents, professional development trainers, and consultants. We have attended and presented at local and national conferences/symposiums and participated in specialized training including international study weeks. For over a decade, our professional learning community has studied and implemented inquiry-based methodologies that encourage creative thinking and incorporate the image of the whole child. We work closely with the Nevada Museum of Art whose focus is “Art and the Environment” and influence their practices to include the youngest learners. We intend to test new strategies and reflect together, as we explore the implications for teaching and learning.

Based on long standing relationships, we were invited to participate as part of the California delegation in the 2019 Five State Study Group. Thus, the High Sierra Study Group was formed to study, plan, and prepare for this rich formative experience.

Relaunch, a term that echoed during this study week, prompted the High Sierra Study Group to examine different perspectives of this expression and its pedagogical uses. Reflective discourse further defined relaunch as revisiting, reflecting, transforming, and maintaining life in the work of children. Starting again from a different direction or with new information helps to re-propose children’s theories in order to move thinking forward. We discovered many different contexts in which we found evidence of relaunch including spaces, identity, and documentation.

The transformation of the old Locatelli cheese factory into the Loris Malaguzzi International Center is a symbol of how this philosophy relaunch. The infant-toddler centers and preschools too exemplify relaunching environments as each group moves to a new space each year. Teachers relaunch successful spaces from the previous classroom in their new environment while taking advantage of the new features of the space; each configuration creating a collective identity.

However, children construct their own identity. Participation is the tool of change: children change through their participation, and teachers collaborate with them through listening in every sense of the word. Teachers observe how children choose materials and imagine with blocks. Are they going for...
height, symmetry, modular structures, or color? From the teacher’s observation and notes, she reflects about how to relaunch. The Acrobat clay project from La Villetta school demonstrates using documentation to prepare for a relaunch. Using a documentation grid, teachers and atelieristas can quickly note the action and thinking of a child while working on a project. Then when relaunching, this documentation can illustrate the child’s development such as one child’s need to make a chair-like apparatus for their clay person to dry upright.

Documentation is a tool to record the history of the collective identity.

Documentation is a tool to record the history of the collective identity. Adults and children bring ideas back to the whole group which allows for reflection and the possibility to relaunch on both current and dormant concepts. Christina, a teacher from Andersen School, explains that, “The classroom/school is like a town. You don’t erase the history of a town so you wouldn’t erase your experiences or work in the school.” Teachers and children can revisit historical documentation as a source for relaunching both current and new projects and explorations. One important role of the teacher is intentionally planning, questioning, creating space, and transferring of ideas/points of view.

Similar to the idea of confronto, teachers collaboratively reflect upon the thinking behind the documentation, and discuss ways to re-propose and relaunch ideas to children both for daily work and long-term projects. The different forms of documentation serve as another point for relaunching ideas with children. Such work prepares them to reflect with the pedagogistas and fellow teachers before relaunching. Our group considered the Remida Project to be a source of inspiration for teachers to repurpose and relaunch from documentation because of the infusion of different materials.

During our practical experience in the ateliers we explored relationships between technology and materials – a duality of senses and meanings. The “Digital Landscapes” atelier was especially rich in provocations set up with multiple image sources – webcam, projector, digital microscope, natural, and reflective materials. Teams began to create vignettes and shadow scapes. Atelierista Marco encouraged each team to go “beyond storytelling” through thoughtful questions and challenges to re-launch our investigations; to teach ourselves how to understand across different

Notes of relaunch clay
planes. Multiple images added different layers of perspective and digital reality.

We found that joining the 2019 Five State Study Group also led to *formazione*. *Formazione* in the way that we as a group continue to co-research and further develop strategies to engage social-constructivist approaches in our contexts. We will continue the idea of *confronto* through constant revision and reflection of this process.

We have begun by relaunching the presentations and professional development we offer in our community to reflect our commitment to the value of social constructivism. Through these efforts, we are transforming our group. The High Sierra Study Group is inspired by the connections made during the study group and accepts the challenge to share within our community; to inspire change, and to broaden practices.

"The High Sierra Study Group is inspired by the connections made during the study group and accepts the challenge to share within our community; to inspire change, and to broaden practices."
The number of programs studying the Reggio Emilia Approach in New Mexico is growing. “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit showing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1997 and “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit showing in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2014 were widely supported and helped to stir awareness and interest in establishing rich learning opportunities for our earliest learners. This year, New Mexico sent 28 participants on the second Five State Study Group. Participants included individuals from the Navajo Nation, Central New Mexico Community College, the University of New Mexico, the hands-on science museum Explora, our state’s public pre-K, and directors and teachers from private and public early childhood programs. The New Mexico Reggio Emilia Exchange (NMREX) was, again, key in facilitating this study week.

New Mexico is a “minority” majority state with people from diverse backgrounds, rich cultures, and colonialism. Within the boundaries we call New Mexico, there are 23 sovereign Pueblo nations whose people have lived and worked on their lands for thousands of years. The Navajo Nation also has a stronghold in New Mexico. To the south, our border with current day Mexico has traditionally been very fluid. A ruling in a recent court case has affirmed that inequities in children’s access to rich and relevant educational opportunities in New Mexico persist and are systemic.

In 2018, Judge Sarah Singleton, presiding over Martinez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico, ruled that all New Mexican students have a right to be college- and career-ready and that the state is failing to meet this obligation, especially with low-income children, Native American children, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Being responsive to the lawsuit is an opportunity for relaunch in education in New Mexico at the individual, school, community, and state levels.

We first heard the term relaunch used in Reggio Emilia in a lecture on the value of organization in the schools. Our understanding is that relaunch is about looking at documentation, identifying threads that have remaining potential, and then beginning a new study or continuing a study with those threads. Relaunching seems to acknowledge what extends from time away. A “launch” is not only a beginning, but a beginning with significant momentum. In light of the Martinez/Yazzie ruling, we have significant momentum to develop educational opportunities that are more responsive to the multilingual and multicultural children in our programs.


Kersti Tyson, Ph.D., associate professor, College of Education at the University of New Mexico.

New Mexico 2019 Delegation
That brings us to a word we heard the educators in Reggio Emilia use: recognition. Cognition means the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the senses. This definition suggests a possible meaning for recognition as re-engaging in this process, possibly with new results. The definition calls forth not only the cognitive aspects of our work with documentation – thinking – but also the emotional and experiential aspects.

Hearing children's words and making sense of them, is a process filled with wonder and joy. It is a journey with the children, re-experiencing something that has already happened in new ways.

The word recognize first means to identify (someone or something) from having encountered them before, to know them again. Certainly, looking at documentation is a process of remembering, whether remembering an event or remembering what it is like to be a child, reconnecting with our own wonder and humanity. Secondly “recognize” means to acknowledge the existence, validity, or legality of. This additional meaning is an assertion that education is a political act. Documentation is an assertion of the rights of children. Serious study of children's sense-making brings it validity and affirms its existence. Thus, recognition more accurately and thoroughly describes our aspirations for working with documentation than the word “reflect”. And yet, as we work to engage multicultural and multilingual heritages in the New Mexico context, we are often pulled up short (Kerdeman, 2003).

Our participants went to Reggio to see what the Reggio educators do. We did not expect to be provoked to recognize ourselves and our own cultures. Often, we discovered that what we thought was Italian about what we were doing was also American, influenced by our dialogue with Reggio Emilia. More uncomfortably, we experienced cognitive dissonance between our utopian visions of Reggio Emilia and reality. With further reflection we began to realize that utopia itself is not universal but is rather a construct based on values held by a particular culture. We must recognize our vision of utopia as our own, based on our own contexts, values, and aspirations.

For example, in New Mexico, as in Reggio Emilia, our context, our families, and our deep histories, compel us to be responsive to diversity in certain ways. We expected the educators in Reggio Emilia to tell us what to do about our questions concerning diversity in New Mexico. Instead we are challenged to recognize ourselves and how our dominant culture sets itself up as supreme and clouds our vision to the otherness of cultures, even when it comes to questions about approaches to diversity. As Moss (2018) writes, drawing on Levina's thoughts about the ethics of encounter:

I cannot grasp [the Other] by seeking to understand through imposing my framework of thought, my own perspective. Instead, my relationship with the Other must be one of respect for their absolute alterity or otherness, a recognition that they are a stranger “whom it is impossible to reduce to myself, to my thoughts and my possessions” (p. 61, emphasis added).

Identifying this disequilibrium calls for a relaunch as we study our documentation from the week. If we seek direct answers to New Mexican questions in Reggio Emilia, we are unlikely to directly hear the answers we are looking for because the educators in Reggio Emilia have not been investigating New Mexican questions. We must temporarily put aside our New Mexican questions so that we can hear the questions asked in Reggio Emilia and listen for the methods they use to investigate these questions and any evolving discoveries they come to recognize. Insight into our own inquiries exists in the dialogic relaunching of the questions, methods, and discoveries we heard and saw in Reggio Emilia as we work to recognize own New Mexican questions, methods, and insights in order to evolve our work in New Mexico; curiously revealing what we have in common but
also what is uncommon, not only with Reggio educators, children, and families - but with our own.

With this revelation, we can begin to recognize that the educators of Reggio Emilia have vast experience in using the ethics of encounter with children and holding themselves open to “the unexpected and unknowable, the perplexing and wondrous” (Moss, 2018). We can learn to apply this knowledge of how to hold ourselves open in regard to our own cultural questions regarding approaches to diversity in education in New Mexico. There was much to learn in Reggio relating to our New Mexican questions and even more to learn about ourselves: How else has our blindness prevented us from seeing what Reggio has to teach us? How has our own blindness prevented us from responding to the diverse needs and interests of the children of New Mexico? How can we relaunch our questions, methods, and findings to recognize New Mexico’s families and children’s participation in education in ways that honor their rich multicultural multilingual heritages? Perhaps, rather than being given the answers we thought we wanted, what we have been given is a reminder to relaunch: to recognize that the answers we seek can only be discovered by listening and engaging in the processes of education in our own contexts, as well as in others’.

Summary: Participatory Relaunching

In summary, as a collective, planning for, visiting, and reflecting on our time engaging in the study of education in Reggio Emilia, we have come to a place of participatory relaunching. As we learned about new and relaunched forms of participation that educators, children, families, and the city of Reggio Emilia engage in as they strive to educate the children in their communities, we have new eyes and new hopes for engaging adults as they strive to educate the children in our communities, and in the six states in the 2019 Five State Study Group.

REFERENCES


Review of Bordercrossings: Encounters with Living Things/Digital Landscapes
by Brenda Fyfe

Brenda Fyfe is dean and professor emeritus at the School of Education at Webster University in St. Louis, MO. She has authored multiple journal articles and book chapters on the Reggio Emilia Approach to early education. She serves on the boards of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Education Deans for Justice and Equity, the Association for Constructivist Teaching, and the Ideal Learning Roundtable of the Trust for Learning. Brenda is the principal investigator for a multi-year early literacy grant serving low-income families in the St. Louis area. She has recently begun a collaboration with several teacher-educators from the United States and Reggio Emilia, Italy, to research how Reggio-inspired education supports bilingual and multilingual children and families.

Anyone who is interested in gaining deeper insights and understandings about the power of children to cross borders of virtual and real, digital and analog, intellec-
tual and aesthetic, fact and fantasy – should read and study this captivating new publication from Reggio Children. Its deeply reflective essays by educators and extraordinary visual and narrated records of children’s experiences and explorations of living things, offer rich provocation for thought, dialogue, and action. Bordercrossings serves as a catalogue for an exhibition at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center, but it also functions as a stand-alone document that reveals young children’s encounters with nature, augmented by digital technology. It describes and depicts an approach to technology integration that is empowering to children and that expands and enhances the hundred languages of children.

As always, Reggio educators are at the forefront of research and practice. This book focuses on their many efforts across infant-toddler centers and preschools in their school system to encourage and study children’s relationships with living things, and to show how everyday experiences with nature can be enhanced through a seamless integration of the latest technology tools that can intensify children’s observations, interrogations, and growing relationships with nature. Reggio educators’ daily practices of observation, documentation, and analysis of children’s learning processes enable them to project and facilitate learning experiences that connect with and challenge children’s thinking and playful explorations. In this book we see how children’s experiences and wonderings about nature can be further extended and enhanced within digital environments, environments that attempt “to integrate nature’s complexity with the complexity of the digital” (p. 14).

The authors explain that digital representations and communications do not dominate other ‘languages,’ or replace them, but mix with them.

In the introductory research notes of this publication, Paola Cagliari reminds us that “Loris Malaguzzi, always attentive towards phenomena in contemporary life . . . decided preschools could not remain indifferent towards the first appearance of personal computers in offices and homes” (p. 10). He encouraged Reggio educators as early as 1984 to research encounters between children and computers in municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia. Consistent with their social constructivist philosophy of learning, Reggio Emilia educators have always introduced technology such as computers and other digital devices as tools for learning in collaborative small groups. Over the years, computers, programming software, scanners, digital cameras, video
Projectors, web cams, and pen microscope/cameras have, as Cagliari states, helped educators to imagine “environments augmented by digital technology” (p. 10). She describes how children’s efforts to communicate and construct knowledge through painting, drawing, and photography, for example, can be elaborated and made more complex when children are given the opportunity to experiment with scanners and digital cameras:

Digital cameras and scanners let us import images, materials, colors, and shapes, taken from reality, onto a computer, where we can modify them, enrich them, and mix them with one another, or with our own interventions in drawing, thus creating new qualities of perception previously unimaginable (p. 10).

Simona Bonilauri and Maddelana Tedeschi describe digital technology as tools that can connect areas of knowledge and support multidisciplinary explorations. They have “imagined a kind of artisan technology that keeps the artisan and digital dimensions connected” (p. 14). This artisan technology can spur curiosity, creative thinking, and respect for nature. Each of the fifteen “encounters with living things” which are documented and presented in this catalogue of the exhibition, reveal the artisan technology that delights and inspires the children and supports their research, their questions, their marvels and wonderings, and their love for the aesthetical dimensions of nature.

Encounters by children as young as one year of age through six years, are documented in the exhibit and presented in this catalogue, which illustrates 15 different encounters/investigations from 15 different municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia. As the authors explain, each study begins with images, quotes from children, and narrative from educators that reveal the initial moment of an encounter and what happens next, “documenting children’s capacity for re-elaborating the initial elements of information” (p. 23).

As I examined each of these studies (for example: “The optimism of daisies” or “Gifts for the tree” conducted by children and their teachers at infant-toddler centers; and “Plant effect: from flower to new plant project” or “In the skin of trees,” conducted by preschool age children), I could better appreciate and understand what Paola Cagliari explained in her research notes at the beginning of this book, especially when she states, “Over the years digital technology has offered us an increasing number of tools for creating experience that is sensorially-augmented, modified and enriched, with unexpected and previously impossible perceptions” (p. 13). I could better understand and internalize the concepts of “artisan technology” and “digital-nature” described by Bonilauri and Tedeschi (pp. 14-16) and the qualities of artisan-digital work articulated by Isabella Meninno in her remarks about the thinking that supported the exhibition project (p. 17).

Bordercrossings is a book that I believe is all the more powerful as a stimulus for our thinking if it is read and re-read, if it is examined from beginning to end and end to beginning. It articulates and beautifully illustrates a philosophy of education and research that recognizes and embraces bordercrossings of digital and nature. It is rich with examples of this philosophy enacted within children’s projects and investigations. And it offers an abundance of evidence that young children are not only capable of crossing borders of digital and nature, with the support of digitally augmented environments, but also lead the way in showing us how it can stimulate their thinking, enable them to build relationships and connections, as well as discover and generate new perspectives, questions, and appreciation for beauty in our lives.

REFERENCE

PERSPECTIVES ON NAREA

"Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material" Exhibition and Atelier – Call for Proposals to Host

NAREA is pleased to announce a call for proposals to host Reggio Emilia’s “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material” exhibition with atelier, beginning in July 2020.

The exhibition is a collection of works by the children who attend 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 interpretations. The new exhibit from Reggio Emilia illustrates the interweaving of drawing and words creating an intelligent and poetic mosaic. Within the exhibition, as part of the display, is situated an atelier space for drawing and narration, set up with drawing instruments, tools, and material supports. It is an interactive strategy that underscores how theory and practice are inseparable and indispensable to the quality of the educational experience.

We offer the following technical information for your consideration:

- A legal entity in your community must enter into contract with NAREA.
- The exhibit with atelier hosting fee is $20,000 (US) for a three- to four-month period.
- The minimum venue size required is approximately 1,500 square feet; however, large, aesthetically interesting atriums, galleries, or museum spaces are preferred.
- The exhibit includes multi-media materials, including (5) 24” Smart LED TV’s with stands. Venues must have electrical capacity and assume responsibility for security of all components of the exhibit and atelier.
- Installation time for the exhibition is approximately 4 hours. Additional time is needed to resource and appoint the accompanying atelier. A small collection of atelier resources is included for display purposes.
- The host community is responsible for unpacking, packing, installing, and dismantling the exhibit-atelier.
- The host community is responsible for shipping costs to the subsequent venue, as well as insurance and security for the exhibit.
- The host community is responsible for collaborating with NAREA and Reggio Children on the planning and organization of a NAREA conference, which will include participation of NAREA and Reggio Children representatives. A no-cost or low-cost conference venue with a capacity of approximately 350 must be available.
- NAREA staff are available to offer recommendations on exhibit-atelier installation.

Please submit all proposals no later than January 15, 2020, to Thresa Grove thresa@reggioalliance.org
Proposal Guidelines

Summary Question

1. What is the rationale for hosting the exhibit in your community, including potential impact?

Introduction

1. What is the name of the legal entity requesting the exhibit? Who will sign the contract?
2. What is the nature of the organization requesting the exhibit? (i.e., private school, 501(c)(3) organization, public school, university)
3. Are funds in place for hosting the exhibit? If not, how will funds be raised for hosting the exhibit?
4. What top three periods do you wish to request? Please list 1st/2nd/3rd choice.
   - June-September 2020/2021/2022/2023/2024 (NAREA Summer Conference host)
   - October-January 2021/2022/2023/2024/2025 (NAREA Fall Conference host)
   - February-May 2021/2022/2023/2024/2025 (NAREA Winter Conference host)

Background

1. What is the history of interest in the philosophies and experiences of Reggio Emilia in your community, including a description of the evolution of work in your community/state/province?
2. If your community previously hosted “The Wonder of Learning-The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit, please describe the impact of that experience.

Collaboration

1. Describe the presence of existing collaboration between educators, schools, and organizations, including the nature of the collaboration related to professional development and advocacy, and how members of the existing collaborative group will participate in the effort to host the exhibit in your community.
2. What is the composition of the team of individuals, schools, and organizations collaborating in the management of responsibilities inherent in hosting the exhibit?
3. Describe the presence of schools in your community that might serve as a context for professional development initiatives related to the exhibit, including background information about the school(s).

Venue

1. List the venue(s) being considered and the reasons why.
2. What are the dimensions of the spaces being considered?
3. What do you know about the electrical/technological capacity of the spaces being considered?
4. What on-site resources are available? Are there costs associated with on-site resources?
5. What would be the recommended venue for the NAREA conference?

Use

How do you plan to use the exhibition/atelier in your community?

Criteria for Determining Selection as Host

1. Is there a strong, collaborative presence in the community/state/province requesting the exhibit? Preference will be given to strong collaborations.
2. Is there a reasonable expectation that the host will succeed in raising necessary funds, securing an appropriate venue, and organizing all facets of the exhibit’s presence, including participation in the organization of a NAREA conference? Preference will be given to proposals reflecting strong histories of innovative initiatives and previous accomplishments.
Resources

Organizations

NAREA
North American Reggio Emilia Alliance
narea@reggioalliance.org
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

March 21–26, 2020:
Students and Professors Study Group

March 28–April 4, 2020:
In Depth U.S. Study Group

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

International Professional Development Initiatives in Reggio Emilia, Italy

To be announced.
NAREA Professional Development

Discount for NAREA members

The 11th NAREA Winter Conference
Defending Thoughtful Learning, Human Competence, and Creative Dignity
Greenville, SC
March 19-21, 2020
Speakers: Representatives from Reggio Emilia
Exhibit: “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material”
Contact: NAREA

The 16th NAREA Summer Conference
The Complexity of Trying: Time to Think, Search, Create, Understand, and Create Meaning
Atlanta, GA
June 25-27, 2020
Speakers: Representatives from Reggio Emilia
Exhibit: “Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material”
Contact: NAREA

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 centers 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 center 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 realized 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