

# The 13th NAREA Summer Conference – “Early Childhood Education as Activism: Stewardship, Social Justice, and Global Engagement” Featuring the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange*

By Judith Kaminsky and Patty Randall



Judith Kaminsky is the editor of *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange* and the NAREA exhibit project coordinator. Patty Randall is the NAREA professional development and social media coordinator and director of educational practices at Peachtree Presbyterian Preschool in Atlanta, GA.

## North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

### The Relevance and Timeliness of the Conference Topic

The 13th NAREA Summer Conference, “Early Childhood Education as Activism: Stewardship, Social Justice, and Global Engagement,” took place on June 22-24, 2017, in Ann Arbor, MI in connection with the presence of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit on the campus of the University of Michigan, as the exhibit was hosted by the University of Michigan Children’s Centers and the University of Michigan-Dearborn College of Health, Education, and Human Services. Since the beginning of the NAREA exhibit project in 2008, the exhibit host community’s choice for their professional development focus during their hosting period is, in most cases, also the title of the NAREA winter or summer conference that takes place in that community. In the professional development proposal that the Ann Arbor host community submitted to Reggio Children and

NAREA, they elaborated on the rationale for their choice:

“The Wonder of Learning” exhibit’s arrival will serve as an impetus for deep dialogue among educators and community members on important issues facing our state’s communities, as well as those impacting young children nationwide. Most notably, we hope to explore our work in the context of activism, reflecting the unique attributes of our communities’ strengths and challenges. We also hope to bring light to the power of our work and its impact on our global community. As we focus on social justice, stewardship, and global engagement, how do we see the work of early childhood educators, in and of itself, as activism? When children’s rights are compromised, how can our work counter those effects? How do experiences

in early learning environments serve as a catalyst for social change? How do we support children as active citizens with a voice? How and where do we see correlations between environmental stewardship and social justice?

As is the case with every NAREA winter and summer conference, NAREA and Reggio Children collaboratively planned the content of the summer conference with the host community in order to support learning and dialogue related to the conference topic in a way that is consistent with the spirit of the Reggio Emilia approach.

Following opening remarks on the first morning of the conference from NAREA co-chairs Margie Cooper and Barbara Acton and Michigan host community leaders Jennie McAlpine and Seong Hong, three NAREA board members, Karyn Callaghan, Brenda Fyfe, and David Fernie, shared their perspectives on the topic of the conference, inspired by “A Charter of Rights” by Loris Malaguzzi (1995).

### Karyn Callaghan

The theme of the conference that was chosen by the local hosts is “Early Childhood Education as Activism: Stewardship, Social Justice, and Global Engagement.” We appreciate the big vision of this theme and the timeliness. The work we do is political. It is either aimed at accepting and maintaining the status quo or interrogating and changing the status quo—the dominant discourse—and that work happens in big and

small ways in every decision we make. The work of the educators, children, and families in Reggio Emilia gives us hope that together, we can construct a new, more equitable, more just status quo. Their first schools were built out of determination that children would not endure fascism. They did not just resist; they created an alternative based on democracy and a revolutionary view of the child as a citizen with rights.

In your conference folder, you have a statement of rights composed by Loris Malaguzzi. We hope you will read the entire concise, rich document; we have chosen to reflect on segments of each of his statements—the one for children, the one for teachers, and the one for parents. In “The Rights of Children,” Malaguzzi (1995) states:

Children have the right to be recognized as subjects of individual, legal, civil, and social rights; as both source and constructors of their own experience, and thus active participants in the organization of their identities, abilities, and autonomy, through relationships and interaction with their peers, with adults, with ideas, with objects, and with the real and imaginary events of intercommunicating worlds. (p. 67)

One of the greatest challenges to our thinking is to understand and embrace at a deep level Malaguzzi’s view of the child as a citizen with inherent rights, and this applies not just to some children, not just when we are feeling generous, but to all children every day—children who have been made poor,



Alliance

If these rights of children, teachers, and parents are to be realized, there are participatory responsibilities for all of us, and we can make a conscious effort every day to take up those responsibilities.

—Karyn Callaghan

children who have been racialized, children who have been marginalized because they or their parents were born elsewhere, children who are differently abled, children who have been gendered, children whose families are Native Americans and who have been rendered invisible and silent.

It is interesting that a group of children and youths in Oregon have just gotten approval to sue the federal government over their right to a stable climate. The plaintiffs range in age from 9-21. The government had made a motion to dismiss, but last week a federal district court judge ruled in favor of the case proceeding, so it will go to trial sometime this year. If these rights of children, teachers, and parents are to be realized, there are participatory responsibilities for all of us, and we can make a conscious effort every day to take up those responsibilities. When we do that, we will start to see a more just society.

#### Brenda Fyfe

From Loris Malaguzzi's (1995) statement on the rights of teachers, I chose two passages to highlight. The first is:

It is the right of the teachers and workers of each school to contribute to the study and preparation of the conceptual models that define educational content, objectives, and practices. This takes place through open discussion among the staff, with the pedagogical coordinators and parent advisory committees, in harmony with the rights of children and families . . . (pp. 67-68)

I would elaborate by saying that this means educators have the right to think together, the right to reflect with colleagues, children,

and families to create learning experiences that have continuity with children's thinking. Educators must not be driven by a prescribed curriculum or high stakes assessments. But the right of educators to create responsive and negotiated learning experiences with and for children goes hand in hand with the responsibility to observe, document, and then analyze children's learning processes. This includes a responsibility to ensure that learning experiences challenge children's logical-mathematical thinking, physical knowledge, expressive languages, and social relationships, which, I believe, is what Malaguzzi meant when he spoke of "educational content, objectives, and practices."

I have observed that educators in Reggio Emilia have taken responsibility to advocate for their rights to live and learn with children and families in a culture of collaborative research and inquiry as well as the right to experience ongoing professional development and to be part of a cooperative network. When educators advocate for and exercise these rights, they are in a position to create socially just and equitable conditions for the learning of all children and adults.

As Malaguzzi (1995) stated:

Such a cooperative network of multiple interactive processes, entrusted to the contribution of ideas and abilities from each individual and all those involved—and always open to experimentation and modification—becomes the model for research, for educational interaction, for experience and life. (p. 68)

#### David Fernie

When school and parents are able to converge toward a cooperative experience, an interactive experience that is the rational and advantageous choice of everyone concerned (we are all pursuing more meaningful experiences), then it is easy to see how hostile and mistaken is the pedagogy of self-sufficiency and prescription, and how friendly and fertile is the strategy of participation and shared research. (Malaguzzi, 1995, p. 69)

As we three NAREA board members thought about and discussed an appropriate opening provocation for considering social justice at the 2017 NAREA Summer Conference here in Ann Arbor, Malaguzzi's "A Charter of Rights" not surprisingly came to mind. The above excerpt concerning the rights of parents seemed to me to be particularly strong and meaningful. It is a statement of advocacy and hope, advocating for the school and home to come together in a cooperative experience—one that is advantageous for all participants and is "interactive" among all participants. In his view, the rights of family members (I prefer the term "family members" to "parents" given our increasingly diverse society) are not an abstraction but are exercised and play out "in the doing" and in conjunction with the rights of teachers and children. The message to me is that when we are all in this together, the results are meaningful and beneficial for all.

In our society, there is a need for more places and experiences that are "friendly and fertile," countering a current societal ethos of competition and elitism that all too often marginalizes and isolates those who struggle due to difference and/or disadvantage.

From another country and era, Malaguzzi's words ring true to us, suggesting that the school can either be a place of hope and support or hostility and exclusion; the choice and the responsibility to make a difference is ours. The further implication, in my view, is that the full realization of our rights comes only through equitable, ethical participation and the exercise of responsibilities among all protagonists in the educational process.

The topic of the conference was addressed through the daily morning presentations of Claudia Giudici, *pedagogista* and president of Reggio Children, and Luisa Costi, project coordinator at the Gianni Rodari Theater Laboratory. On the first morning, they shared "Walking on Silk Threads: The Educational Approach of Reggio Emilia." Claudia began the presentation in this way:

We would like to bring you the very warmest greetings from all of our children in our infant-toddler centers and preschools and from the teachers, the *atelieristi*, [the *pedagogisti*], and the cooks—all the people who work in our infant-toddler centers and preschools every day. Those children are here with us today in this room, and we will give voice to their experience and the work that they do in the schools everyday. On our first slide, we chose the words of Camilla, age 5: "The trees are alive because they make apples; they make leaves; they make the wind." We began with the words of a child because we wanted to underline the central quality of the children—the importance, for us, of always crediting the children with this capacity for expressing their points of view on the world. We chose Camilla's words because we felt that they are very close to the aspirations of this conference. With her words, Camilla seems to be "tearing a sheet" so that we can see

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—David Fernie

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—Brenda Fyfe





From left, Claudia Giudici, Jane McCall (interpreter), and Luisa Costi

through it into the future. Camilla is inviting us, with that light touch that children always have, to think again—to think anew—about the centralization of human beings in the world—thinking of ourselves as central in the world—thinking the world depends on human beings. With great simplicity, as children know how to do, Camilla is proposing a new approach to the world. She is not proposing a world in which human beings are central but an approach based on interdependencies. In her approach, there is not a division of humans and nature but rather, humans are nature. This leads us to a holistic way of thinking of what it means to be in the world. Over the next few days while presenting aspects of our educational project in Reggio Emilia, we will try to highlight this vision of human beings as nature and the reciprocal relationships and interdependencies that exist between us all.

### The Celebration of 25 Years of *Innovations*

One of the highlights of this conference was the celebration of the 25th anniversary of *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange*, which was first published by Wayne State University in 1992. Late in the afternoon on the first day of the conference, the celebration began with a program

The breakout sessions offered on the afternoon of the first day also focused on the topic of the conference. Claudia and Luisa presented and dialogued with participants on “Early Childhood as Activism: Becoming a Group Every Day.” In addition, NAREA board members facilitated three discussion sessions with conference participants based on articles related to advocacy and social justice in back issues of *Innovations*, which participants had received in their electronic versions prior to the conference.

On the afternoon of the second day of the conference, *ateliers* were offered on the topic of “water as a human right.” This focus was especially relevant considering not only the topic of the conference, but also the reality of the Flint, MI water crisis over the last few years, tragically and ironically, in the “Great Lakes State” of Michigan. The “Voices: Conversations from North America and Beyond” column in this issue features reflections from the *atelier* facilitators about this experience with conference participants.

that honored the significant contributions to the periodical of Lella Gandini, *Innovations* associate editor since 1998; Patty Weissman, *Innovations* founding editor; and Rosalyn Saltz, *Innovations* associate editor from 1992-1998. Following some brief comments by Margie Cooper, Lella Gandini shared the “Letter from

Loris Malaguzzi” that was published in the first issue of *Innovations*:

Sept. 15, 1992

Dear Eli,

Ten handshakes for your idea and 10 more for carrying it out, and then 10 sets of good wishes for its success. It is a generous and worthy idea.

From what I learn from Lella Gandini, I see that you have in mind a newsletter that gives information about the adventures and resonance of our educational experience in the United States. I also see that you have in mind a newsletter that tends to expand the knowledge about our work while, at the same time, strengthening the connections of friendship and exchange among the people who have already encountered our approach. I am thinking here of many people: those who have come to visit us with delegations; those who came for a long stay; those who conducted with us (and continue to do so) research projects on children’s processes of learning; those who participated in meetings, institutes, or seminars; and finally, those who have worked to host or viewed or studied our exhibit “The Hundred Languages of Children,” which since 1987 has been touring in the United States.

I want to give you some relevant data. In the last four years, 31 delegations with a total of more than 800 persons came from the United States, while in just the last 12 months, nine of these delegations with a total of 250 people visited us. In the same 4-year period, the city of Reggio Emilia welcomed 32 delegations from other countries, such as Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Thailand. All of this highlights the strength of the attraction that our experience has and the enormous web of friendship that our experience has created around us.

Also in this recent period of time, there have been more than 20 major meetings, institutes, and seminars in the United States with the participation of educators from Reggio

Emilia and of our American friends. Furthermore, at least 30 American universities have had exchanges or contact with our experience. The relationship between our network and that of our American colleagues has become richer, thanks to two very beautiful documentaries. One was produced by Eugene Marner (in the series “Childhood”) and the other by Paul Kaufman (in the series “The Creative Spirit”). They were presented on public television by PBS in 1992. Furthermore, the designation by *Newsweek* of the Diana School as the best and most advanced school for young children in the world created great upheaval—almost too much—even in a country such as ours where the whole educational system is under heavy criticism.

Another important element is the imminent release in the United States of a book that will tell about the Reggio experience with our contribution and that of our American colleagues—a book introduced by our special friend Howard Gardner. Furthermore, we are preparing, with George Forman and Lella Gandini, another surprise that they will soon reveal. We can certainly say together that a good tract of road has been built, and many more passages have been opened.

Yes, dear Eli, your initiative will produce a reciprocal and deeper knowledge of what brings us close and of what differentiates us. The more it will offer reflections, dialogues, and comparisons, the more it will achieve good results. The true intercultural theme of our time (in a world more open and supportive) is for educators to open up to new questions, to new answers, and to new educational ideas.

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 governments 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 knowledge—perhaps we will



One of the many things that we can understand and perceive in the pages of *Innovations*—in the many different issues of *Innovations*—is the political message of Reggio Emilia. This attention to the rights of childhood, to social justice, and to the role of school in democratic societies has been maintained within the content of *Innovations* over the years.

—Claudia Giudici

not carelessly dissipate, with guilty nonchalance, the good that they, along with us, possess.

Dear Eli, I am confident that these thoughts are at the basis of your idea. I am very happy to follow your initiative with you and with all the American friends to whom I offer my good wishes and whom I thank affectionately. Before leaving, I want to salute also your wife, Rosalyn, to thank her particularly for her initiatives and for the earnest interest I remember seeing in her eyes.

An affectionate embrace, Loris (Malaguzzi, 1992, p. 2)

Then Claudia Giudici offered her thoughts on this historic occasion on behalf of Reggio Children; the Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers, *Istituzione* of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia; and the children, educators, and families of the Reggio Emilia educational project:

We are very, very happy to be here to take part in the celebration of 25 years of the *Innovations* journal. I would like to say thank you to NAREA on behalf of the *Istituzione*, the infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, and Reggio Children.

Through the work of *Innovations*, Lella Gandini gave voice to Loris Malaguzzi over many years through a very different language and a long relationship of friendship, which Lella once referred to as “a beautiful story in the midst of many stories.”

I believe that *Innovations* is a true concrete representation of a utopia. What I mean by that is that *Innovations* gives a voice to the dialogue that exists between people who are connected and related by the shared passion for a culture of childhood. *Innovations* gives voice to the dialogue between people who are motivated by the desire to share together and to contribute to a creative, new, and different education for young children.

*Innovations* is a utopia that has been inspired by the work in education of the city of Reggio Emilia. It is a reference, not only for the political dimension, but also the pedagogical dimension. One of the many things

that we can understand and perceive in the pages of *Innovations*—in the many different issues of *Innovations*—is the political message of Reggio Emilia. This attention to the rights of childhood, to social justice, and to the role of school in democratic societies has been maintained within the content of *Innovations* over the years. Today, the fundamental role of schools in democratic societies is a particularly important topic.



From left, Judith Kaminsky, Lella Gandini, Patty Weissman, and Claudia Giudici

The name *Innovations* tells us something about its identity and its essence. The essence of the work of *Innovations* is to diffuse and to generate innovative cultural work. *Innovations* offers us a context for knowledge and for exchanges, which project toward a future. This original and precious journal, which gives voice not only to the research that is done in universities (although it also does that), but above all, it gives a voice to teachers—the primary researchers together with children into new pedagogy.

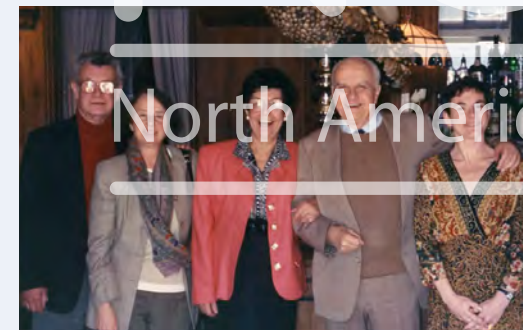
*Innovations* is looking very good after 25 years! It has accompanied the journey of the Reggio Emilia approach in North America and beyond. It has accompanied us through a constant evolution, and it has done that by keeping the level of quality extremely high, not only in the content, but also in the ways the content is communicated.

Twenty-five years ago when *Innovations* was born, I was very young, but I know from what I have read, from the stories that I have heard, from everything I know about that time, and from what I heard from Malaguzzi,

that it was a very different period of history. The economic conditions, the political conditions, and the social conditions were all very different, not only in Italy, but also here in North America. Precisely because of those different conditions, I believe that the presence and the vitality of the *Innovations* journal is needed more than ever.

Because of that, I would like to offer one more sincere thank you—not a rhetorical thank you but a sincere thank you—to all the many contributors to the first 25 years of life of the *Innovations* journal. It is with this deep sense of gratitude that we wish to celebrate 25 years in order to guarantee the future of *Innovations* together. Thank you very much!

Finally, Judith Kaminsky offered appreciation and recognition to the three honorees and to everyone that has contributed to the development of *Innovations* since 1992:



How wonderful that the 25th anniversary of *Innovations* coincides with the presence of “The Wonder of Learning – The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit and the NAREA Summer Conference in Michigan! For NAREA, a very important part of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the *Innovations* periodical is recognizing and honoring those that were instrumental in its creation and early years. I’d like to share with you a 1993 photo of (from left) Eli Saltz, then the director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute at Wayne State University in Detroit; Lella Gandini, then the official U.S. liaison for the Department of Education in Reggio Emilia; Rosalyn Saltz, then a professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (UM-D)

and the director of the UM-D Child Development Center; Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia educational project; and Patty Weissman, the founding editor of *Innovations*.

In a way, the story of *Innovations* begins with Roz, who was, according to Carla Rinaldi (in her letter in the *Innovations* 25th anniversary exhibit booklet):

... an educated and passionate scholar in pedagogy and the history of Italian pedagogy who met Reggio Emilia and Loris Malaguzzi before her husband, and who was literally “pervaded” with it, becoming a strong supporter. . . The beautiful dialogue between Eli and Loris was fostered by Rosalyn’s enthusiasm since she was the biggest supporter of hosting “The Hundred Languages of Children” exhibit in Detroit.

So in 1991, the exhibit came to Detroit, hosted by the Merrill-Palmer Institute and the University of Michigan-Dearborn, along with the Italian-American Cultural Center and The Scarab Club, where the exhibit was located.

According to Lella Gandini (in her tribute to Eli Saltz in the March 2016 issue of *Innovations*):

I had the good fortune to participate in one of the professional development initiatives connected to the presence of the exhibit in Detroit and experience the hospitality of Eli and Rosalyn in their home when the idea of establishing a vehicle of communication between Reggio Emilia and the United States was first generated. I also participated in Eli’s and Rosalyn’s first conversations with Loris Malaguzzi about the decision to launch *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*. (p. 26)

So the creation of the *Innovations* periodical was the result of the collaborative and mutually respectful relationship that developed between Loris Malaguzzi and Eli Saltz.





Eli asked Patty Weissman to be the editor, a position she held until 1998. In Patty's tribute to Eli, she wrote:

... Eli entrusted me with inviting a newly formed editorial board to our first discussion about the creation of *Innovations* ... The early *Innovations* editorial board meetings were filled with collective excitement as formidable minds tossed around ideas, argued, laughed, shared food and good Italian wine, and, ultimately, agreed upon ways to introduce and explore Reggio principles with teachers in this country. (p. 31)

Rosalyn Saltz served as the associate editor of *Innovations* from 1992-1997 and as an editorial board member from 1997-2000. Lella Gandini was an editorial board member from 1992-1997 and has been the associate editor of *Innovations* since 1997.

The first issue of *Innovations* was published in the fall of 1992. In "Greetings from the Director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute," Eli (1992) wrote:

It is with great pleasure that we at Merrill-Palmer have initiated *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*. The experiment taking place in the Reggio preschools has inspired many educators throughout the world. (p. 3)

In "Letter from Loris Malaguzzi" in this first issue, I would like to highlight these words that represent Malaguzzi's hopes for this new resource for early childhood educators:

Yes, dear Eli, your initiative will produce a reciprocal and deeper knowledge of what brings us close and what differentiates us. The more it will offer reflections, dialogues, and comparisons, the more it will achieve good results. The true intercultural theme of our time (in a world more open and supportive) is for educators to open up to new questions, to new answers, and to new educational ideas. (p. 2)

Patty Weissman hired me in March 1995 to work part-time on a grant project to develop a video-enhanced early childhood education curriculum in collaboration with the public TV station in Detroit. Two months later, she asked if I could work 5 more hours a week to help her with the *Innovations* periodical, so I became the managing editor. A month after that, I participated in a weeklong professional development initiative in Chicago in connection with the presence of the first edition of "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit in the United States. There I learned about the Reggio Emilia approach from Sergio Spaggiari, Amelia Gambetti, and Giovanni Piazza, as well as from Lella Gandini. I was incredibly moved by this experience and knew I had found my place professionally.

I learned a great deal from Patty in the 3 years we worked together, and we laughed a lot due to Patty's keen sense of humor! Because she was working fulltime on the grant project, Patty gave me the responsibility of developing each issue of *Innovations* under her guidance, so I had to learn fast. I was so

grateful that Patty did the final editing of the content for each issue as she is an excellent editor. Patty also had a strong sense of the Reggio Emilia approach, which she shared with me in the course of our work. I remember in a meeting in Reggio Emilia in 1997, Carla Rinaldi told Patty that she was a "wise *pedagogista*." I understood what she meant.

From Roz Saltz, I learned about the necessity and the value of collaboration in our work. At one meeting of the Merrill-Palmer professional development advisory group, which included educators from the local community, Roz told me to be sure that I made an intentional effort to include the members of the group in the work of *Innovations* as well as the conferences that we were organizing at the time. She told me that people want to participate, and that I am communicating respect by offering them opportunities to do just that. Years after Roz left the *Innovations* editorial board, I remember her pulling me aside at a luncheon to let me know how she felt about the ways in which *Innovations* was evolving and her suggestions for the future.

Lella Gandini has been the associate editor of *Innovations* since 1997. I remember thinking at the time that she had already been serving in that role, working with us on the planning and content of each issue and offering her invaluable perspective in order to ensure that the articles that were published in *Innovations* respectfully reflected the values, the principles, and the experience of the Reggio Emilia educational project. I believe that Lella's ongoing participation in the work of *Innovations* contributed to our ability to establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with the educators in Reggio Emilia and to regularly publish articles by and interviews with *pedagogisti*, *atelieristi*, teachers, municipal officials, and citizens of Reggio Emilia. Lella became my mentor and has added so much to the experience of being the editor of *Innovations* for me. I learned from her wisdom, her patience, her judgment, her thoughtfulness, and her

respect for others. I have told her that she is the "heart and soul of *Innovations*," and I still believe that.

Please join us in expressing our appreciation and our gratitude to Patty, Roz, and Lella for their significant contributions to *Innovations* and to the quality of early childhood education in North America and beyond. We have a small gift for Patty, Roz, and Lella—Volume 1 of the *Echoes* series, *Environment, Spaces, Relations*, the first of many *Innovations* compilations that NAREA is planning on publishing, and the *Innovations* 25th anniversary exhibit booklet. Roz's health does not permit her to join us here, but we will send the gift to her where she now lives in Athens, GA.

I'd also like to express gratitude to Lisa Bizon, who has been the *Innovations* designer since 2000 and is here with us today. In addition, I would like to recognize Libby Sheldon, a colleague of Patty and mine from the early years at the Merrill-Palmer Institute, who served as a consultant in a Reggio-inspired professional development program with Detroit Head Start and Detroit Public School teachers and is a participant and *atelier* facilitator at this conference. Then I would like to thank the members of the *Innovations* editorial board through the years, the current consulting editors, all of the authors of *Innovations* articles, and, of course, the readers! Your support and collaboration has made it possible for *Innovations* to reach this milestone!

I'd like to end with the words of the dedication of the first volume of the *Echoes* series, *Environments, Spaces, Relations* (2017):

To the children, women, and men of Reggio Emilia, Italy, in deep gratitude for the tireless example of creative democracy that sees very young children, and all human beings, as citizens with enormous rights.







From left, Emily Fanelli and Maggie Fritz, Ann Arbor host representatives



From left, Lella Gandini and husband Lester Little



From left, Julia Koumbassa and Jennie McAlpine, Ann Arbor host representatives

Please join us at the reception to celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Innovations* and our collective commitment to the rights of children, educators, and families throughout the world. Be sure to enjoy some food and drink

### Gratitude for Our Collaborators

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we welcomed Reggio Emilia colleagues Claudia Giudici and Luisa Costi. We are indebted to interpreter Jane McCall for her untiring efforts throughout the 3 days. We were delighted with the participation of Lella Gandini and Patty Weissman, who, as former and current editors of *Innovations*, shared memories, insights, and hopes for the evolution of *Innovations*. We would like to recognize and thank those who offered their creative spirits and inspired us as they

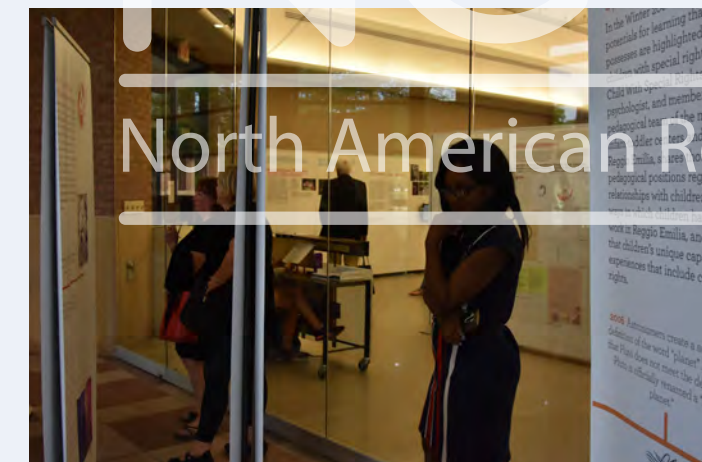
as well as the new *Innovations* exhibit. Feel free to also visit “The Wonder of Learning” exhibit. Thank you for being with us in observing this important moment in our history.

facilitated the *ateliers*: Kym Cook, Anna Golden, Jesús Oviedo, Beth Poronsky, Libby Shelton, Nora Thompson, Gigi Yu, and Kelly Zechmeister-Smith.

We are grateful for the efforts in the planning of this conference over so many months of our local hosts, the representatives of the University of Michigan Children’s Centers and the University of Michigan-Dearborn College of Health, Education, and Human Services. Additionally,

we want to thank the educators and families who opened their schools to us through actual and virtual school tours: the University of Michigan North Campus Children’s Center, the University of Michigan-Dearborn Early Childhood Education Center, and the University of Michigan-Flint Early Childhood Development Centers. As we work to create a different kind of education for young children, we will continue to be inspired by the Michigan early childhood community.

It is our hope that the time spent together at the University of Michigan, participating in shared study and research of the Reggio Emilia educational project and promoting education as activism, will fuel our common passion for a culture of childhood. Together, we can contribute to a new kind of education for all young children.



## North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

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