

# Welcome!

## The 19<sup>th</sup> NAREA Summer Conference

The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance welcomes you to The 19<sup>th</sup> NAREA Summer Conference, “Crossing Borders: Affirming Rights,” a NAREA initiative in collaboration with Reggio Children and Project Infinity. We are happy to return to Atlanta, a city with a long history of working for positive change, particularly in civil and human rights.

We’ve been busy living the mission of NAREA, connecting the practices and philosophies of the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy, to its advocates and education professionals in the United States and Canada and those individuals to each other. We’ve held multiple initiatives and managed two exhibitions and *ateliers*, *Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material* and *Bordercrossings: Encounters with Living Things / Digital Landscapes*. We’ve published *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Emilia Exchange*, updated the NAREA website, supported the Reggio Children International Network and the Reggio Children Loris Malaguzzi Center Foundation, and raised funds to send professional materials to underserved communities.

It is with special gratitude that we welcome Moira Nicolosi, *pedagogista*, Marco Spaggiari, *atelierista*, and Jane McCall, interpreter. Through their sharing and exchange, we will continue to construct strong interpretations of the values, principles, and experiences of the Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers – *Istituzione* of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. Finally, we thank the community of Reggio Emilia, including Reggio Children, for all they do to advance the rights of children, families, and educators. We extend our appreciation to the educators of Project Infinity for hosting this conference and for supporting its planning, including the Atlanta working group, which helped with the *atelier* design and organization, The Nest Nursery School and Peachtree Presbyterian Preschool for opening their school to welcome us, and Peachtree Presbyterian Preschool for its sponsorship.

To be continually encouraged to find our own unique identities as schools in different communities worthy of our own identity is to see how much the message of Reggio Emilia is based on attitudes of research and invention, rather than prescriptive dogma. For this, we are also grateful. As we invest in an approach that includes permanent study, research, collaboration, innovation, transparency, and exchange, may we keep the words of Loris Malaguzzi (1994) as a constant companion, “Children have the right to imagine. We need to give them full rights of citizenship in life and in society. . . . Instead of always giving children protection, we need to give them the recognition of their rights and of their strengths (Malaguzzi, p. 5).”

Please enjoy the pleasure of thinking, wondering, and learning together as we work to affirm the full rights of children and adults in our schools, communities, and life.

With nostalgia for the future,

*NAREA Board and Staff*

