



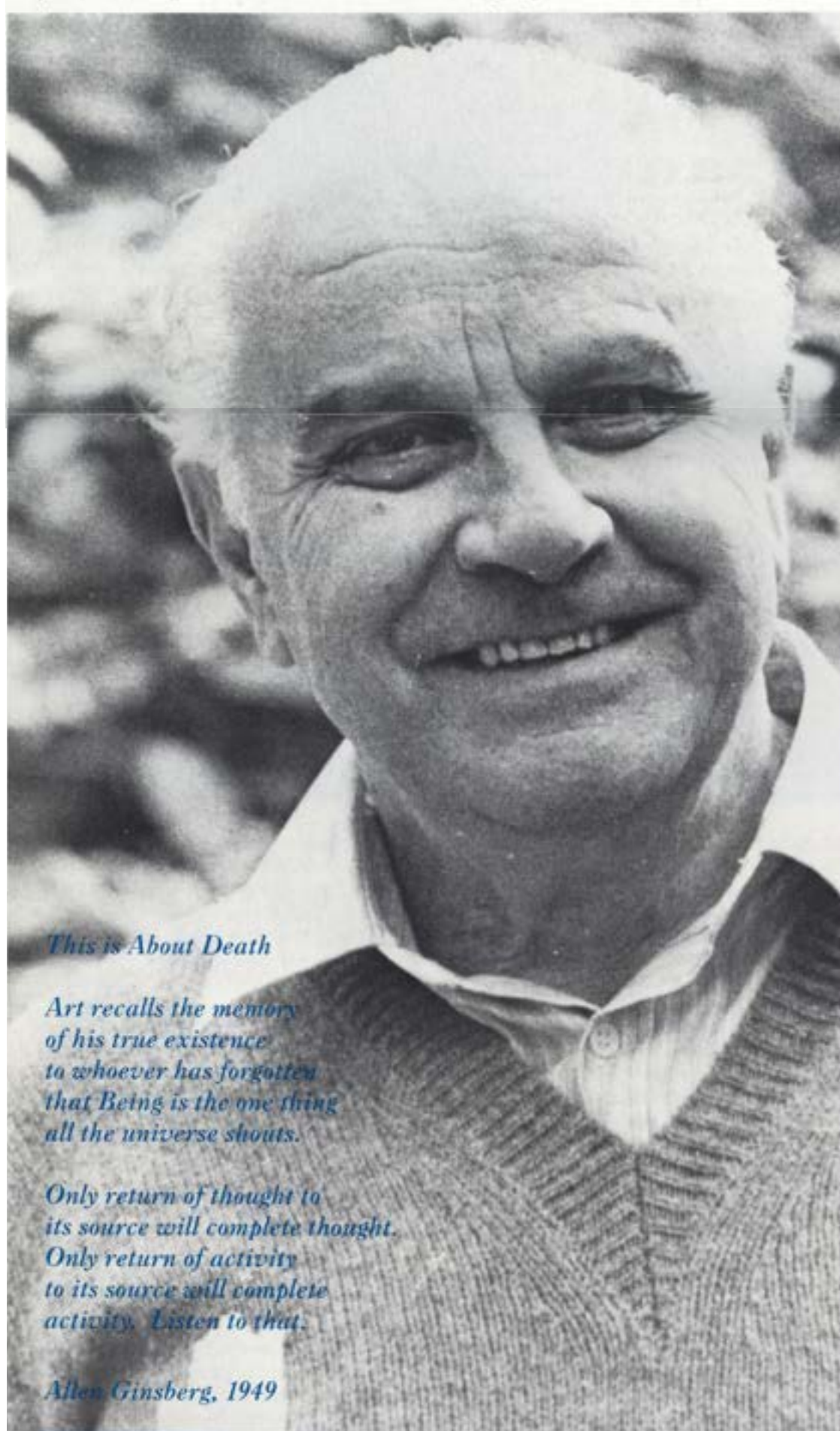
innovations

in early education: the international reggio exchange
vol. 2 no. 1 winter 1994

Sponsored by the Merrill-Palmer Institute

loris malaguzzi

This issue of Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange is dedicated to the memory of Loris Malaguzzi (1920 - 1994) and to the gift of his vision which he so generously shared with the world.



This is About Death

*Art recalls the memory
of his true existence
to whoever has forgotten
that Being is the one thing
all the universe shouts.*

*Only return of thought to
its source will complete thought.
Only return of activity
to its source will complete
activity. Listen to that.*

Allen Ginsberg, 1949

editors

Editor • Patricia Weissman, Ed.D.,
Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University
Associate Editor • Rosalyn Saltz, Ph.D.,
University of Michigan-Dearborn
Institute Director • Eli Saltz, Ph.D.,
Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University

editorial board

Louise Cadwell, MA,
The College School, Webster Grove, MO
Carolyn Edwards, Ed.D.,
University of Kentucky
George Forman, Ph.D.,
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Amelia Gambetti
Reggio Emilia, Italy
Lella Gandini, Ed.D.,
U.S. Liaison for the Department of Education,
Reggio Emilia, Italy
Joanne Hendrick, Ph.D.,
University of Oklahoma
Pam Houk,
The Dayton Art Institute
Lillian Katz, Ph.D.,
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Rebecca New, Ph.D.,
University of New Hampshire
Baji Rankin,
Early Childhood Educational Exchange,
Institute for Self-Active Learning, Boston
Claudia Rose,
Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University

a profile of dr. loris malaguzzi, founder of the reggio emilia early childhood program

by Dr. Patricia Weissman

Educators throughout the world are mourning the loss of Dr. Loris Malaguzzi, who died of a heart attack on January 30, 1994. His presence will be missed in Reggio, by friends and family, and by the educators, parents and children who are connected with the Reggio schools and infant centers. His loss will also be felt by the citizens of Reggio who have come to know and respect the remarkable energy that Loris Malaguzzi gave in the service of creating an entire community—not just a school or 33 schools, but an entire community of adults dedicated to providing the best possible world for children. As well, the death of Loris Malaguzzi will be felt in the educational community in the United States, coming at a time when we have been discovering the relevance of Dr. Malaguzzi's vision and philosophy to our own work here.

Loris Malaguzzi was born in Correggio, a province of Reggio Emilia, on Feb. 23, 1920. In describing his childhood to Danish writer Peter Ambeck-Madsen, Malaguzzi said, "The question is whether we who were young in fascist Italy in the 1920s and 1930s can even remember having a childhood—I certainly can't. I think it was destroyed by six years of war which gobbled up our youth. Perhaps that's why I am always most interested in the most important childhood years—both others' and my own."

"My father, who was a stationmaster, pressed me a little, so in 1939 I began my teacher training, which I completed during the war. It was a short and inexpensive course and would provide a modest but secure livelihood. I was also a soldier—a bad one!—on railway duty around Bologna. Because I was involved with the railway I did not have to work for the German Wehrmacht—and that was good. There were 30 of us who graduated from teacher training in my year, but only two of us took up teaching after the war. The others disappeared to other jobs which paid better. But maybe that's not such a bad thing—you can only be good at teaching if you enjoy it, if it gets under your skin." (Ambeck-Madsen, 1992, p. 18).

By 1945, the enjoyment of teaching which was under Loris Malaguzzi's skin, led him into an extraordinary adventure and commitment. Six days after the end of World War II, Dr. Malaguzzi rode his bicycle to the nearby town of Reggio Emilia where women were gathering bricks and wood out of the rubble of war to build a new school. Having witnessed the devastation of the war and the fascist regime of Mussolini, Reggio parents were intent on creating schools that could lead to a better world for children. This first school, "Villa Cella", was financed by selling a tank, three military trucks and six horses which were left in the German retreat. Impressed by the parents' commitment, Dr. Malaguzzi offered his support. He continued to work with Reggio parents until 1963, when Reggio Emilia opened Italy's first secular, city-sponsored school, and hired Dr. Malaguzzi as the official educational coordinator. Under Dr. Malaguzzi's leadership, the city has come to finance 22 schools for children aged 3 to 6 years and 12 infant centers for children aged 3 months to 3 years.

In speaking of the beginnings of the Reggio early childhood program, Dr. Malaguzzi said, "If we continue to review those extraordinary origins, it is because we are still trying to understand the intuitions, the ideas, and the feelings that were there at the start and that have accompanied us ever since. These correspond to what John Dewey called, 'the foundation of the mind,' or Lev Vygotsky considered, 'the loan of consciousness.' Such concepts we have always kept in mind, especially in moments when we have had to make difficult decisions or overcome obstacles. Indeed, the first philosophy learned from these extraordinary events, in the wake of such a war, was to give a human, dignified, *civil* meaning to existence, to be able to make choices with clarity of mind and purpose, and to yearn for the future of mankind." (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1993, p. 50).

Throughout his life, Dr. Malaguzzi pursued a course of wide-ranging activity. He was the founder of the Municipal Psycho-Pedagogic Medical Center shortly after the war and directed the "Rinascita" Institution for Survivors and Partisans. He worked in an international effort to support children who had been left handicapped or orphaned by the war. In addition, Dr. Malaguzzi, with the poet Corrado Costa, created a children's theater group and produced plays by Beckett, Brecht and Ionesco. Since 1976, Dr. Malaguzzi had been the director of the monthly magazine, *Zerosix* (Zerosix) and since 1985 of the monthly magazine *Bambini* (Children). He was also the president of the National Association for the Education of Infants and Children in Italy.





Dr. Malaguzzi organized two exhibits based on works created in the Reggio preprimary schools which have traveled throughout Europe and the United States. The second exhibit, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, is currently on tour in North America (see the Calendar listings) and is scheduled in U.S. cities through 1996. *The Hundred Languages of Children: Narratives of the Possible* catalogue, which was compiled by Dr. Malaguzzi to accompany the exhibit, is currently available in the United States (see Recommended Resources). In addition to the publishing of many articles and speeches, Loris Malaguzzi was the author of a children's book, *Volpino, ultimo ladro di galline* (*Little Fox, The Last Thief of Chickens*).

Although Dr. Malaguzzi officially retired from his position with the Reggio schools in 1985, he continued his active involvement until the time of his death. He continued to work with the educators, children and parents of the Reggio preprimary schools, and lectured throughout the world to help interpret the Reggio philosophy to others. In the last year of his life, Loris Malaguzzi focused much of his energy into the creation of an organization called *Reggio Children*. Made up of various constituencies of Reggio citizens, the function of *Reggio Children* is to support the early childhood schools: to disseminate information, publish materials, conduct research, oversee foreign delegations and educate teachers. Dr. Malaguzzi expressed great satisfaction when the initiative of *Reggio Children* received a vote of approval in the municipality of Reggio in the fall of 1993, and an affiliate organization, *Reggio Children, USA* was formed in the United States. For more information about *Reggio Children, USA*, see the interview with Carol Philips on the final page.

The 1990s marked a period of international recognition for Loris Malaguzzi's life-long efforts on behalf of children. An article in *Newsweek* (December 2, 1991) cited the Reggio Emilia early childhood program as "the best in the world" and brought hundreds of teachers, journalists, filmmakers and researchers to the exemplary schools which Dr. Malaguzzi founded. In 1992, Loris Malaguzzi was awarded the prestigious LEGO prize which is assigned to persons or institutions that have made "an extraordinary contribution towards the improvement of conditions under which children live and grow up." (Ambeck-Madsen, 1992, p. 2). In 1993, Dr. Malaguzzi received the Kohl International Education Award, sponsored by the Kohl Foundation of Willmette, Illinois.

As Dr. Malaguzzi accepted the award, he noted, "I was wondering what image I could bring back to

Reggio about this day. I think it would be of a large ship, filled with many friends and great celebration, seeking a safe harbor, a secure, protected place where we might reason together, deeply and clearly, about all the things we've done, and have not done yet, for children. . . ." (Lane 1993, p. 69).

Even at times of celebration to acknowledge his accomplishments, Loris Malaguzzi thought of the future. He saw that his work on behalf of children – despite the ceaseless efforts over the course of his 74 years – was nowhere near complete. We can all learn from the passion, commitment and vision for the future that Loris Malaguzzi embodied.

REFERENCES

- Ambeck-Madsen, P. (1992). *The LEGO Prize, Press Release*. Denmark: The LEGO Group.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L. and Forman, G. (1993). *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Hinckle, P. (1991). "The Ten Best Schools in the World, and What we Can Learn From Them." *Newsweek*, 50-59.
- Lane, M.S. (1993). "Loris Malaguzzi's One Hundred Languages." *Scholastic Early Childhood Today*, 8(2), 68-69.
- Malaguzzi, L. (1987). *The Hundred Languages of Children: Narrative of the Possible*. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Department of Early Education.

memorials to **loris
malaguzzi**

(1920 - 1994)

Loris Malaguzzi has left us. The evidence of sorrow and pain that is being seen throughout Italy and the whole world allows us to affirm, that not only Reggio Emilia, but Italy as a whole has lost a great man. He was a man who knew how to honor his country by making Reggio Emilia, his preschools and his infant centers, an essential reference point for those who wish to build a modern and advanced educational system for children in every corner of the world.

The great builder that he was leaves us with, among other things, the insight and precious inheritance in the initiative to which he dedicated his life with all of his energy until the end: *Reggio Children* was created to broaden and promote outside of our city the study, the research, and the application of the methods that have their origin here in Reggio.

Loris had one of the most difficult and demanding careers: that of an educator, deeply aware of the responsibilities to the families, society, and above all to the children to whom he wished to guarantee a cultured, intelligent and happy life. These were the deepest and most significant qualities of the man who did not enclose himself in a theoretical work, but gave concrete and tangible life to an original and ingenious intertwining of thought and

action. He made an untiring and daily commitment to children, with school personnel, with parents, with the rich and articulated institutional and democratic reality, striving always towards a primary objective which he repeated just a few days ago to the directors of the infancy schools: "the schools have to be of high quality not for who come to see them, but first of all for the people who live in Reggio." To sum it up, he demonstrated the firm determination of a person who does not allow himself to become carried away and have his attention distracted by the fame acquired in the world, and who does not want to lose the most authentic and vital roots of his experience. This is a lesson that we must hold firmly also in the commitment that we make to continue in *Reggio Children*, and should speak to the world by thinking of the present and future quality of services for the children of Reggio Emilia. This is also the most coherent and true

way to continue the work of a man that ran away from rhetoric, loathed the vainness of political meetings and short-lived gratification of exterior manifestations. He was never pleased or satisfied, he always was determined to dig deeper, to ques-

tion himself and others, also to expect and to provoke without rest. He always asked from himself, first, and then to those who worked with him and to those who were going to participate in the life of service.

tions and hopes which were continuously put to the test of a reality which was often hard, ungenerous, and violent, especially towards the weaker people, beginning with the children in the various areas all over the world. How can one not think of the children from the ex-Yugoslavia? And also those around us. Loris Malaguzzi was a great builder in a world of tenacious and hard-working builders. His community understood this and realized with his great contribution a splendid human, social, and cultural adventure.

Loris urged us "to yearn for the future of humankind." It will not be easy to look and move ahead without him in this adventure, but today more than ever, it must continue. He has gone, but he has left us so much of himself, and on this we will immediately begin to build. As a matter of fact I seem to hear him; in a moment like this Loris would certainly say to us: "Hey, what are you all doing? Up, up, let's go on working and thinking, come on!"

Thank you, Loris.

Mayor Antonella Spaggiari

Farewell address to Loris Malaguzzi, Sala Tricolore, Reggio Emilia, Italy February 1, 1994

*Children have
the right to fulfill and also expand
all
of their potential,
a process which can be accomplished
by recognizing and valuing
children's capacity
to socialize, by giving them
affection and trust,
by satisfying their needs and
desires to learn.*

- Dr. Loris Malaguzzi

I had the good fortune of meeting Loris while I was going through one of the most determinative crossroads of my life. I shared a friendship with him that grew over time and taught me to always distrust certainties and continuously ask questions. From him I have understood the meaning of the work I have done in these past years with children, parents and educators.

He taught me the virtues and riches nature gives to children – and their minds – and the marvel of discovering and building these virtues and riches together with them. I learned from him the powerful energy and stupendous strength that questioning can give to the mind.

In our last correspondence, just a few weeks ago, Loris wrote to me: "The world, as you can see, goes in infinite spurts. Always shamelessly and wonderfully fresh. I still have many things to do."

I make, with Loris, together with his and my many friends, a large, sincere promise to life and to the future which passes through me.

Aldo Fortunati

*Secretary of the National Infant Centers Group (of which Malaguzzi was the president)
Reggio Emilia, Italy*

Loris Malaguzzi phoned me yesterday, January 29th. His voice was near and strong. I know that the thousands of miles of ocean make no difference, but today, January 30, now that the voice of Loris is still, the clarity of the communication seems even more of a miracle to me.

Loris had specific requests in mind when he called, just as he always did. He wanted to be brought up to date on the interests and issues currently on the minds of American teachers, in order to incorporate them in the program of the June seminar. He listened to me but he also interrupted with questions and comments. Then he revealed new ideas for yet more of his ingenious initiatives. He also had precise messages that he asked me to transmit to the "friends", to the group of educators who have been devoting great energy to disseminate throughout the United States the ideas elaborated by him and the Reggio Emilia schools.

As I listened to him I filled up three pages of notes. I have these notes before me now and they are marked by damp stains. It has been difficult to call so many friends and have to tell them such sad and definitive news. But the stains do not cancel the words of Loris; in fact I realize that I was making a mistake before: his voice has not been stilled but remains vibrant and strong. What he told us is charged with meaning, ideas and open issues to be explored together for children and teachers on both sides of the ocean.

Lella Gandini

Lella Gandini is the U.S. Liaison to the Reggio Emilia Department of Education and is co-editor of The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education.

Several months ago, Loris presented us with a memento which included a very touching note. The memento was a picture of a clay sculpture made by children of the Scuole D'Infanzia in Reggio: A tree with roots that symbolized both the birth and growth of the preschools of Reggio, and also the great adventure of bringing the innovations of Reggio to American soil. In the margin Loris wrote a note to "Eli and Rosalyn, two *cavalliere*, friends who ride . . . with us. With acknowledgment of adventures past and future."

We are very pleased and proud that Loris numbered us among his friends. His personality was so warm, so vivid, so enthusiastic that we felt as though our friendship had existed all of our lives. Loris reenergized and revalidated our belief in the potential that lives in all young children. Always looking to the future, always sparkling with new ideas, he never seemed to tire of the great adventure he had started.

Loris Malaguzzi combined in himself a wonderful mosaic of characteristics that will lead him to have a permanent impact on his friends, his community, and on early education throughout the world. He was an idealist; after World War II had torn his country apart, he decided that the future of his country (and of all countries) would rest on realizing the social and intellectual potential of the emerging generations of children. In the service of these ideals, he became a scholar on the topic of how children develop and construct both knowledge and social relationships. He read and integrated, on this topic, the most innovative thinkers of the century: Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, among others. Based on these sources, he was able to construct a new approach to early education. This in turn led him to become a community leader, energizing the community, parents, and teachers of Reggio to formulate and implement a program that could cultivate the creativity and the "hundred languages" of children.

Now the ideas that he helped develop have spread far beyond Reggio. The success of the Reggio approach, fostered and disseminated by the force of his intellect, personality, and commitment, have reached beyond Emilia Romagna, and beyond Italy, to enhance the lives of children in many countries throughout the world. We shall miss you, Loris, but we shall continue in the exciting venture that we entered together.

Eli & Rosalyn Saltz

Eli Saltz is the director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute of Wayne State University, which produces Innovations in Early Education; The International Reggio Exchange. Rosalyn Saltz is the director of early childhood programs at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Many days have now passed since the untimely death of Loris Malaguzzi, and I still find myself unable to comprehend his passing and our loss. My most immediate thoughts and prayers were and still are for those in Reggio Emilia who have known and loved Loris for so many years. My sadness is surely mingled with a sense of awe that someone could be so full of life at the time of death; and my grieving is tempered by my gratitude at having had the opportunity to know this uniquely remarkable man. I am comforted by the belief that his spirit lives on in the minds and hearts of all those who were touched by his warmth and understanding, inspired by his passionate embrace of new ideas, and challenged by his moral imperative that we never stop inquiring about how best to care for the youngest among us.

In reflecting on my experiences with this giant of a man, I recall the occasion of our first meeting – a 15-minute appointment for the expressed purpose of obtaining permission to bring the first delegation of U.S. educators (actually, teachers-in-training) to Reggio Emilia. Two hours later, I left his office feeling overwhelmed, privileged, and challenged – much the same as I have felt in every subsequent conversation with him. We were quite the odd conversational pair, my awkward questions limited by my modest grasp of the Italian language, and his lengthy responses both poetic and scholarly. Yet I remember well the essentials of his answer to my question about how he began his work in Reggio Emilia. Whether or not he understood the pragmatic intent, his response was a reflection of his personal ethics as well as his philosophical stance on his work. It also served as a preview of what I would learn from him in our many subsequent exchanges, and provided me with three guiding principles that now inform my own professional goals and activities.

In the beginning, he noted, “*we did not know what to do; we only knew what we did **not** want to do.*” Thus the traditions of observation, exploration, hypothesis generating and testing were established as normative modes of teacher behavior in the Reggio Emilia schools, and the concept of inquiry was presented to me as a new way of conceptualizing teacher training and professional development.

“*Begin with the children . . .*,” he declared, when I asked again about how he determined priorities. “*. . .and the rest will be taken care of.*” This simple statement of commitment to and respect for children illustrates the principle behind the wealth of social supports provided to families of young children in Reggio Emilia, and provides some explanation for why some have claimed that their early childhood program is “the best in the world.” This principle belies the conservative opinion that an “adequate” early education is sufficient, and now serves as a mantra in my work and advocacy on behalf of young children in the U.S.

And finally, throughout our conversation, he shared with me the importance of *cooperative and collaborative relationships among parents, teachers and children* as the essential means by which to identify and achieve our goals in early childhood education. It is because of this last principle that I am most confident that Loris’ good deeds and brilliant thinking will continue to inform and inspire those who care about young children.

Loris Malaguzzi’s legacy to us is our increased understanding of the rights and abilities of children, the richness of multiple points of view, and the potentials of collective action on behalf of a society’s youngest citizens. In short, he challenged us to recognize that we have much yet to do and learn on behalf of young children, and he gave us some of the tools with which to do this work, not the least of which is the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that he engendered among us. It is in this spirit that his work continues.

Rebecca New

Rebecca New is a professor of education at the University of New Hampshire.

In one way of measuring time, my relationship with Loris Malaguzzi was very brief – I first met him on a visit to Reggio Emilia in May 1993. Fortunately for me, I was able to spend time with him on two other occasions, in June and December. But there are other ways of measuring time. The intensity of my encounter with Malaguzzi and the profound effect that he had on my thinking made me feel like I had known him for a long time. The experience literally left me sleepless, unable to turn off my thoughts and wanting desperately to rethink everything I ever thought and rewrite everything I had ever written about early childhood education. He literally altered my world view, influencing how I see and interpret not just education, but life in general. Through personal experience, Malaguzzi helped me gain appreciation for paradox. His words inspired and threatened me at the same time; I felt affirmed in beliefs but also challenged – both right and wrong. So, too, I find a paradox in his death. I feel a personal loss because there is so much more I wanted to learn from him, so many questions that I did not get to ask. At the same time, I feel a gain because as the outstanding teacher he was, Malaguzzi gave us the tools to learn for ourselves. In the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach – collaboration, co-construction, provocation, documentation, and more – we find the means and the power to continue learning, to gain understanding and to ask more questions. What’s more, I feel more committed than ever to work toward integrating his philosophy – with integrity and passion – into my work on behalf of young children, families and teachers.

Sue Bredekamp

Sue Bredekamp is the director of professional development for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



Washington, D.C., June, 1993 • Pictured left to right: Carolyn Edwards, Lilian Katz, Rebecca New, Lella Gandini, Baji Rankin, Carlina Rinaldi, Sergio Spaggioli, Sandra Piccinini, Tiziana Filippini, Amelia Gambetti, Loris Malaguzzi

Pictured right: Lella Gandini, Eli Saltz, Rosalyn Saltz, Loris Malaguzzi, Patricia Weissman

Pictured below: Loris Malaguzzi in Reggio with Carlina Rinaldi, pedagoga, U.S. Liaison, Lella Gandini and Sergio Spaggioli, director of the Reggio early childhood program.

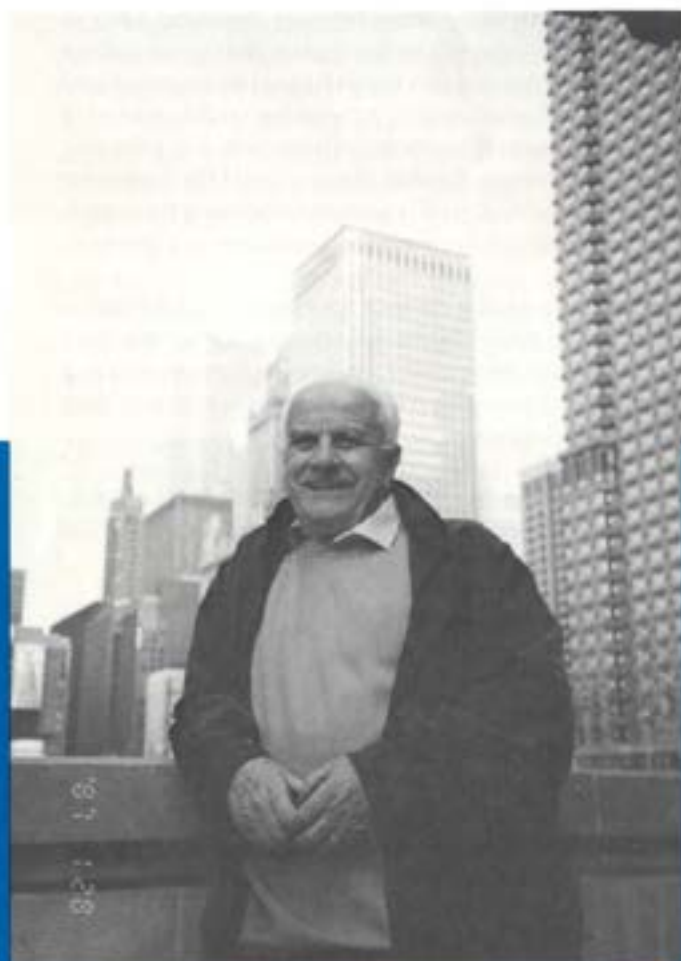


March, 1992, I was in the atelier in Diana School, one of the famous preschools of Reggio Emilia, when I first met Malaguzzi. Instantly I knew it was he. He radiated presence and command. If there had been any question, his eyes would have given him away – lively, piercing, black/brown. Later, when I knew him better, his eyes penetrated, questioned, drilled, laughed, envisioned.

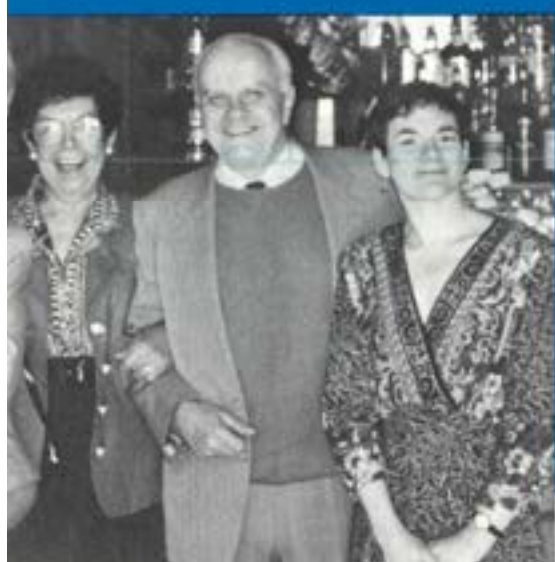
He answered our delegation’s questions for three hours. Each answer took an unexpected turn: What is creativity? It is dressed in everyday clothes. How do your schools handle culturally different children? Children bring their culture with them if the school invites it in. What happens when children go on to the elementary school? Every child has the right to a happy early childhood. His answers put responsibility on us to revisit assumptions, redefine words, realign realities. The schools Malaguzzi directed and shaped have no easy answers. It is said that he had great expectations, that he even made teachers cry. Theater, rather than education, provides the best analogy for Malaguzzi’s work. He was director, impresario, producer. Human development was the drama, schools were his stage, children and adults the players, surprise the leitmotif. In the U.S. we are easy on ourselves. We placate children; it is easier than watching their struggles. We usurp their prerogatives; it is easier than being midwife as intelligence develops. We provide answers; it is easier than listening. Malaguzzi’s work shows us what can be achieved if we abandon easy answers and instead partake in the drama of the development of the human being.

Ann Lewin

Ann Lewin is the founder and president of The National Learning Center in Washington, D.C.



Loris Malaguzzi, Chicago, 1993



Our conviction was contagious. Jan Phillips, the director of The College School, made it her priority. Parent architects became involved. Parents donated money. Parents and staff contributed ideas and labor. We now have a stunning atelier. The space has been transformed. I know it is there today because Malaguzzi was direct, honest and critical; because he wanted the best for children and teachers. We thank him, and the pedagogisti, teachers and atelieristi of Reggio Emilia, for the inspiration and conviction they gave and continue to give us. — **Louise Cadwell**

At the beginning of my internship in Reggio Emilia, I wrote: "Today I heard Malaguzzi speak to an Australian delegation. Listening to him, (when I understand) makes me relax, I think because he speaks so heavily in concepts and metaphor that I can begin to move away from concrete specifics, and to sort of dance on a different plane of thinking. If I concentrate on this image of the child that he's always painting, child as strong, powerful, curious, child as researcher, explorer, questioner, then I can easily 'see' how I can take this all home. Another reason Malaguzzi is incredible is because I can think about what he says not just in terms of learning/teaching/being with children, but also in terms of relationships between people in general. He has such an expansive way of speaking about human nature and human potential and human needs that I find it both stimulating and comforting to listen to him."

Since Malaguzzi's death, I have been reflecting more than ever on my internship and on the effect it has had on me professionally. I realize that the above experience repeated itself throughout my year in Reggio because Malaguzzi, by repeatedly advocating for the rights of children, invariably spoke of the rights of all people. He spoke of equality and reminded us that rights (and privileges) cannot be arbitrarily bestowed upon one group of people and not on another. And in the complex and detailed world of the Reggio Emilia schools, this humane message always served to remind me of a broader picture, of a larger message to heed.

Although I have been back in the United States for seven months now, Malaguzzi's "image of the child" is an ever-present anchor for me. I was speaking with my principal recently about this image of the child and about the fact that keeping this concept present while I teach constantly alters my observations of the children, my thinking about them and also my relationship with them. There is a spiraling phenomenon which occurs in which I dive off this image of the child into my usual routine in my classroom. Immediately I find that I am more interested in the actions and thoughts of the children, more willing to listen to and also probe their thinking, more able to hear them and to be amazed and awed by their considerable talent, capability, curiosity and motivation to explore and learn. These observations, especially if they're documented photographically or on tape, reinforce the idea that children ARE powerful and curious, that they do research and explore, that they do have theories about things, but are flexible enough to change (re-construct) their thinking in the face of new evidence. And I am spurred on to search even more closely for the "tracks" of children's thinking and talent.

What happens to me then is both satisfying and frustrating: I find myself captured by so much of what my children say and do, that I have to pick and choose, to prioritize which aspects to focus on and extend and which ones to simply allow to take their own course. It is never an easy choice; in fact, sometimes it is rather difficult NOT to follow up on something, just because I don't have the time, or because there is already too much going on.

I must admit, of course, that this is a wonderful "problem" to have, that of having too much from which to choose. I think that my contact with Malaguzzi and Reggio Emilia is directly responsible for opening up this new world, this new way of living with and thinking about children. Thank you so very much. — **Eva Tarini**

We, Baji Rankin, Louise Cadwell and Eva Tarini, were each privileged to have spent a full year in Reggio Emilia as interns in their schools. We worked in the Diana, La Villetta, Anna Frank and Pablo Neruda schools and therefore were able to have known Malaguzzi personally and to have worked alongside him as he collaborated with teachers, atelieristi, pedagogisti and countless foreign visitors. We all feel indebted to him for the tremendous professional growth we made during our respective internships, growth which continues to flourish as we follow our individual paths here in the U.S. We mourn the loss of Malaguzzi, but hope that his inspiration will continue to move educators to advocate for children and their families.

Baji Rankin, Louise Cadwell and Eva Tarini

Baji, Louise and Eva were interns from the United States who spent a school year in the Reggio Emilia early childhood program.

It is more than one week after the death of Malaguzzi, and I am making final changes in my dissertation. In my study – about collaboration as the basis of early childhood curriculum development in Reggio Emilia – I speak often about Malaguzzi's key contributions to the development of Reggio schools. All of a sudden I realize that I have to change all the present tenses to past tenses: "Malaguzzi is – no, was – a theorist and an educator who dedicated his career to constructing theory and practice together. He did this, along with other educators and parents, in the process of developing a system of schools where theory would serve practice. Theory is successful, he pointed out, only to the extent that it helps teachers understand their work."

This, of course, is still as true now as it was before he died. In fact, the importance of this statement shines through to me even more strongly since his death. Yet, how poignant, to realize, one more time and on one more level, that he is no longer a part of this everyday life. I feel his spirit is still here, and his work continues in the way it has affected me and many others, but I miss his vitality, his energetic speaking, his never-ending curiosity, and his continuing desire to build stronger systems of schools for children.

I feel very grateful to have had many opportunities to listen to him, to speak and interact directly with him about my work – especially in the year I spent in Reggio, and to interpret him for others. His abilities to integrate being an articulate and inspiring theoretician, practitioner, and politician are rare, indeed. I find myself committed, now more than ever, to continue his work – rather our work – as I work with others on building excellent classrooms and schools for children everywhere we can. — **Baji Rankin**

One of my strongest memories is of Malaguzzi working with teachers at Diana and Villetta schools: shirt sleeves rolled up, furrowed brow, thinking, reading transcripts, looking at drawings, reviewing ideas, tireless.

One winter Saturday morning Malaguzzi, Vea, Marina Mori and myself met in the mini atelier of the five-year old room at the Diana school. The question: Where to go with the tree project? We looked at children's richly detailed collaborative drawings of trees as the trees transformed through the seasons. We were anticipating Malaguzzi's response to the drawings. He didn't pay much attention to them. Instead his questions were: "But where are the living trees? Where is their experience with living trees?" As he often was, Malaguzzi was direct, cutting to the heart of the issue.

Last spring Brenda Fyfe and I had the opportunity to give a slide presentation to Malaguzzi, the pedagogisti, and several atelieristi and teachers on what we had been able to accomplish with classroom environments, materials and project studies in St. Louis. After the presentation there was a long pause, some questions, and then Malaguzzi spoke for a long time. He made many comments, all of them critically honest. Among other comments, he said many of our classrooms looked like attics. Did he mean too cluttered, too dark, spaces too generic rather than spaces designed for specific numbers and sorts of activities? Perhaps all of the above.

We returned to St. Louis with new conviction that, as Malaguzzi and the "Equipe" had suggested, we needed to establish a demonstration site to serve as a common reference for our larger Danforth funded project, and that in this site we needed to knock down walls, to let in more light and to create an atelier.

Loris Malaguzzi was a great man and a great thinker who helped the people of his community create a school system that reflects all the best qualities of their local culture and at the same time the qualities of his own brilliant cast of mind. His thinking was never linear but always spiraling around the same core themes in ever more interesting and rich variations. He knew thousands of ways of touching and creating exchanges with others, but he was especially gifted in how he used metaphors and levels of language and complex, aesthetically powerful visual displays (documentation! The Hundred Languages Exhibit!). He was a product of his time and place and thoroughly imbued with the habits and preferences of his locale but at the same time universal in his sense of heritage and in the scope of his concerns. He was deeply collaborative in his way of working. These are the things I remember about him.

His enormous persistence in staying true to course while considering and synthesizing layers and layers of possibilities and outcomes was always evident when hearing him think out loud, for example, when participating in a small group discussion or meeting around a table with a group of close colleagues. This was the setting in which I got to know him best and had my most unforgettable experiences. As the fabric of one of his arguments grew longer and longer, extending into more and more considerations, rationales, images, and associations, until it seemed the continuity of ideas must be lost and not one more thing could be said (but still many more would be), one could finally comprehend and appreciate how Loris sustained the integrative energy for years and years to create a school system that now displays all of the features – clarity, unity, harmony – usually associated with a theoretical system rather than the messy real world. What a wonder to come upon such a person in such a seemingly unexpected place (“Reggio who?” as my students say) and yet such as to make anyone – me, too – encouraged to believe we each are valuable, creative, and necessary to collective progress – just as he said!

Carolyn Edwards

Carolyn Edwards is a professor of family studies at the University of Kentucky and one of the editors of The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education.

Malaguzzi is gone. What a crushing fact. How are we to go on without the inspiration he has given us? Perhaps “revisiting” our experience with him will lighten this blow.

My understanding of Malaguzzi changed over the eight years that I knew him. I always respected him as a powerful and charismatic leader, but initially I could not follow him during his most eloquent moments. He would speak in metaphors and I would ask, “Yes, but what do you do? What are your guiding principles of instruction?” Invariably Malaguzzi would demur or would proclaim that this attention to technique is an American question. Gradually, as I studied the Reggio approach I could see a truly unique set of teaching strategies in operation. Then why had Malaguzzi not told me in the beginning?

Malaguzzi was a careful teacher. He knew it was important for me to understand his vision before I dealt with technique. He knew I was a careful observer, but needed to situate myself in the midst of his purpose – to create schools where belonging is an essence, where children spend their day seeking and explaining connections, where teachers are research partners with children in their business to deepen understanding.

Malaguzzi taught by giving us a vision. Once understood, the vision becomes our personal guide. We develop, in diverse and creative ways, our own means to actualize this vision. His vision is not a vague romanticism, but a precise insistence, often told in the most delightful anecdotes, on the intelligence of all children. I am so thankful that I knew Malaguzzi long enough for him to teach me this important lesson: we must understand before we look in order to know what we see. Therein lies the program for action. Therein lay his success. I will miss you Loris, and I promise the Amusement Park video will be finished by November.

George Forman

George Forman is a professor of education at the University of Massachusetts and is an editor of The 100 Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education.

The news of Loris Malaguzzi's death was especially shocking since we were expecting Loris in California in two weeks. The Hundred Languages of Children exhibit has been at Dominican College for four months and the response in California has been fantastic. Loris knew this and had communicated his excitement in coming through many messages with Lella Gandini. Around the exhibit, a series of four seminars was created to build knowledge of the Reggio Emilia educational approach. Lella Gandini, Amelia Gambetti, Baji Rankin, Carolyn Edwards and George Forman began to build the foundation knowing Loris was to be at the last seminar “The Image of the Child” a week before closing the exhibit. In the spirit of Reggio Emilia and Loris Malaguzzi we decided to continue the seminar as planned.

As the knowledge of Loris' death deepened I became very sad at the loss. I was so looking forward to being with Loris and sharing our endeavors in relation to the exhibit and the seminars. I wanted to walk through the exhibit with Loris and exchange my thoughts. Most of all I was looking forward to having pasta and drinking wine and getting to know each other. I was sad that I was not going to be able to share him in person with my educational community and colleagues.

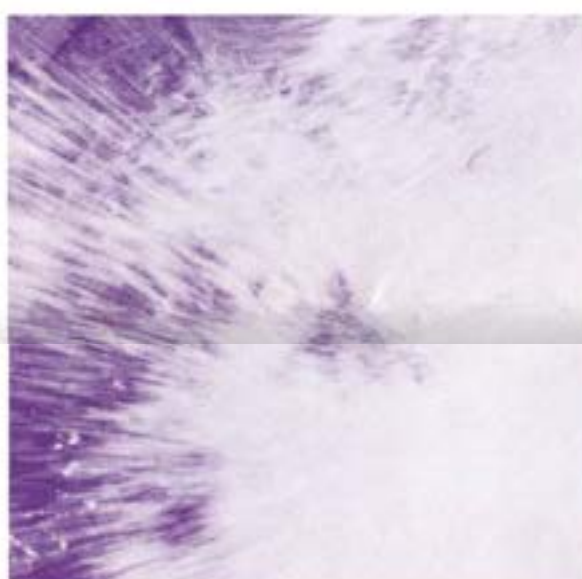
Loris Malaguzzi touched me both personally and professionally. I feel very lucky to have been able to meet Loris in my life. He has inspired me to inspire others. He showed me great generosity of spirit and knowledge. I sensed his zest for life and his deep respect of children.

Loris would be very happy to know that more than 250 people came to the seminar Feb. 12, 1994 and joined in a tribute to Loris and his work with Lella Gandini and Susan Lyon.

Susan Lyon

Susan Lyon was the project director for The Hundred Languages of Children exhibit at Dominican College, San Rafael, Calif.

memorials to loris malaguzzi



My strongest impression of Loris is of his lively mind. In his presence especially, I always wished I could understand and speak Italian and thereby get the full benefit of his thinking. It was so hard to keep up with his ideas, his rich metaphors, and his penetrating

observations, through the translation process. Where did his ideas and insights come from, I wonder? How can we continue to learn from the practices he stimulated and inspired? Where do we go from here without him? Surely, one of his wishes would have been that we continue to work together on behalf of all children.

Lilian G. Katz

Lilian Katz is the president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the director of ERIC, the Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

Was it Loris Malaguzzi's background in journalism that made him such a keen observer and effective communicator? In my initial and unforgettable contacts with him, he very quickly conveyed the keys to his approach: a profound respect for children and a commitment to helping educators nourish children's natural abilities to

construct knowledge from their first months of life. Although he paid tribute to John Dewey and other great minds, it was clear that this great visionary's chief mentors were children.

Personally, meeting Malaguzzi was a life-changing experience. As an art educator, I was deeply impressed by his recognition of children's capacity to use symbolic languages to communicate various stages of knowing. This was a considerable leap beyond the notion that art activities for the young child are useful primarily for self expression. He certainly taught me as a museum educator to listen more carefully to our youngest visitors and encourage their adult companion to become more effective partners with children in their explorations and discoveries.

Malaguzzi's voice can be clearly heard in the exhibition, *The Hundred Languages of Children*. Those who take time to read his words will be rewarded by the dynamic insights of a brilliant educator, theorist, philosopher, prophet, poet and advocate for the rights of children.

Pam Houk

Pam Houk is the curator of The Hundred Languages Exhibit, which is on tour in North America (see calendar listings).

One idea central to my understanding of the teachings of our beloved Malaguzzi is that teachers must possess a habit of questioning their certainties. It seems to me that this characteristic of teaching is essential to our understanding of emergent curriculum; our ability to learn from and with children, their parents and our colleagues; our willingness to question and wonder and delight in the discoveries of the child; our willingness to consider the perspectives of others; our disposition to recognize that teaching decisions are based on many and unique sets of variables that are weighed within a context of relationships – and therefore cannot be simplified to a *certain* formula of teaching response. It is a disposition to be open to possibilities, to assume a critical style of research, to be willing to listen to and contemplate ideas that conflict with our own. This habit of questioning certainties is the stimulus for research, for continually updating our knowledge of children. It is essential to co-teaching, to co-learning.

Malaguzzi has taught us to be flexible, to know that anything can change tomorrow, but that we can be secure even if we are in the process of changing. Even though the world changed when Malaguzzi left us, we can be secure that his ideas, his work, his challenges are forever with us and part of us.

Brenda Fyfe

Brenda Fyfe is an associate professor of education at Webster University, St. Louis.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Children have the right to be recognized as the bearers of important rights: individual, social and legal. They both carry and construct their own culture and are therefore active participants in the organization of their identity, their autonomy and their capabilities. The construction of this organization takes place through relationships and interactions with peers, adults, ideas and objects, as well as both real and imaginary events of a communicative world.

Accepting this statement gives rise to fundamental premises for a higher level of participation in citizenship by the individual, as well as in his own human relationships, while at the same time crediting children, **all children**, with inborn endowments and potential of extraordinary richness, strength and creativity. These gifts cannot be ignored, misunderstood or allowed to wither because this type of neglect will result in suffering and deprivation which is often irreversible. This means that children have the right to fulfill and also expand **all** of their potential, a process which can be accomplished by recognizing and valuing children's capacity to socialize, by giving them affection and trust, by satisfying their needs and desires to learn. It is equally important, that children feel assured of an effective **alliance** with adults who are ready to give help and understanding which will favor more than the **simple transmission** of knowledge and skills, **but rather the development** of their ability to research constructive strategies of thinking and action.

This final point is precisely that which contributes to form creative intelligences, free thinking, reflective and sensitive individuals, all through uninterrupted processes of differentiation and integration with other people and with other cultures.

That the rights of children be the rights of truly **all children** is that dimension which defines and gives value to a more complete sense of humanity.

THE RIGHTS OF TEACHERS

Teachers, and others who work in a school, have the right to contribute to widening and deepening those conceptual frameworks which define the content, the goals and the practices of education all through open discussion among colleagues, with educational experts within the institution (such as an educational coordinator), and with the parent advisory board, always with an eye toward a harmony with the rights of the children as well as the parents. In this way teachers will contribute to the choosing of methods and didactics, of projects based on research and observation, and of "fields" of experience all to offer to the children. At the same time teachers will help in shaping their own professional growth and development, in forming the role of the community-teacher partnership in governing the school, and finally, in dealing with the problems connected with the organization of the work environment.

a bill of three rights

By Dr. Loris Malaguzzi, Translated by Lella Gaudini and Eva Tarini

This collaborative network, which is based on multiple interactions, is dependent on the contribution of the ideas and capabilities of each and every person, and is always open to developing, growing and experimenting. As such, it is already a model of research, of educational interaction, of culture and of life. It is a model that not only gives new life to the role of the school and the families, but also renews and deeply reinforces the social nature of the construction and the reconstruction of knowledge. Educators then present themselves to children as immersed in activities which are alive and stimulating, in perfect integration with the children's needs and desires within a world of relationships, activities which are a path to gaining ownership of knowledge.

On the part of the teachers, of each one of them, it is an occasion to enhance dialogue and discussion, to compare and contrast ideas and experiences, to enrich tools for assessing and making professional judgments.

THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS

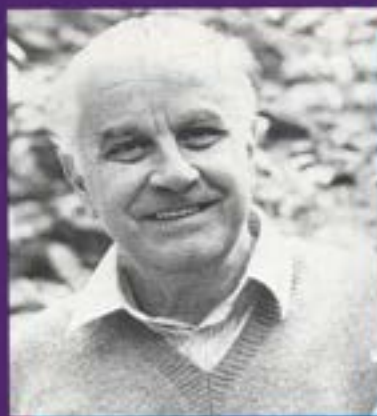
Parents have the right to participate freely and actively in the elaboration of the founding principles and in their children's experiences of growth, care and learning while entrusted to the public institution. However, there should be neither delegation of power, nor estrangement. On the contrary, there should be a presence and a role for the parents such as the one valued by our institution's long tradition and experience. On our part, we have developed, as part of our role, a strong entreaty by the school for parent participation, because we know how fruitful strong cooperation with families can be in order to establish a maximum sense of assurance and well-being on the part of the children. We have also put into place a network of communication which can lead to more true and reciprocal knowledge about the child and learning. This system of communication also leads to a more profitable and shared "researching" for the ways, the content, and the values of a more effective education.

On the part of the parents, we find primarily young parents, parents with different types of jobs, with different maturation, different backgrounds, often of different ethnicity, but all struggling with problems: problems of limited time at their disposal, of the cost of living, of the difficulty of their role as parents, of fears of solitude and of their worries about the future. All these parents also have a great need to matter, a need to speak and discuss and reflect on their problems, problems which revolve primarily around themes which have to do with the growth and education of their children.

If the school and the parents converge toward a collaborative type of "culture" – interactive, as this is a choice which has advantages for everyone, because everyone searches for experiences which are laden with meaning – then one can understand how very hostile and mistaken is a philosophy of self-sufficiency and prescriptions, and to the contrary, how friendly and fruitful is a pedagogy of participation and research.

Participation and research are in fact two terms capable of crystallizing much of the more general conception of our educational theory, and at the same time of highlighting those most important prerequisites for both launching and sustaining a cooperative understanding between parents and teachers with the belief that this partnership adds immeasurably to the educational prospects of children.

inside this issue



loris malaguzzi

(1920-1994)

*This issue of Innovations
in Early Education: The International
Reggio Exchange is dedicated
to the memory
of Loris Malaguzzi (1920 - 1994)
and to the gift of his vision which he
so generously
shared with the world.*

The angel drawings represented in this issue were created by the 5-year-old children of La Villetta School, Reggio Emilia, Italy. • All photos courtesy of Lella Gandini. • Wayne State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Wayne State University - People working together to provide quality service • Produced by the office of marketing communications, Division of University Relations



Wayne State University
The Merrill-Palmer Institute
71-A E. Ferry Ave.
Detroit MI 48202

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Detroit, Mich.
Permit No. 3844



innovations

in early education: the international reggio exchange

