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WITH GIGI SCHROEDER-YU, PHD

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REGGIO EMILIA

“What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught. Rather, it is in large part due to the children’s own doing as a consequence of their activities and our resources.”

-Loris Malaguzzi

The Reggio Emilia approach began as a parent initiative in the region of Reggio Emilia, Italy, in the aftermath of World War II. Parents from Reggio Emilia sought the help of Loris Malaguzzi to develop an early childhood education program that treated children with respect and recognized children as fundamentally creative and curious.

The first Reggio Emilia school was funded through the sale of war remainders including a German tank, nine horses and two military trucks. Malaguzzi considered it the first victory of women after the war, as the women of Reggio Emilia were the ones who decided to use the proceeds to fund the school.

The Reggio Emilia approach believes that every child naturally knows one hundred languages of self-expression.

The Reggio Emilia approach holds four basic principles:

- CHILDREN MUST HAVE SOME CONTROL OVER THE DIRECTION OF THEIR LEARNING
- CHILDREN MUST BE ABLE TO LEARN THROUGH EXPERIENCES OF TOUCHING, MOVING, LISTENING, AND OBSERVING
- CHILDREN HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND WITH MATERIAL ITEMS IN THE WORLD THAT CHILDREN MUST BE ALLOWED TO EXPLORE
- CHILDREN MUST HAVE ENDLESS WAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES

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Section 1

THE

**REGGIO EMILIA
APPROACH**



Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins

by Loris Malaguzzi

These comments are translated and adapted from a seminar presented by Professor Loris Malaguzzi in Reggio Emilia, Italy, June 1993.

There are hundreds of different images of the child. Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image. For example, if your image is that boys and girls are very different from one another, you will behave differently in your interactions with each of them.

The environment you construct around you and the children also reflects this image you have about the child. There's a difference between the environment that you are able to build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment that you can build that is based on the child you see in front of you — the relationship you build with the child, the games you play. An environment that grows out of your relationship with the child is unique and fluid. The quality and quantity of relationships among you as adults and educators also reflects your image of the child. Children are very sensitive and can see and sense very quickly the spirit of what is going on among the adults in their world. They understand whether the adults are working together in a truly collaborative way or if they are separated in some way from each other, living their experience as if it were private with little interaction.

Posing Important Questions

When you begin working with children in the morning, you must, as adults, pose questions about

the children, such as: "When are these children really going to begin socializing?" And at the same time the children will pose questions to the adults: "When are the adults really going to begin socializing?" This is a dialogue that needs to be continual between the adults and the children. The adults ask questions from the world of adults to the children. The children will ask questions to the adults. The expectations that the children have of the adults and the adults have of the children are important. We must spend some time talking about these expectations.

The family — mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, grandparents — is also involved in this questioning. Daily they need to ask: "What is this child doing in the school?"

It's very probable that once a day, maybe twice or three times or many times a day, the children are asking themselves: "What is my mother doing?" "What is my father doing?" "What is my brother or my sister doing?" "Are they having more fun than I am?" "Are they bored?"

The school we are talking about is not the school you are familiar with in the past, but it is something that you can hope for.

Considering Each Child's Reality

We can never think of the child in the abstract. When we think about a child, when we pull out a child to look at, that child is already tightly connected and linked to a certain reality of the world — she has relationships and experiences. We cannot separate this child from a particular reality. She brings these experiences, feelings, and relationships into school with her.

And it is the same for you as adults. When you enter the school in the morning, you carry with you pieces of your life — your happiness, your sadness, your hopes, your pleasures, the stresses from your life. You never come in an isolated way; you always come with pieces of the world attached to you. So the meetings that we have are always contaminated with the experiences that we bring with us.

Growing Comfortable with the Unknown

School is not at all like billiards. When you play billiards you push the ball with a certain force and it hits the table and bounces off; there's a definite way the ball will go, depending on force and direction. Children are not at all like this, predictable. But sometimes schools function as if they were; these are schools with no joy.

Of course, many things that happen in school can be seen ahead and planned beforehand. But many things that happen cannot be known ahead of time. Something will start to grow inside the child and suddenly what is happening in the school will move in that direction. Sometimes what happens starts inside the adults. School can never be always predictable. We need to be open to what takes place and able to change our plans and go with what might grow at that very moment both inside the child and inside ourselves.

Each one of us needs to be able to play with the things that are coming out of the world of children. Each one of us needs to have curiosity, and we need to be able to try something new based on the ideas that we collect from the children as they go along. Life has to be somewhat agitated and upset, a bit restless, somewhat unknown. As life flows with the thoughts of the children, we need to be open, we need to change our ideas; we need to be comfortable with the restless nature of life.

All of this changes the role of the teacher, a role that becomes much more difficult and complex. It also makes the world of the teacher more beautiful, something to become involved in.

Enjoying Relationships

The ability to enjoy relationships and work together is very important. Children need to enjoy being in school, they need to love their school and the interac-

tions that take place there. Their expectations of these interactions is critical.

It is also important for the teachers to enjoy being with the other teachers, to enjoy seeing the children stretch their capacities and use their intelligences, to enjoy interactions with the children. Both parts are essential.

Both children and adults need to feel active and important — to be rewarded by their own efforts, their own intelligences, their own activity and energy. When a child feels these things are valued, they become a fountain of strength for him. He feels the joy of working with adults who value his work and this is one of the bases for learning.

Overactivity on the part of the adult is a risk factor. The adult does too much because he cares about the child; but this creates a passive role for the child in her own learning.

Finding Our Way in the Forest

All of this is a great forest. Inside the forest is the child. The forest is beautiful, fascinating, green, and full of hopes; there are no paths. Although it isn't easy, we have to make our own paths, as teachers and children and families, in the forest. Sometimes we find ourselves together within the forest, sometimes we may get lost from each other, sometimes we'll greet each other from far away across the forest; but it's living together in this forest that is important. And this living together is not easy.

We have to find each other in the forest and begin to discuss what the education of the child actually means. The important aspect is not just to promote the education of the child but the health and happiness of the child as well.

We need to think of the school as a living organism. Children have to feel that the world is inside the school and moves and thinks and works and reflects on everything that goes on. Of course not all children are the same — each child brings a part of something that's different into the school.

Learning to Wait

All of this pushes us to produce a higher level of observation. We must move beyond just looking at the child to become better observers, able to penetrate

into the child to understand each child's resources and potential and present state of mind. We need to compare these with our own in order to work well together.

Our task is to construct educational situations that we propose to the children in the morning. It's okay to improvise sometimes but we need to plan the project. It may be a project that is projected over a period of days, or weeks, or even months. We need to produce situations in which children learn by themselves, in which children can take advantage of their own knowledge and resources autonomously, and in which we guarantee the intervention of the adult as little as possible. We don't want to teach children something that they can learn by themselves. We don't want to give them thoughts that they can come up with by themselves. What we want to do is activate within children the desire and will and great pleasure that comes from being the authors of their own learning.

We need to know how to recognize a new presence, how to wait for the child. This is something that is learned, it's not automatic. We often have to do it against our own rush to work in our own way. We'll discover that our presence, which has to be visible and warm, makes it possible for us to try to get inside the child and what that child is doing. And this may seem to be passive, but it is really a very strong activity on our part.

Becoming Totally Involved

It's a constant value for the children to know that the adult is there, attentive and helpful, a guide for the child. Perhaps this way of working with the child will build a different understanding of our role than we have had before. Clarifying the meaning of our presence and our being with children is something that is vital for the child. When the child sees that the adult is there, totally involved with the child, the child doesn't forget. This is something that's right for us and it's right for the children.

There are many things that are part of a child's life just as they are part of an adult's life. The desire to do something for someone, for instance. Every adult has a need to feel that we are seen/observed by others. (Observing others is also important.) This is just as true for children as for adults. Therefore, it's possible to observe, to receive a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from observing in many different ways.

When the child is observed, the child is happy — it's almost an honor that he is observed by an adult. On the other hand, a good teacher who knows how to observe feels good about himself because that person knows that he is able to take something from the situation, transform it, and understand it in a new way.

What the child doesn't want is an observation from the adult who isn't really there, who is distracted. The child wants to know that she is observed, carefully, with full attention. The child wants to be observed in action. She wants the teacher to see the process of her work, rather than the product. The teacher asks the child to take a bucket of water from one place to the other. It's not important to the child that the teacher only sees him arrive with the bucket of water at the end. What is important to the child is that the teacher sees the child while the child is working, while the child is putting out the effort to accomplish the task — the processes are important, how much the child is putting into the effort, how heroic the child is doing this work. What children want is to be observed while engaged, they do not want the focus of the observation to be on the final product. When we as adults are able to see the children in the process, it's as if we are opening a window and getting a fresh view of things.

"If only you had seen all I had to do." The child wants this observation. We all want this. This means that when you learn to observe the child, when you have assimilated all that it means to observe the child, you learn many things that are not in books — educational or psychological. And when you have done this you will learn to have more diffidence and more distrust of rapid assessments, tests, judgments. The child wants to be observed, but she doesn't want to be judged. Even when we do judge, things escape us, we do not see things, so we are not able to evaluate in a wide way. This system of observing children carries you into many different feelings and thoughts, into a kind of teaching full of uncertainty and doubt, and it takes wisdom and a great deal of knowledge on the part of the teachers to be able to work within this situation of uncertainty.

Discovering a New Way of Observing

Observing in this way offers tremendous benefits. It requires a shift in the role of the teacher from an emphasis of teaching to an emphasis on learning, teachers learning about themselves as teachers as well as teachers learning about children. This is a

self-learning that takes place for the teacher and it enables the teacher to see things that are taking place in children that teachers were not able to see before.

We have to let children be with children. Children learn a lot from other children, and adults learn from children being with children. Children love to learn among themselves, and they learn things that it would never be possible to learn from interactions with an adult. The interaction between children is a very fertile and a very rich relationship. If it is left to ferment without adult interference and without that excessive assistance that we sometimes give, then it's more advantageous to the child. We don't want to protect something that doesn't need to be protected.

It's important for the teacher who works with young children to understand that she knows little about children. Teachers need to learn to see the children, to listen to them, to know when they are feeling some distance from us as adults and from children, when they are distracted, when they are surrounded by a shadow of happiness and pleasure, and when they are surrounded by a shadow of sadness and suffering. We have to understand that they are moving and working with many ideas, but their most important task is to build relationships with friends. They are trying to understand what friendship is. Children grow in many directions together, but a child is always in search of relationships. Children get to know each other through all their senses. Touching the hair of another child is very important. Smell is important. This is a way children are able to understand the identity of themselves and the identity of others.

Redefining Roles

We need to define the role of the adult, not as a transmitter but as a creator of relationships — relationships not only between people but also between things, between thoughts, with the environment. It's like we need to create a typical New York City traffic jam in the school.

We teachers must see ourselves as researchers, able to think, and to produce a true curriculum, a curriculum produced from all of the children.

What we so often do is impose adult time on children's time and this negates children being able to work with their own resources.

When we in Reggio say children have 100 languages, we mean more than the 100 languages of children, we also mean the 100 languages of adults, of teachers. The teacher must have the capacity for many different roles. The teacher has to be the author of a play, someone who thinks ahead of time. Teachers also need to be the main actors in the play, the protagonists. The teacher must forget all the lines he knew before and invent the ones he doesn't remember. Teachers also have to take the role of the prompter, the one who gives the cues to the actors. Teachers need to be set designers who create the environment in which activities take place. At the same time, the teacher needs to be the audience who applauds.

The teacher has many different roles and she needs to be in many places and do many different things and use many languages. Sometimes the teacher will find himself without words, without anything to say; and at times this is fortunate for the child, because then the teacher will have to invent new words.

Forging Alliances with Families

We must forge strong alliances with the families of our children. Imagine the school as an enormous hot air balloon. The hot air balloon is on the ground when the parents bring their children in the morning. Some parents think the balloon is going to rise up and fly around during the day. Others would really prefer that the balloon remain on the ground because that way they are sure their children are safe and protected. But the children want to go up and fly and travel everywhere in a hot air balloon, to see in this different way, to look at things from above. Our problem is that to make the hot air balloon fly we have to make sure that parents understand the importance of what the teachers and children are doing in the hot air balloon. Flying through the air, seeing the world in a different way, adds to the wealth of all of us, particularly the children.

We need to make a big impression on parents, amaze them, convince them that what we are doing is something extremely important for their children and for them, that we are producing and working with children to understand their intelligence and their intelligences. This means that we have to become skilled in flying and managing this hot air balloon. Perhaps it was our previous lack of skill that made us fall. We all need to learn to be better hot air balloon pilots.

Building Strong Images

What we have to do now is draw out the image of the child, draw the child out of the desperate situations that many children find themselves in. If we redeem the child from these difficult situations, we redeem ourselves.

Children have a right to a good school — a good building, good teachers, right time, good activities. This is the right of ALL children.

It is necessary to give an immediate response to a child. Children need to know that we are their friends, that they can depend on us for the things they desire, that we can support them in the things that they have, but also in the things that they dream about, that they desire.

Children have the right to imagine. We need to give them full rights of citizenship in life and in society.

It's necessary that we believe that the child is very intelligent, that the child is strong and beautiful and has very ambitious desires and requests. This is the image of the child that we need to hold.

Those who have the image of the child as fragile, incomplete, weak, made of glass gain something from this belief only for themselves. We don't need that as an image of children.

Instead of always giving children protection, we need to give them the recognition of their rights and of their strengths.

Translated by Baji Rankin, Leslie Morrow, and Lella Gandini.

Loris Malaguzzi

February 23, 1920 — January 30, 1994

Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach, began teaching in schools started by parents just after the end of WWII. Through the years, he transformed that courageous initiative into the internationally acclaimed program for young children that we know today.

Those who worked with Malaguzzi or heard him speak have vivid memories of an intense learning experience — his philosophical reflections, surprising observations, challenges of conventional thoughts in education, unexpected turns of thought, complexity of ideas, and delightful metaphors. One way to pay tribute to Loris Malaguzzi is to listen to his words:

“Our goal is to build an amiable school, where children, teachers and families feel at home. Such a school requires careful thinking and planning concerning procedures, motivations and interests. It must embody ways of getting along together, of intensifying relationships.”

Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (editors),

The Hundred Languages of Children (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993).

Teacher Research in Reggio Emilia: Essence of a Dynamic, Evolving Role

Many aspects of the Reggio Emilia experience are fascinating to American educators, but perhaps none more than the role of the teacher. How do teachers (infant-toddler and preschool) support, facilitate, and guide children to the complex levels seen in classroom interactions as well as in the creative works children produce? Certainly, the teacher's role has intrigued both of us ever since we began our studies in Reggio Emilia, even before we began collaborating on the three successive editions of *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 1993; 1998; 2012). In each of those volumes, Carolyn contributed a chapter specifically focused on the Role of the Teacher. In preparing the third edition, we interviewed many teachers and administrative leaders, and thereby gained many new insights into the dynamic and evolving aspects of teachers' work in Reggio. In this article, we will summarize some of our thoughts about this issue, with particular focus on teachers as researchers.

Reggio Emilia: A transforming city

Reggio Emilia is a very old city, founded by the Romans in the second century B.C. It still has many buildings of great antiquity, as well as remnants of the old walls that surrounded and protected it. However, Reggio Emilia is also a lively city undergoing rapid economic growth and population and generational change.

Indeed, the whole Po Valley area in northern Italy has experienced rapid economic development, becoming one of the most industrialized parts of Europe. Reggio Emilia has grown prosperous in the food and fashion industries,

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and was recently linked to Italy's new high-speed railway system. Economic changes have also spurred social changes, which are even more notable. As

stated by Piccinini and Giudici,

[i]n the course of this evolution, the city is moving away from consolidated traditions toward those that are new and unfamiliar. It is possible to see the signs of this change in the landscape and architecture of the city, yet the social changes are of even more importance, though not as visible. (2012, 90)



Reggio Emilia is a forward-looking city, with many new inhabitants as well as new construction.

Influx of new families

Reggio Emilia today is a growing city, a young city, and a culturally and racially diverse city, experiencing an influx of new families from around Europe and the world. The most common countries of origin of the young children

in the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools are Albania, Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Nigeria, and China. Because of the high level of immigration, Reggio Emilia is experiencing a new level of encounter between different

cultures. For this reason, the city leaders are striving to create new forms of citizen participation and involvement, as well as educational services for all children in the community. They want to ensure that the longtime residents of Reggio Emilia do not react to change with fear—of outsiders, change, or losing a familiar standard of living.

City leaders are also aware that when people feel excluded from the community, the risk of conflict arises. The former mayor, Graziano Delrio, spoke eloquently of this at the North American Reggio Emilia



Mothers gather in the park in the center of the city.

Alliance (NAREA) Conference in Chicago in 2012:

Today when the zeitgeist tells us that difference is a problem, our society can choose between two kinds of relationships: bonding or bridging. We can stay within the group creating bonds that knit the group together, reinforcing a sense of belonging. Or we can stimulate openness to the other, to the different, thereby gaining knowledge and stimulating curiosity toward the others along a path of enrichment and positive change. This is the bridging approach, a multi-connection, which multiplies knowledge.

Tighter financial situation

Besides the influx of newcomers, Reggio Emilia also faces a tighter financial situation, with fewer resources but more competing needs. The world economic crisis that began in 2008 also affected Italy. In Reggio Emilia, the rising cost of public early childhood education and care has become a source of concern. At the same time, there are increasing family requests for high-quality services for children under three years of age. The city leaders have acknowledged these requests, and considered the fact that community unity depends on public services embracing everyone (not just some income levels or segments of society). Thus, the elected officials and governing bodies, along with the leaders of the educational system, have worked slowly and steadily to expand the amount and types of services available to the community. One innovation to accomplish this goal is the creation of new partnerships to expand services and to better network existing relationships. For example, in 2003, a public-private system was created with the goal to provide education for all the young children in the city. Called the “*Istituzione*,” it is an umbrella organization that oversees the municipal, state-run, and mixed public-private educational services for the birth-to-6 age range.

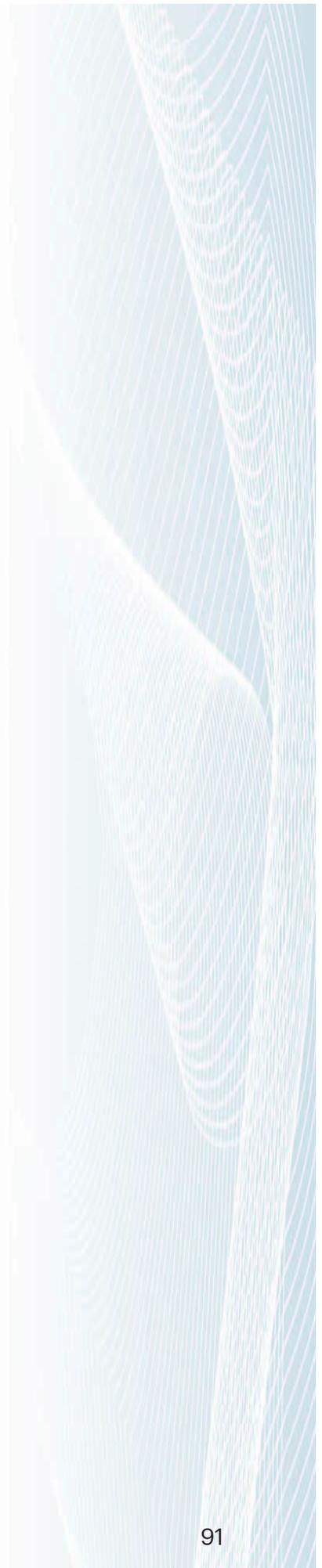
Generational turnover of educators

Finally, along with change in its population profile and organization of services, Reggio Emilia is also experiencing a generational turnover in its educators. As the founding generation of *atelieristi* (studio teachers) and *pedagogisti* (pedagogical coordinators) retires, this generation is being replaced by younger individuals with new outlooks and background experiences.

What does it mean for Reggio’s high-quality approach to working in schools to experience so much change? It is not an easy matter to carry out this high level of functionality in the face of many changes: new families—many from abroad and not socialized to the Italian tradition of active parental involvement in school; new financial situations and cooperative arrangements; and a new generation of younger and less experienced educators.

Aspects of the teacher’s role in Reggio Emilia

When Italian early childhood educators talk about their work, they do not break it down into elements or dimensions the way many Americans do. Instead, they might talk about philosophical themes that create goals for their



work and allow educators from different places and services to talk together, such as well-being, continuity, culture, and aesthetics (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012, 10–11). But when we look closely, we can find familiar elements of the teacher’s role, just rephrased somewhat differently. The rephrasing strikes a chord; it promotes interesting ways to reframe the teachers’ work.

In this article, we will consider one-by-one the aspects of the teacher’s role in Reggio, with comments on how these interact with the transformations taking place in Reggio Emilia today. We will consider what it might mean for teachers’ practice—for their methods of teacher research oriented to innovation—to deal with so much social, economic, and generational change. We will cover parts of the teacher’s role familiar to Americans, including: planning curriculum and environment; interacting with and observing children to promote learning through play and appropriate instruction; providing nurturance and guidance to children; and promoting parent engagement and involvement. In suggesting how these aspects play out in a special way in Reggio Emilia, we draw from the excellent discussion by Susan Fraser, in *Authentic Childhood: Experiencing Reggio Emilia in the Classroom* (2000, chapter 3), and for many illustrative photographs, we draw from Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (2012).

The teacher as researcher

Research is a concept that underpins all activity of Reggio Emilia educators, in a general way of working aimed at generating new ideas, thoughts, and projects closely linked to the contemporary world. It is central to the teacher’s role in all of the dimensions we will describe, and is actually more

closely linked to the American idea of *innovation* than to that of systematic hypothesis testing. From this perspective, research can be considered a way of thinking and approaching knowledge oriented to the future. It is a way of understanding oneself in relation to the world that can produce the kind of innovation only derived from systematic pursuit of multiple perspectives on problems and rigorous examination of evidence at hand.

In chapter 13 of Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (2012), Carlina Rinaldi focuses on the differences between the kind of research that takes place in scientific laboratories and universities, and the kind



Veia Vecchi and Carlina Rinaldi talking together in the atelier of the Diana Preschool, circa 1990.

of research or experimentation that teachers and ordinary citizens can and should do. She says that:

When teachers make listening and documentation central to their practice, they transform themselves into researchers. (2012, 244)

Rinaldi goes on to propose the concept of normal, or everyday, research, defined as:

... an attitude and an approach in everyday living—not only in schools but also outside of them—as a way of thinking for ourselves and thinking jointly with others, a way of relating with other people, with the world around us, and with life. (2012, 245)

We will show how a questioning and searching attitude, or inquiry process, pervades the work of teachers in Reggio Emilia. We believe this is “inquiry as stance,” as defined by Cochran-Smith and Lytle:

... a continual process of making current arrangements problematic; questioning the ways knowledge and practice are constructed, evaluated, and used; and assuming that part of the work of practitioners individually and collectively is to participate in educational and social change. (2009, 121)

The teacher as colleague within a network and organization

In Reggio Emilia, the role of the teacher as “master of the classroom” is transformed into something much more collective or collaborative. The teacher’s work is defined not individually but rather as a **colleague co-acting within a network and organization**. It is normal to have two coteachers per classroom, or even three in the first two years at the infant-toddlers centers. Together, teachers are continually researching: *What does each of us know, and what have we observed and considered, that can be usefully shared in an ongoing, mutual experience?*

Certainly, teachers and staff offer one another emotional support and encouragement as well as concrete suggestions and advice. In addition, however, a method of extended mutual criticism and self-examination is very much accepted. Indeed, an important part of teacher professional development in Reggio Emilia entails a small work group—composed perhaps of teacher(s), mentor teacher, *pedagogista*, *atelierista*—observing and documenting a group of children together, then meeting for lengthy discussion, analysis, and comparison of perspectives. This method of collaborating has been used for many years in Reggio Emilia, with variations according to the annual plans for professional development formulated by the Pedagogical Coordinating Team (see Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012, chapter 8).

The reflection process is often simulated for visiting study groups in the large plenary sessions conducted at the Loris Malaguzzi International Center. The process typically involves an introductory phase, where those who have planned, conducted, and documented an experience with children provide others with necessary background and context and also frame the reflections to follow. Next, *the documentation is shared*. The group (sometimes divided into smaller groups with a facilitator) engages in extended reflection



Lella Gandini interviews Tiziana Filippini in the atelier of the Diana Preschool, 2009, to gain understanding of the role of the pedagogical coordinating team.

on that documentation, carefully listening to each voice, following an implicit ethical code, and affording each person the right to participate. Finally, each of the presenting educators acknowledges all the reflections *and offers final comments*, noting the many insights offered and new questions raised.

Today, this reflection process is also used in a modified form when international study groups visit the infant-toddler centers and preschools. All of the centers and schools are involved; the visits are considered important not only for visitors' learning but just as much for the educators themselves. Thus, it is intrinsic to ongoing professional development. A group of visitors (perhaps 30 in

number) first receive an introduction to the school delivered by two or three "hosts" (usually a teacher or two, and an *atelierista* or *pedagogista*). Then, visitors fan out to observe and take notes for an hour or so. Finally, visitors gather again to share observations and reactions and ask questions of the

host educators. Later, study group members meet on their own with others from their school or community and share what they learned that day.

In general, the process of teachers' ongoing professional development looks somewhat different today than in the past due to the increasing complexity of the system of services. The goal remains what it always was, to sustain quality education through reflection, inquiry, and innovation. Educators hold to principles that their research should be purposeful and systematic, public and transparent, and supported through strong organization and networks. For example, Reggio leaders have introduced some innovations in their organization of professional development. There are now three cross-cutting, or

"transversal," *pedagogisti*, who coordinate the pedagogical system throughout its entire complexity. These transversals are responsible for the pedagogical coordination within the city of Reggio Emilia and for the professional



Study tour discussing their day's reflections outside the Bruno Munari Preschool.

development of the staff. They are also responsible for collaboration with other educational initiatives in the city and the Emilia Romagna region.

Furthermore, other changes in professional development have been introduced due to the influx of new kinds of children and families, as well as the wave of newly-hired teachers (pedagogisti and other staff) entering the Reggio Emilia early childhood system. Paola Cagliari, the new Director of the Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools, and Claudia Giudici, President of the Istituzione Scuole e Nidi Reggio Emilia, have worked closely to conceive and lead a transformation of the professional development system that they call a “diffuse pedagogical system.” This “diffuse system” of professional development is not designed for linear and top-down transmission, but instead creates many collegial zones of knowledge creation and exchange. Competences are deepened and enlarged in a forum that ideally promotes learning between older and younger generations, across job categories, and around pedagogical issues of enduring concern. This new system amplifies tendencies of past years and sharpens earlier emphases, yet also reveals the capacity of the Reggio early childhood system to evolve and adapt to new conditions and challenges.

Today, the intellectual content of professional development is sometimes focused on “conceptual knots” that can be explored in collaboration across educational roles. These “knots” are those common-yet-enduring, thorny issues of everyday teaching, such as how and what to observe; how children interact and learn; ways to encounter the zone of proximal development of children, colleagues, and parents; and how one becomes part of and contributes to educational action. These topics represent a departure from a focus on long-term projects, such as those described extensively in the many publications and exhibit themes prepared by Reggio educators (e.g., “City and the Rain,” “Shadowiness,” “The Long Jump,” “The Importance of Looking at Ourselves,” “The Amusement Park for Birds,” “Reggio Tutta,” and “The Theater Curtain,” to name a well-known few). Yet, the heritage of those projects is not to be lost; instead it is kept alive through contemporary study and revisiting some of those past themes with children, delving back for guidance into documentation preserved in the schools and the Documentation and Educational Research Center. In a time of economic stringency, instead of producing many new publications educators can study the productions of the past, with the intention of producing novel professional development for new personnel.



Children experiment at the water table while constructing a fountain, as part of “The Amusement Park for Birds” Project.



The teacher, Marina Castagnetti, notices that children need help with something they are trying to do with the play. First, she points and tells.



Then she decides they need her to actually show them what she means.

The teacher's role in curriculum: Progettazione and pedagogy of listening

The familiar role of teachers in promoting learning and preparing curriculum in Reggio Emilia is discussed as **documentation and flexible planning**. The concept of flexible planning is covered by their term *progettazione*, which is roughly translated as “projecting on the basis of observed or documented action or interaction to be interpreted together.” The concept applies to any aspect of curriculum or life of the school, and always involves multiple voices in decisions:

The curriculum is at once defined and undefined, structured and unstructured, based more on flexible strategies than rigid plans. (Rinaldi 1998, 119)

We believe that there are two sides, or “faces,” of *progettazione*. With both, the teacher researches these questions: *Why? What happened? What does it mean? What else could happen if . . . ?*

The first side of *progettazione* involves what Americans often speak of as “emergent curriculum,” with its strongest version the Project Approach—those big, long-term projects involving a whole classroom or school, or even many schools together. This is what many people think of when they hear the words “Reggio Emilia” and are reminded of projects such as “The City in the Rain,” “Shadowiness,” and so on from the exhibits *The Hundred Languages of Children and The Wonder of Learning*. A new example of such a long-term project is provided in the color insert “From Messages to Writing,” by Laura Rubizzi and Simona Bonilauri, in Edwards, Gandini, and Forman (2012, 213–222). But long-term projects are not the whole story.

The second side of *progettazione* involves the “pedagogy of listening” (see Rinaldi’s chapter 13 in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012). The pedagogy of listening means helping children find meaning in what they do, what they encounter, and what they experience. In the Reggio preschools today, we see

broad inquiry on topics of child well-being, such as *food and healthy eating*; *relationships with nature and the outdoors*; and *technology with children*.

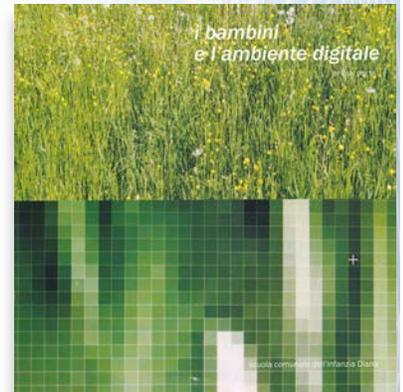
Regarding technology, the school environments are now full of digital technology for children and for teachers' use in preparing documentation. One example is a little booklet published by Diana School. "Micropublishing" is a way for individual schools to share the results of their research and sell small publications to school visitors. Diana School's booklet is called *The Children and the Digital Environment*; in it we see children's experimentation on the computer, transforming their digital photos of the natural world outside their school. In fact, there are printers, scanners, video monitors, and video projectors in many of the *ateliers*. The children are taught how to use this equipment to produce images on paper and images, transformations, animations, and video clips on the computer screen. (For further information, consult Forman's chapter 19 on digital media in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012.)

Both sides of *progettazione* are alive and well in Reggio, but there has been a shift in emphasis from the first to the second. Much in-house professional development focuses on infusing quality into ordinary moments, not only in infant-toddler centers and preschools but also in laboratories, citywide events, and all sorts of learning encounters relevant to every age, from young to old. Yet the enduring research questions remain central: *Why? What happened? What does it mean? What else could happen if . . . ?*

The teacher as creator of the environment

In Reggio, the familiar role of the teacher as "program planner" changes to creator of the environment as a third teacher. Providing a quality program naturally begins with preparing the space and environment, indoors and out. The quality and aesthetics of materials, furnishings, and images (their "taste" or "flavor") help the child appreciate, love, respect, and take advantage of the environment. Calm but stimulating environments promote well-being—that is, a sense of being fully at ease in the setting. This careful preparation, plus continuity of care (looping) are in our opinion what make possible financially feasible teacher/child ratios in Reggio. The teachers inquire: *How can we renew our older spaces and environments, and innovate design of new ones, to meet the learning needs of children today?*

The Villa Sesso Preschool illustrates a typical story of how space and environments are always scrutinized and revitalized in Reggio Emilia. The Villa Sesso was one of the historic preschools. It was founded at the end of World War II by a group of women, moved in 1960 and then again in 1972 when it was inaugurated as the Municipal Preschool of Villa Sesso at Botteghino (Ghirardi 2002). Because of its striking natural surroundings—beautiful fields, rich with vegetables and grapevines—in 1991 this school officially became a "green center," where children and teachers concentrated on the ecology of the countryside and taking care of the school grounds. Parents and visitors marveled at the richness of transformation of natural materi-



The cover of the booklet *Children and the Digital Environment*, produced by the Diana Preschool, December, 2012. It describes children's experiments with digital technology.



© Lella Gandini

Children explore the grounds of La Viletta Preschool with a map they are using to situate the amusement park for birds they are constructing.

als, especially in the *atelier* but also in the way the school kitchen became a place of participation for children and a focus of preparation and enjoyment of healthy food together in the group.

In 2010, following the donation of new land and funding for a new building, now called the Martiri di Sesso Preschool, planning started for the creation of a wide surrounding park. At the same time, the public administration of the city of Reggio Emilia established a research group of educators, parents, and technicians to reconsider and recommend improvements for the outside areas of all preschools and infant-toddler centers. The research group suggested that teachers of each preschool and infant-toddler center should carry out an inquiry, questioning parents as well. The intention was to find out how the children perceive, encounter, interpret, and live in the green areas in their courtyards and outside spaces, no matter what size. This teacher inquiry informed and helped orient atelieristi, pedagogisti, and the research group to make proposals for change.

Here are some of the questions the teachers asked in their inquiry:

- How do children of today enter into relationship with the natural green surroundings?
- How do children move within such spaces?
- Which gestures and words do they use?
- How do they make use of such spaces, and what is there?
- What mental images do they have of these places?
- Which aspects seem most attractive?
- How do they represent them?

In addition, many Reggio teachers today work in bold new spaces benefiting from the innovation of young architects. The new Giulia Maramotti Infant-Toddler Center, for example, was supported by a gift from Maramotti Foundation/Max Mara, in collaboration with Reggio Children, in a competition open to young architects and engineers under age 35. It was inspired by high-quality pedagogical and architectural criteria and values. (See Gandini's chapter 18 on space and environments, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012.) The architects, Francesca Fava and Carlo Margini, innovated a striking design open to the outdoors that included movable *ateliers* that could be placed close to the building in winter and further out toward the grounds in summer.

In sum, today we see much more emphasis on children's relationships with nature and the outdoors, and on the relation of living plants to the

emotional and physical nourishment of human beings. In the design of new buildings, we see explicit elements to bring the outside in and take the inside out. We find booklets/documentation of projects where children investigate plants, the sea, the air, and consider the future of the earth.

The teacher as guide in fostering exchange and community

The familiar role of “providing guidance” is best understood in Reggio Emilia as **fostering exchange of understandings and promoting community of children**. Teacher research focuses on this question: *How can we make our centers and schools more inclusive of all children?*

Children with special rights due to their disabilities or unique learning needs have first priority for admission to the public services of Reggio Emilia. Today, educators actively seek to strengthen relationships with community health providers to increase quantity and quality of inclusive participation. They also seek to learn about new therapies compatible with their relational approach to pedagogy, and to understand the seeming increase in certain conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders. These inquiries are well described in Soncini’s chapter 11 on “the inclusive community” in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman (2012). For many years, Soncini has been the transversal *pedagogista* with expertise in special education; she works with all centers and schools to support successful inclusion. She offers this remarkable example of the Reggio approach.



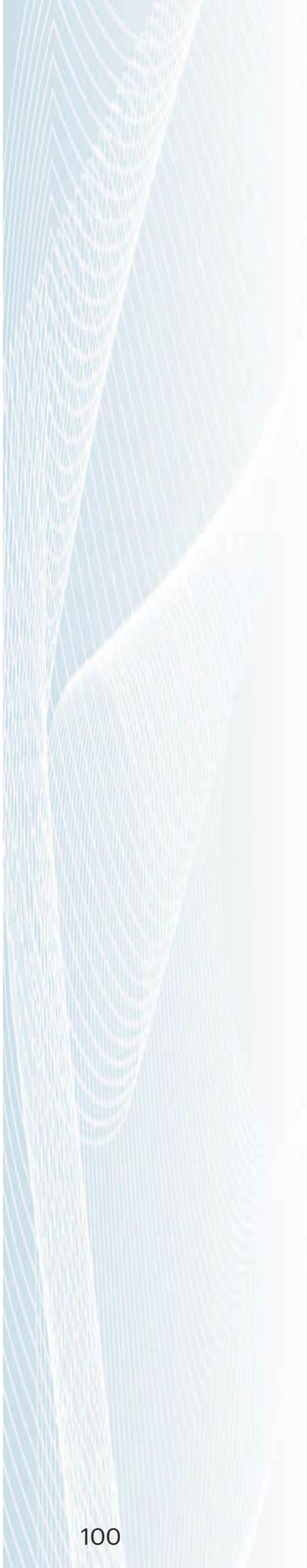
© Cathleen Smith

The outdoor garden invites children of different abilities to play together.



© Cathleen Smith

Sometimes a brush with a large handle and paint of a strong color help a child do satisfying work in the inclusive community.



When Marco arrived at Anna Frank Preschool, he had already spent a year at the Salvador Allende Infant-Toddler Center. . . . Born without eye lobes, he wore prostheses that needed to be periodically cleaned and reset, a process that may have been somewhat difficult for him. . . . In the infant-toddler center, the decision had been to get to know Marco better by choosing spaces inside and outside the classroom that were distinctive for the sounds and resonance of their materials. For example, the teachers had made available percussion musical instruments in one area, bells attached to a climbing structure in another, construction materials involving metal and wood in a third, and a pillow made of furry material on which to sit at circle time. They also found a rug with a thick border that he could easily feel when he was crawling, and they placed it where he could play with other children. The year at Salvador Allende was like a rebirth for Marco. He started to use verbal language, above all to construct utterances (phrases) that he used to ask for help. He also started to walk around accompanied by an adult . . . [but his language and] exploration of materials with his hands was very limited.

When he entered Anna Frank Preschool, Marco showed great pleasure every day in meeting his classmates, who liked to greet him at the door when he arrived and help him take off his coat. . . . The teachers and children at Anna Frank discussed and shared the challenges of Marco to find solutions that might help him move from place to place independently . . . the bathroom, the kitchen, the piazza? [After much discussion,] the child thought of the idea to create a tactile path, using a strip made with a solid plastic rug with bumps in relief that he could feel with his feet as he walked. They experimented with different surfaces and types of carpets by walking with their eyes closed until they found the one they thought would be best. For the pathway to the kitchen, they thought about a rope with bells attached, and this was set along the wall, starting after the door of the classroom. Finally, thinking about going between classroom and piazza, his schoolmates first chose elements in the piazza and the classroom with which they saw that Marco particularly liked to interact: a rocking horse near the door in his classroom and the piano in the piazza. Their ideas were many and demonstrated great variety; and they took into account Marco's needs, which were ever-changing, and the difficulties that they gradually encountered.

What was important to his teachers was that the children looked forward to playing with him and were trying to “think about Marco and think as Marco.” They empathized with him and seriously pretended to have his limits and his possibilities. . . . Marco participated in the small group discussions, so that his opinion was involved. These discussions seemed to activate . . . Marco. . . . [He] used the piano keyboard and discovered the different tones. . . . He began to play with the sounds [with] one or two other children and . . . mov[ed] himself around at the piano, standing up to reach the keys of contrasting tonalities. He even created some games with a friend, consisting of a dialogue of sounds (stimulus and answer) and some patterns of rhythm. All of this was very encouraging in Marco's ongoing story. (Soncini 2012, 200–201)

The teacher as partner with families

The familiar role of “educating and involving families” is defined in the Reggio approach as **promoting participation and exchange**. In the United States, parent involvement commonly refers to parents becoming connected to schools. However, the term usually implies something one-sided: the parent contributes on the school's terms—the teacher is the expert and gets the parent to contribute in a helpful way. Parent involvement in the US is

often expected to produce “outcomes” (Edwards & Kutaka 2015); it results from “investments” leading to “payoffs.”

In contrast, in preschools in Reggio Emilia and other Italian cities, the relationship between schools and families is generally referred to with the term **participation**. There is a formal election of parent representatives for each preschool and infant-toddler center, and from those representatives a committee of parents is elected to represent families directly with the city government. As the advisory system evolves, educators are researching this question: *How can we strengthen participation even as our community grows and develops, and the needs of children and families change?*

In all writing on Italian early childhood education, the term “participation” recurs over and over, incorporating the whole spectrum of meanings covered by the English terms involvement, engagement, and partnership. “Participation” is broad, implying that not only parents and teachers but also other members of the community participate. It covers all forms and levels of participation and contribution, without distinction, and frames issues connected to diversity in terms of multiple perspectives and invitations to dialogue. The following three quotations from parents in Reggio Emilia suggest the emotional value that parents derive from participating on the advisory council of their children’s preschool:

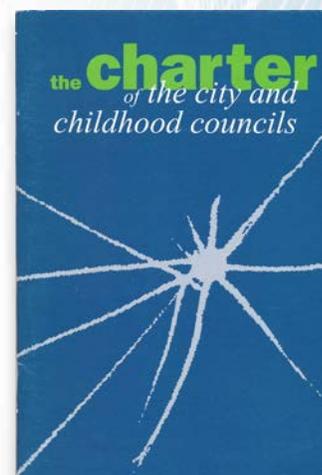
For me it’s a looking for growth through times of shared reflection, through opportunities for exchange, comparing points of view, taking our reflections further, so that I am closer to my child as a parent, so that we grow together as people.

It’s a personal development, sharing points of view, friendship, wanting to help do things, telling our stories; because if we parents talk about ourselves a bit then that helps the teachers in their work with our children, which is of primary importance to all of us. It shows us that not everything is necessarily owed to us, and if we can learn that we can pass it on to our children for their growth and future.

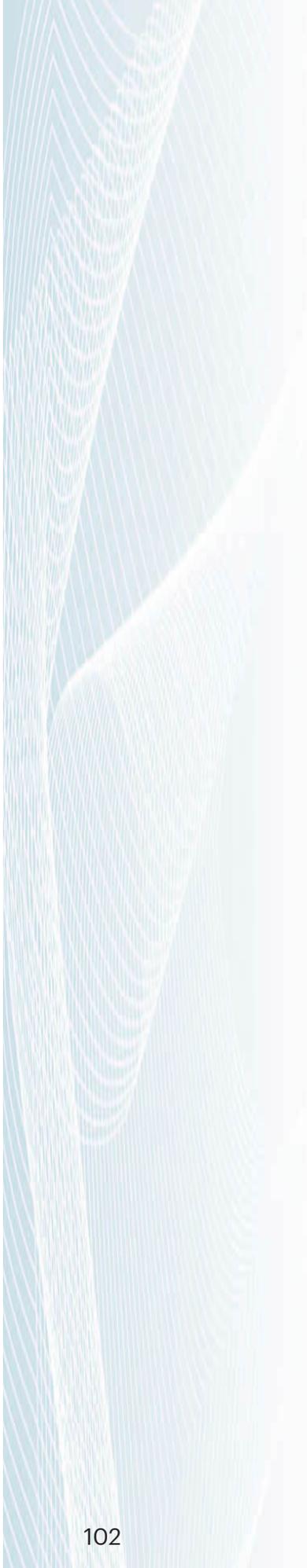
I understand participation in the City and Childhood Council to be an assumption of responsibility . . . which comes from the civic sense of belonging and contributing to a civilized community—collective—society. (Documentation and Educational Research Centre 2002, 9, 25, 34)

Thus, the reasons and motives that stimulate parents to participate are what have changed most from former decades. It is clear that nowadays people participate and become involved not so much out of idealistic fervor or political conviction, but rather out of a desire to seek opportunities for personal growth or for their children’s growth. They seek meaningful experiences and to both give and receive enrichment and help.

As an example of how this affects the role of the teacher, consider how in recent years the increasing diversity of children and families in the schools has presented a focus of concern. Some members of the pedagogical team have demonstrated leadership in helping teachers cultivate sensitivity toward other cultures and increasing intercultural appreciation and respect in the schools. For example, Deanna Margini, a *pedagogista* with rich pre-



The Charter of the City and Childhood Councils was produced by a study group of stakeholders in Reggio Emilia in 2002.



vious cultural background, describes how the city government has hired cultural mediators for each foreign language group (2010). She also explains the importance for infant-toddler and preschool staff of weekly meetings with their *pedagogisti*, who can encourage the teachers to talk openly (see also chapter 8 on the Pedagogical Coordinating Team, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 2012). The *pedagogisti* can ask the teachers about progress with particular families' participation. They can support teachers in describing the experiences of the children and sharing how relationships with families are developing. Any teacher naturally feels deeply affected when a misunderstanding arises or when it seems that trust is not growing with a family. The *pedagogisti* can encourage the teachers to talk about an episode that was not positive, that was uncomfortable for a teacher or in which she did not understand the intercultural nuances. At times, teachers may misinterpret a family member's behavior because that person is from a different nationality or culture. In counteracting this, it can be helpful for educators to reflect together in staff meetings in order to better understand and consider how to pay better attention to aspects of communication teaching staff might underestimate or overlook.

As a result of their intercultural experiences, all the educators—teachers, aides, members of the pedagogical team, and cultural mediators—attain a better sense of the points of view of immigrant parents, and thus are better able to partner with them. The teachers, for instance, realize how much insight they experience when families begin to emerge in their individuality, offering their personal and cultural resources and speaking about their lives. Families voice their particular paths as immigrants; their personal questions and worries about whether or not to create a family here; problems they may have in relation with families of their native country; or difficulties that the Italian laws and legal system continue to pose in the daily life of immigrants. The *pedagogisti* and cultural mediators play a facilitating role in creating a truly shared educational experience.

Conclusion

In sum, teacher practice (with a strong value placed on active inquiry) is constantly evolving in Reggio Emilia through experimentation and iterative, cumulative changes. These changes are visible in how Reggio teachers co-act within a network and organization of colleagues and design and use space and environments. The changes are also seen in how they inquire about promoting child learning and project curriculum through documentation and foster communication and community in an inclusive community. Finally, the dynamic and evolving role of teachers is visible in response to family diversity to strengthen participation and partnership with parents. In all of these aspects, the teachers flourish as researchers, seeking to do the best work possible by continually asking deep questions about their work

and reflecting with others on what has happened, what it means, and how to go forward. This kind of research requires much courage in the face of uncertainty, and confidence that everyone together has the necessary power and strength.

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Values and Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Lella Gandini

What are the distinguishing features of the education of young children with regard to theory and practice that have made the Reggio Emilia approach so notable?

An examination of the features of this philosophy soon reveals that the educators have been serious readers of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, David Hawkins, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, and other world-renowned scientists and philosophers. In fact, Reggio educators have continued to keep abreast of the latest research in child development and education in other countries. At the same time, though, they continue to formulate new interpretations and new hypotheses and ideas about learning and teaching through their daily observations and practice of learning along with children.

The image of the child. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity; they have interest in relationship, in constructing their own learning, and in negotiating with everything the environment brings to them. Children should be considered as active citizens with rights, as contributing members, with their families, of their local community. Children with special rights (rather than using the term special needs) have precedence in becoming part of an infant/toddler center or a preschool.

Children's relationships and interactions within a system. Education has to focus on each child, not considered in isolation, but seen in relation with the family, with other children, with the teachers, with the environment of the school, with the community, and with the wider society. Each school is viewed as a system in which all these relationships, which are all interconnected and reciprocal, are activated and supported.

The role of parents. Parents are an essential component of the program—a competent and active part of their children's learning experience. They are not considered consumers but co-responsible partners. Their right to participation is expected and sup-

ported; it takes many forms and can help ensure the welfare of all children in the program.

The role of space: amiable schools. The infant/toddler centers and preschools convey many messages, of which the most immediate is: this is a place where adults have thought about the quality and the instructive power of space. The layout of physical space fosters encounters, communication, and relationships. Children learn a great deal in exchanges and negotiations with their peers; therefore teachers organize spaces that support the engagement of small groups.

Teachers and children as partners in learning. A strong image of the child has to correspond to a strong image of the teacher. Teachers are not considered protective babysitters, teaching basic skills to children but, rather, they are seen as learners along with the children. They are supported, valued for their experience and their ideas, and seen as researchers. Cooperation at all levels in the schools is the powerful mode of working that makes possible the achievement of the complex goals that Reggio educators have set for themselves.

Not a pre-set curriculum but a process of inviting and sustaining learning. Once teachers have prepared an environment rich in materials and possibilities, they observe and listen to the children in order to know how to proceed with their work. Teachers use the understanding they gain thereby to act as a resource for them. They ask questions and thus discover the children's ideas, hypotheses, and theories. They see learning not as a linear process but as a spiral progression and consider themselves to be partners in the process of learning. After observing children in action, they compare, discuss, and interpret together with other teachers their observations, recorded in different ways, to leave traces of what has been observed. They use their interpretations and discussions to make choices that they share with the children.

The power of documentation. Transcriptions of children's remarks and discussions, photographs of their activity, and representations of their thinking and learning are carefully studied. These documents have several functions. Most importantly, they help to determine the direction in which the work and experiences with the children will go. Once these documents are organized and displayed, they help to make parents aware of their children's experience and maintain their involvement. They make it possible for teachers to understand the children better and to evaluate the teachers' own work, thus promoting their professional growth; they make children aware that their effort is valued; and furthermore, they create an archive that traces the history of the school.

The many languages of children. Atelierista and atelier. A teacher with a background in the visual arts works closely with the other teachers and the children in every preprimary school and visits the infant/toddler centers. This teacher, who works in a special workshop or studio known as an atelier, is called an atelierista. The atelier contains a great variety of tools and resource materials, along with records of past projects and experiences. What is done with materials and media is not regarded as art per se, because in the view of Reggio educators the children's use of many media is not a separate part of the curriculum but an inseparable, integral part of the whole cognitive/symbolic expression involved in the process of learning. Through time, the materi-

als and work of the atelier has entered into all the classrooms through the setting up of "mini-ateliers," as teachers and atelierista learn to work in very connected ways.

Projects. Projects provide the narrative and structure to the children's and teachers' learning experiences. They are based on the strong conviction that learning by doing is of great importance and that to discuss in groups and to revisit ideas and experiences is essential to gain better understanding and to learn. Projects may start either from a chance event, an idea or a problem posed by one or more children, or an experience initiated directly by teachers. They can last from a few days to several months.

Educators in Reggio Emilia have no intention of suggesting that their program should be looked at as a model to be copied in other countries; rather, they consider their work as an educational experience that consists of reflection of theory, practice, and further careful reflection in a program that is continuously renewed and readjusted. Considering the enormous interest that educators show in the work done in the Reggio schools, they suggest that teachers and parents in each school, any school, anywhere, could in their own context reflect on these ideas, keeping in focus always the relationships and learning that are in process locally to examine needs and strengths, thus finding possible ways to construct change.

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1. 25-27, L. Gandini, "Values and Principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach," in *Insights and Inspirations from Reggio Emilia: Stories of Teachers and Children from North America*. Ed. Lella Gandini, Susan Etheridge, Lynn Hill. Davis Publications, Worcester, MA. 2003
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Section 2

EMERGENT CURRICULUM
AND
DOCUMENTATION



Visual Thinking Protocol: See, think, wonder...

<p>What do you see and hear?</p>	<p>What do you think about what you see and hear?</p>	<p>What do you wonder about?</p>
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CTI Documentation Protocol:

- Presenter (teacher, administrator, Consultant) shares documentation without interruption
- Group discusses (not plans): what is interesting, what are you curious about, what stands out for you, etc
- Group provides ideas and makes plans
- Group hypothesizes what we think will happen
- Each group member makes statement regarding what he/she learned: children, teachers, professional development, families, facilitators, etc
- Presenter takes planning ideas back to program and integrates into his/her work.



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Learning to Document in Reggio-inspired Education

Carol Anne Wien

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with Victoria Guyevskey & Noula Berdoussis

Abstract

This article discusses how teachers in child care and elementary schools learn to work with Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation. While teachers grasp the value of such documentation theoretically, it is most challenging but exciting to use in practical settings. Documentation illuminates teacher theories about children's understanding: watching such theories change through study of documentation and further teacher research profoundly influences professional development. This article outlines five aspects in a progression in learning to document: (1) developing the habits of documenting, (2) "going public" with recountings of activities, (3) exploring the visual literacy of graphic displays, (4) making children's theories visible, and (5) sharing visible theories with others for the purpose of further interpretation and curriculum decision making. Two stories of teachers learning to document are shared—one showing a teacher's attempt to make one child's theory visible and one showing a teacher's "documentation strips" developed for revisiting theories with children.

Introduction

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education was developed in the municipal system of 46 infant-toddler centers and preschools for children birth to age 6 in the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. The approach has attracted worldwide attention for its rich and vibrant image of children, teachers, and families in relation to society (Cadwell, 1997, 2003; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998; Fleet, Patterson, & Robertson, 2006).

The Reggio educators' conception of documentation as combining many forms of texts to make learning visible is highly respected and considered a major contribution to the early childhood field (Burrington & Sortino, 2004; Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001; Katz & Chard, 1996; Malaguzzi, 1996); it appeals to students of the Reggio approach and can be grasped intellectually. Yet, in our experience, when teachers outside of Reggio attempt such documentation in their own classrooms, they find it much more challenging than they had expected, which suggests how radically different the Reggio notions of documentation are from those often found in schools and child care settings in North America.

To use the term Reggio-inspired regarding early childhood programs is to recognize that one does not "implement" or use the approach as a "model to copy" (a modernist position that reflects an inaccurate view of reality). Rather, educators outside of Reggio explore and re-interpret—for their own contexts and through their own understandings—a number of processes for which Reggio offers useful reference points.

Documentation as Teacher Research

Reggio educators use the term "documentation"; in the North American context, it is helpful to distinguish documentation concerned with teacher research from the myriad other forms of documentation in our society—

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from cash register receipts to family snapshots, from legal documents to the results of standardized testing. Educators in several English-language-dominant countries are experimenting with such documentation and with terms to adequately describe it, such as “learning story” in New Zealand and “pedagogical narration” in British Columbia in Canada (Berger, 2008). Both “learning story” and “pedagogical narration” imply a storyline or plot in a learning process, countering the notion of learning as a transmission to the learner for testing. In this article, the term pedagogical documentation, introduced by Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999), is used in order to differentiate a form of documentation that attempts to “make learning visible.” The term keeps intact the notion of the educator’s *study* of learning in order to figure out how to teach. Pedagogical documentation is treated here simultaneously as teacher research into children’s thoughts and feelings and as a design process for invention of curriculum in a specific context.

Pedagogical documentation is the teacher’s story of the movement of children’s understanding. The concept of learning in motion helps teachers, families, and policy makers grasp the idea that learning is provisional and dynamic; it may appear to expand and contract, rise, and even disappear. If we were to think of learning as being like a river, capable of flooding and of drying up, or like clouds, massing up and dispersing, we might have an apt metaphor for the ways our minds and bodies work.

Pedagogical documentation is a research story, built upon a question or inquiry “owned by” the teachers, children, or others, about the learning of children. It reflects a disposition of not presuming to know, and of asking how the learning occurs, rather than assuming—as in transmission models of learning—that learning occurred because teaching occurred. With standardized curriculum, once teaching has occurred, there is a tendency to assume that learning may be tested. Thus pedagogical documentation is a counterfoil to the positioning of the teacher as all-knowing judge of learning.

I avoid the terms assess and assessment here because they imply a range of meanings that I hope to distance from pedagogical documentation—accountability and the judgment of learning. To judge is to remove oneself from participation. If the teacher is removed from relationship to and responsibility for the learning, it becomes solely the learner’s responsibility. The learner who has not learned is then considered to be in jeopardy and a failure. To view the child learner as a failure is, in my view, unethical, violating the rights of children to have a safe learning environment.

Conceptualizing pedagogical documentation as teacher research calls upon the teacher not to know with certainty but instead to wonder, to inquire with grace into some temporary state of mind and feeling in children. Pedagogical documentation entails what Heshusius (1994) calls “participatory consciousness” (reminding us of the long history behind the term). It invites teachers to inquire, to listen closely. It is a relational encounter that requires emotional as well as intellectual empathy: “Can we understand without judgment what these children are thinking? Can we show them what we think they are thinking and let them alter it?”

The interpretation of pedagogical documentation as a research method is linked with the tradition of ethnographic research in education that began to flourish in the 1970s (e.g., Best, 1983; Erickson, 1986), a tradition that borrows qualitative research methods from sociology and anthropology (e.g., Spradley, 1980, 1979; Lewis, 1961), building analysis and interpretation upon the “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of observational data from field notes and interviews and visual material (artifacts and images). The tradition of using visual data reaches back to (and beyond) the work of anthropologists such as Margaret Mead (1972) and Gregory Bateson in the 1930s. Educators in Reggio Emilia may or may not have been aware of these intellectual traditions, but scholars elsewhere may recognize the connection between pedagogical documentation and ethnographic research traditions in education.

Documentation as a Design Process

Carla Rinaldi, president of Reggio Children, an organization for international outreach, describes documentation as “traces” of learning (in Wien, 1997) and as “visible listening” (Rinaldi, 2001, 2006). We interpret these ideas as meaning close attunement of the adults to what children do and to ways that they as teachers might use visual methods to communicate with others about the thoughts, feelings, values, and culture of the children with whom they work.

If documentation is a design process, its purpose is first to make learning visible, which allows for collaborative discussion and interpretation with others to generate new “designs” for further learning and experience. The design of what to do next in one’s practice arises from the discussion and interpretation of the documentation; in this way, pedagogical documentation contributes to an emergent curriculum (Wien, 2008).

How is documentation also a design process? To design documentation is to create a representation that theorizes or imagines how learning might be. Reggio classroom pedagogy is closely linked with graphic design processes, from the children’s observational drawings of real things in the city—such as fountains, piazzas, loggias, and pillars—to sketches and models that they make based on their ideas for similar structures. The children work out their ideas through their engagement with a variety of materials—clay, wire, light, shadow—that enable expression in different “languages of learning.” Examples include the paper and clay prototypes for working waterwheels for *An Amusement Park for Birds* (Forman & Gandini, 1994). Reggio educators also

routinely use computer programs and other scaffolding devices that enable the children to alter scale (by projecting an image onto a wall, for example).

Graphic design principles and processes are important to pedagogical documentation, along with an understanding of visual literacy—how the human eye reads images and how people interpret those images. Also helpful is awareness of the ways that combining text and image, or text and audio, or video and still image can convey information effectively. A grasp of how digital technologies can be used in visual design may also be applied to documentation.

The teachers' designing of documentation is closely linked to design work done by the children, whose theories and provisional explanations for how something works or occurs (a fax machine, a human dancing, birth and death) are made visible in their own work and in the teachers' pedagogical documentation. The documentation creates a representation of children's learning—the development of their imagined theories and their movement between fantasy and what they understand to be reality. A parallel process goes on for the teachers who create the documentation in an effort to understand and represent the children's theories and the ways these theories may shift back and forth between playful fantasy and reality. In making this movement visible, adults may also see into their own theories, or lack of them, regarding the ways things work. (How many adults have ever thought about how a fax machine works? If we did, wouldn't our ideas be pretty fantastical and partial, reflecting the limits of our technical knowledge?) Thus through pedagogical documentation, teachers may come to understand some limitations of adult thinking and become open to the fact that many of their own theories are unproven and sometimes ridiculous; their grasp of reality is tenuous, always negotiated and hypothesized—reality only partially understood.

Witnessing the progression of children's thought and feeling while at the same time becoming aware of the limits of adult knowledge can widen teachers' understanding, sensitize their emotional response to children's learning processes, and deepen their sense of affiliation with young learners. The twin processes of teacher research and creative design permit such insight. In pedagogical documentation, teachers imagine or theorize understanding, present evidence of what they think they see, and check it against others' analysis and interpretation, all of which can inform their decisions about what to offer children, thus influencing the design of curriculum.

A Progression in Teacher Understanding of Pedagogical Documentation

This section addresses five features that we have observed of a progression in teachers' processes of learning to create pedagogical documentation with the Reggio Emilia approach as their inspiration. I am indebted to Deborah Halls for the idea of a progression in learning, rather than stages. Stages are invariant—a person must pass through one to reach the next, as in babbling before talking. Understanding how to create pedagogical documentation is a more flexible, more varied process, though in our experience very few teachers begin their documentation at sophisticated levels.

The notion of a progression is based on a decade of conversations, dialogue, and reflections with teachers in both elementary and child care settings. "We" is used here to signify the involvement of all those with whom I have shared these ideas and who have commented and reflected on them. The names of these teachers are used with their permission; all children's names mentioned are pseudonyms.

Five typical aspects of the progression toward sophisticated pedagogical documentation are shared here. First, I will define the terms *data* and *theory* as used in this discussion. Data (or the singular form, datum) are lived experiences (verbal or in action) that are recorded in some fashion and thus can be manipulated in an instrument that represents them separately from the stream of experience. A written field note about a child crumbling a cracker while whispering "snow" lifts that action from real life, processes it through the observers' own thought and feeling, and preserves it on paper, separating from life an interpretation of what was seen. The term theory here refers to a system of imagined possibilities, the mind's wondering freely in a playful way to consider multiple ideas and present a coherent system of relations. A theory has an internal logic, regardless of its relationship to reality.

We have observed five aspects of teachers' progression toward pedagogical documentation as teacher research and design for learning:

1. developing habits of documenting,
2. becoming comfortable with going public with recountings of activities,
3. developing visual literacy skills,
4. conceptualizing a purpose of documentation as making learning visible, and
5. sharing visible theories with others for interpretation and further design of curriculum.

Often when teachers begin pedagogical documentation, they cannot see beyond the first three aspects. Then a pivot point occurs (Wien, 1995) at which they do grasp that there is something more—they catch glimmers—but cannot produce it yet in their documentation. They suffer, as all learners suffer, as they attempt to learn a new language and literacy. Each of these five aspects of the process of learning to document is described in

the following sections.

Habits of Documenting

No matter how much reading a teacher has done about the Reggio Emilia approach, or how strong her intellectual grasp of documentation, the first aspect of the progression will be to develop habits of documenting. For the teacher, that means gathering various tools for classroom use, learning to have the tool she needs at hand when she wants to use it, and developing the mental habit of thinking to document. Teachers may need months to get beyond intending to document but finding they do not have the tools at hand—the camera is forgotten at home or the IC recorder is lost on a cluttered desk—so the teacher must carry on without it.

Habits of documenting also include becoming aware of the potential that moments of classroom action may have for yielding something meaningful about learning. North American society has strong habits of documenting for legal and technical reasons (e.g., notations about medication or behavioral incidents), and educators have strong habits of observing children in early childhood education via anecdotal or running records. Teachers may be accustomed to noting a significant moment—taking a photo of a child's first block tower or recording two children's conversation at the water table about making bubbles "to infinity"—but experience suggests that they are less accustomed to having a sustained, focused commitment to documenting the processes of learning, which is what Reggio-inspired documentation requires.

Teachers may not initially have an automatic habit of documentation in various forms, related to their thinking and reflection about curriculum and children's learning, or see it as a purposeful activity that can help guide their decision making. For decisions about curriculum, they are more accustomed to following curriculum documents and learning standards, with supports provided by school districts, center programs, and funding agencies. Documentation can initially feel like an "add-on," and teachers may feel they cannot find time to do it.

Understanding the intellectual purposes of documentation is difficult for teachers when they have not yet developed habits of documenting and are still frustrated by not remembering to document. Dawn Szolopiak, for example, a preschool classroom teacher in a Reggio-inspired community college program, told me her goal for the year was to get used to using the tools of documentation—to have camera and tape recorder at hand, to consciously record small group conversations, and to generate documentation and commit to examining what she generated. I thought this a most reasonable goal; a year seemed a sensible amount of time in which to lay a foundation of documentation as a habit. With any complex literacy, beginners have to build one layer at a time into their functioning. At one point, Dawn covered an entire wall, about 8 x12 feet, outside her room with documentation of the children's interest in tulips—layers of tiled transcripts of conversation about where tulips should be planted and how they should be protected from the lawnmower (a stick fence woven with brightly colored wool), photos of children digging and planting, drawings of tulips growing or not growing. There was so much on the wall that it was unreadable to the viewer, but it was *Dawn's* data. She knew it backwards and forwards. She "owned" it; it was the successful product of her effort to develop the habits of documenting. It could be considered raw data, not yet in a form that could be readily shared with others. Dawn told me some time later that for several years she drew material from this wall of data to construct more finished panels or to communicate with another group of children.

Dawn's experience is typical of teachers developing the habit of documenting—a tendency to document too much in an unfocused way and to be overwhelmed with masses of data. The data may be largely uninterpretable to an outsider, but the teacher who has created the documentation sees it as her own, and to her, it represents something different from mainstream teaching.

If a teacher goes no further than developing the habit of documenting, however, she may have little sense of what documentation is for and why she does it, though she may delight in the process, enjoy sharing images and transcripts (perhaps haphazardly) with parents and children, and note children's interest in the documentation of what they have said and done.

Why create seemingly purposeless documentation before more focused documentation? It is only once the teacher has collected some data that she can begin to think about it—one cannot think in a vacuum.

Recountings: First Steps in Going Public

Recountings of classroom experiences are likely to be the first stories of learning that a teacher creates when beginning to document. The first documentation attempted at Peter Green Hall in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the mid-1990s, for example, showed children making pumpkin soup. Images showed children cutting the pumpkin, adding it to the soup pot, stirring, and eating soup. The captions said things like, "Here we are making pumpkin soup."

As the habits of documenting develop, the first accounts tend to be descriptive, showing the surface of events. Lesley Valentine, a teacher and graduate student, calls this "making *doing* visible." Lesley comments that one aspect of learning to document is growing comfortable with putting the activity of children and teachers on

display for others: "This aspect is also one where you allow yourself to become comfortable with putting your work with children, and the children's work, on display."

In Lesley's view, being willing to "go on display" is a necessary step toward being able to document more thoughtfully. To make the work visible to others means that others have thoughts and responses to the work—unpredictable and uncontrollable responses that would not occur if it were invisible. By displaying documentation, the teacher creates a mirror, and mirrors can startle people. The teacher's visibility to others may itself be startling initially, for as Krupnick (personal communication, 1989) noted long ago during a graduate course class discussion, teaching is public work done in isolation. Documentation removes the teacher's professional isolation and carries her work out into the community.

Developing Visual Literacy in the Familiar Culture of Bulletin Boards

First attempts at documentation generally reflect the visual culture of a teacher's context. Many teachers are accustomed to decorative frames around bulletin boards purchased from education supply houses; or bright colored backgrounds of construction paper; or stickers, magnets, cut-outs, or other features that they consider appealing. If a teacher's center or school is accustomed to such displays, her documentation will likely have the same visual sensibility. These elements have nothing to do with the documentation, yet it may take time for a teacher to see that they clutter the message that she might wish to communicate. With bright colors, multiple images, and much text, the result may appear messy and muddled, but a teacher may love it because it is hers and done the way she knows.

In Western culture, the most sophisticated and effective visual design often occurs in advertising. People may see this sophistication constantly yet remain unaware of how to plan visual graphics to be read effectively by others. The teacher who is learning to document may have yet to develop an understanding of visual literacy and how the human eye reads images. Teachers' first documentation often makes no use of white space around the edges of visuals, reflecting a lack of understanding of how the eye focuses. The teacher may also have yet to develop an understanding of the way that text and image, or text and audio, or video and still image interact to create something more communicative than is possible with use of a single medium (Garrett-Petts & Lawrence, 1996; Moran & Tegano, 2005).

Making Learning Visible: From Recounting Activity to Conceptualizing Purpose

If Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation is teacher research—inquiry into children's understanding for the purpose of considering what to teach, what to learn, how to facilitate curriculum—none of the three aspects of the teacher's progression mentioned thus far is at the heart of it. Nonetheless, teachers must be allowed to be beginners at documentation, to take time with the first aspects of the progression, and to approach the process in ways that connect to their own practices. They can begin only at their own beginning points, tolerating them and understanding that these first steps take them toward something that they don't yet know how to do but that lead to their own knowing. Teachers' first attempts will bear a close resemblance to what they already know; they cannot see further possibilities until they have permitted themselves some steps into the terrain.

Pedagogical documentation is a route for teaching teachers, for professional development. Whose learning is made visible in documentation? The children's, of course. Yet in the spaces at the edges of pedagogical documentation is evidence of the teacher's thinking. The first task of the teacher educator, then, is to encourage teachers to try documentation, to recognize their first attempts as beginnings, placeholders of sorts, and to have an acute sense of timing about when to support teachers in seeing that there is much more with which they can engage—to enjoy, study, interpret, plan, and carry forward—that will make teaching unbelievably exciting.

The following example shows how one teacher made the tremendous leap in understanding from the three beginning aspects discussed above to making explicit children's theories about their world so they could be studied and interpreted.

Preschool teacher Victoria Guyevskey (2005) documented a project in emergent curriculum for her master's thesis while working with 3- to 5-year-olds in a child care setting where ideas from Reggio were being explored. The children had become enchanted with animals of the African plains—lions, cheetahs, zebras, and monkeys. Victoria, with equal excitement, documented children's play, recorded their conversations as they drew, and set up in the hallway an expanding gallery of documentation that showed the children's activity. Viewers could see data from a child's visit to the Toronto zoo with a report on cheetahs; the children's plasticene figures of lions, tigers, and monkeys; and photos of children creating a reconstruction of a wildlife habitat.

One of Victoria's posters was bright orange, the four corners cut off at angles to form a plaque shape (see Figure 1). It was titled "Wild Rumpus" and included some 15 photographs, several text passages from the children's conversations, and magnetic stickers of animals placed here and there.



Figure 1. Poster of "Wild Rumpus."

Knowing Victoria to be an open-minded student able to look beyond her current thinking, I asked if she would like me to "read" the document to show her what an outsider saw. I told her where my eye was drawn—to the angled corners, the large title—and how my eyes wandered around the photo images a little dizzily, drawn off by the magnetic animal figures. From the clearly stated title positioned in the middle and the many photos of children in animal costumes, I thought it was about children pretending to be wild animals, making lots of noise and crawling around. "No, no, don't you see?" said Victoria. "It's about Michael. He thinks monkeys are stronger than lions, and during their play he understood they aren't!"

She told me how several boys argued for days over whether lions or monkeys were stronger, with Michael insisting monkeys were stronger. Just before the episode displayed on the poster, the children had watched a videotape of animals. Halfway through the video, they began to crawl, roar, and pretend to be animals, at which point Victoria invited them to continue their play with animal costumes she had prepared in a room close by. Michael chose a monkey. The children in the lion costumes chased him, and as they closed in around him, he became puzzled. When one boy removed his lion costume, Michael quickly put it on. As she told the story, Victoria pointed to a photo of Michael surrounded by "lions" and then one of him putting on the lion costume. "I would never have seen that, if you hadn't been here to tell me," I said.

The gap between what she thought her documentation showed and what a knowledgeable reader saw was evident. When I asked what the angled corners and magnetic animals were for, she confessed she just liked them. But these visual elements distracted the reader's eye from focusing on what she wanted the reader to see, and 15 images were too many; the reader did not know where to look. Victoria had created documentation with added decorative elements recounting an experience, but she was trying to show what she thought was a shift in a child's theory. She thought that Michael had a theory that monkeys were the strongest animal and that through the role-playing, stimulated by the video, he understood that lions might be stronger.

She and I discussed what photos and text she would need to show this interpretation of his thinking and how everything else needed to be removed to keep that focus. I also reminded her of our colleague Karyn Callaghan's comment that Loris Malaguzzi, a founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, believed that a title should be "a condensed thesis" (Davoli, 2003).

Victoria's Reflection. I remember being disappointed by the effect that my panel produced in Carol Anne. She, of all people, should see what I am trying to say. Little did I realize that I had done everything in my power to prevent her, as well as everyone else, from reading my panel in the way that I intended it to be read.... I was focused on collecting data through observation, with the intention to analyze it later, so when the next link unexpectedly appeared before my eyes, I rejoiced. That link was Michael hurriedly pulling on a lion's costume the moment it became available.... I felt an instant urge to share it with the world. I created a poster, somehow forgetting my point: I mixed unfinished stories into the panel as well, naming it "Wild Rumpus."...

Even though I knew that Carol Anne was right, I remember feeling quite uncomfortable after that discussion. I thought something I had created was about to be ripped apart into something less joyful and attractive. It would look plain, institutional, and too serious. It would be stripped of all the happiness I felt in sharing the experience with the world. Happiness expressed through bright colors, decorative features, and plenty of data. I remember forcing myself to put emotions aside and focus on making the panel reader friendly, following rules of visual literacy. I tried several layouts—the captions kept getting shorter and more concise, and the font was carefully chosen to facilitate reading, until it finally started to feel right. Surprisingly, I loved the new panel. I wanted to read it over and over, as opposed to merely absorbing the bright colors of the previous version. It finally worked, but I remember it as a painful process, made possible through a collaborative effort.

Victoria's new documentation panel used six photographs with some focused text to show her perspective on the children's conflicting ideas (see Figure 2). She titled it "Pros' of a Conflict" (signifying positive resolution to

differences between children's ideas about animals).

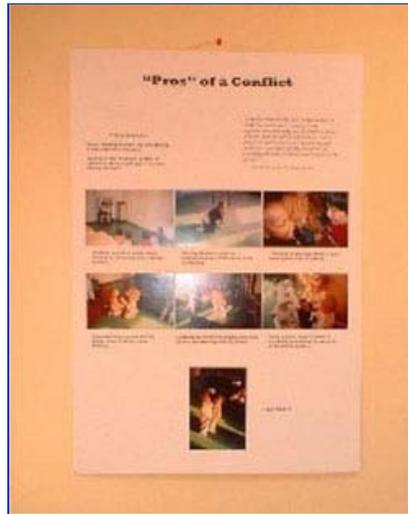


Figure 2. Victoria's revised panel representing her theory about a change in a child's thinking, which she titled "Pros of a Conflict."

Her new panel focused on making explicit an example of children's thinking about animals and her own thinking about how one child's ideas seemed to have changed. (We are not concerned at this point with whether the thinking is accurate or not.)

Victoria's documentation contains her hypothesis about Michael, developed from observation of his play and previous comments and based on all that she knows about him from the months-long duration of their project. It is at this point in the process of learning to document that the teacher's intentionality begins to become visible. Her thinking about what the children are doing is such that she can make inferences about children's theories and express them with the images and text. Inferences are logical deductions based on limited but presumably accurate information. The accuracy or "truthfulness" of an inference can be confirmed only by redundant information.

The teacher's visual literacy must also be sufficiently developed to convey ideas clearly through the documentation; then she can begin to organize the data and representations of her inferences on the panel. Because the data are now outside her head—the panel is an evidentiary warrant for her story—it can be shared with others, to see whether they have other interpretations. Discussion among teachers about documentation can sharpen their thinking about children's understanding and about what to do to expand and deepen it.

Documentation as a Vehicle for Study with Others: Children's Theories about Starfish

Noula Berdoussis (2006) was teaching grade one when she embarked on an emergent curriculum project and its documentation as her master's thesis. Noula's class had moved from an interest in playing store with a basket of shells to an engagement with "sea creatures," especially starfish. One child had said, "If you cut a starfish arm off, it grows again; starfish can never die." The children were interested in how starfish are born and how they re-grow a ray, which they called "its arm."

Noula worked in a "high needs" school with children considered to have low literacy and numeracy skills. Yet as this project developed, she said, "I am overwhelmed with the possibilities and the emerging data. My heart and mind are racing. I am excited all over again as I see the learning in front of me" (Berdoussis, 2006, p. 23). As she shared the documentation that she developed with the children, she commented, "Instant curiosity and wonder is the only way to describe their initial contact with documentation" (p. 44).

Yet after she created her first documentation panel, which included a transcript from class discussion, photos of children in activity, and a brief teacher commentary, she found herself asking, "Now, did I make learning visible?" She described the panel as cluttered and unfocused. I perceive her as a highly reflective and analytical teacher; responses such as hers lead me to believe that the aspects of learning to document described above—developing habits of documenting, publicly recounting activities, playing with elements of visual literacy—are necessary. Noula knew intellectually what she wanted to do, but wanting to do it did not mean that she could do it. The creation of documentation builds from simpler elements toward more complex functioning. Noula asked herself what she wanted to make visible. What she wanted to make visible, she realized, was the children's theories about how the starfish "re-grew its arm."

Devon, for example, believed that starfish have bones, and he had taken most of the other children with him in his belief. As another child said, "How else could they move?" Devon imagined that the cut ray re-grows because "the bone pushes out and it grows into a leg." Andrew repeatedly said, "They don't got bones" (Berdoussis, 2006, p. 85). He insisted they were "jelly" and thought, "Maybe the skin pulls out" to re-grow a

ray. Noula wondered how—if she intended to “teach with questions” rather than simply supplying answers that the children might or might not understand—she could support them in inventing different possibilities.

She created what she called “documentation strips,” one-fourth the width of standard Bristol board (see Figure 3). On these narrow strips, she illustrated different children’s theories about how the starfish ray “regrows” with two to four selected photographs and a brief passage of text from her transcripts of conversations. For example, during one small group conversation, Devon expressed two theories of how starfish were born. Noula highlighted each of his theories on a documentation strip. She included portions of conversations, photographs of starfish, children’s drawings, clay work, and paintings. She added her own reflections on the children’s reasoning and asked further questions that emerged from the documentation.



Figure 3. Examples of Noula's documentation strips.

Noula used these documentation strips like a deck of playing cards, selecting them for specific purposes. She found that constructing a strip to show a theory was more manageable for her than a larger format and encouraged her to focus her ideas, thus creating clearer documentation. She recombined strips to use in various classroom activities, creating for herself and the children a flexible set of tools to scaffold thinking.

In one instance, for example, Noula used several documentation strips as background material for a conversation among children who held conflicting theories about how the ray “re-grows.” She wanted to provoke them to confront their differences and see if they could think of other possibilities. The conversation went on a long time. Andrew, insisting that starfish did not have bones, thought perhaps “the water moves the starfish.” Devon then said:

Andrew gave me an idea. Me and Andrew's idea. Maybe only the arms and legs got bones. Maybe wind pushes water in the [middle of the] starfish.

While his new idea showed some confusion, he had shifted away from his bone theory to consider other forces (water, wind). At the end of the conversation, Devon said, “Maybe Andrew is right, they don't got bones” (Berdoussis, 2006, p. 72). His theory had changed again.

In Noula's description, it is evident how the layers of her activity—creating documentation that makes theories explicit, revisiting that documentation with children, planning what theories to bring together for discussion, and fostering lengthy collaborative discussion—intersect to encourage children to think more deeply. Through this process, children may become intrigued by what happens in the world around them and want to do research to test their ideas. One of the children, for example, thought the “suckers” on the bottom of the starfish were poisonous: this hypothesis was tested when the children went on a field trip to a store that sold starfish and held some in their hands.

Noula's Reflection. During the course of our long-term project on starfish, documentation emerged as a tool in guiding curriculum, suggesting what should come next. The “next” was never clear or predictable, and it was only after a conversation had occurred, was transcribed and later studied, that I as teacher/researcher could select from the children's evolving theories and then make them visible through new documentation strips. I began to view each strip as a window into the children's thinking. Each time a documentation strip was “done,” I realized that in essence it was incomplete, for the next conversation with the children would always open further possibilities as theories were abandoned, reworked, and/or expanded, as the children worked to clarify their thinking. The documentation influenced my decisions as to what theories kept recurring, and thus should be further discussed, and what questions I could bring to the next group conversation to gently guide or provoke the children's thinking so they could come closer to an understanding of “how starfish are born.” Each documentation strip was a visible “trace” of our journey of discovery—a journey that didn't have a clear path, as with standardized curriculum, but was shaped by children and teacher.

Furthermore, to make documentation an effective tool in guiding curriculum, I had to ensure that documentation was current and the children had time to study the new documentation. I posted

documentation strips shortly after our conversation, but we did not discuss them formally until a week later. The waiting period between when the strips went up and when they were formally discussed in the small group offered children an incubation period. It was the incubation period that allowed children to think and reflect about their learning as it was presented to them through windows of documentation. During this wait-time, children could respond to the documentation when they were ready to do so. The incubation period allowed children the freedom to re-experience a moment in their learning or in a classmate's learning, and it opened the possibility of enriching and stimulating future discussion. Also, it provided the opportunity for children to represent and re-represent their theories using clay, paint, and drawing. Documentation strips became a natural, living part of the classroom environment, and new documentation always created a surge of excitement (Berdoussis, 2006, pp. 92-93).

Most exciting during our project were the "surprises" that emerged and how those "surprises" carved the paths of our study. In order for a "surprise" to occur, for example the discovery that the cut-off arm of a starfish [can sometimes] re-grow into a new starfish, I had to accept uncertainty in my teacher planning. What comes next grows from the children as the teacher/researcher practices a pedagogy of listening and makes the listening visible through the documentation. The documentation supports the "surprises" and makes them visible so they can be revisited and thus slowly carve the path of the project. During our project, the children's continued fascination with how starfish are born and how they re-grow their "arm" or ray became the focus. This fascination led to the amazing discovery that starfish have a dual reproductive ability. Each "surprise," evolving theory, or shift in thinking was captured through the documentation.

Concluding Remarks

Two important levels of thought are made evident in strong pedagogical documentation. The teacher presents data in ways that show others what children have been thinking, feeling, or valuing. At the same time, the teacher selects material and composes a display that expresses her hypotheses about the children's experiences and ideas.

In the strongest documentation, such as the famous Reggio series of six photographs that compose the "Laura and the watch" episode (see Edwards & Rinaldi, 2009), the data are shown in an absolutely compelling way. The sharper the teacher's thinking about the data and her purposes in sharing it, the clearer the message of the documentation.

When Victoria first read a draft of this article, she said:

I felt thirsty for more tips on how to do it well. I anticipate that beginners will wonder why do it at all. How do you practice a pedagogy of listening, through documentation, with curriculum documents demanding "students will learn...?"

She suggested providing ideas for ways that teachers might launch the process of documenting. A few simple ideas can act as entry points for teachers beginning pedagogical documentation:

1. Choose one tool for documenting, such as a digital camera, a video or audio recorder, or a pen and pad of paper. Get used to having the tool available when you want it.
2. Watch for and document ordinary moments of learning, the sorts of events and child thinking you would expect to see occur day by day, year after year, yet in ways specific to particular, unique children. For instance, Lana O'Reilly, a kindergarten teacher, observed a boy examining a book on dinosaurs, turning one page back and forth many times. She watched closely and saw that he was looking at an image of the skeleton of a dinosaur on one page and a full image of a dinosaur on the other. She hypothesized that he was wondering if the pictures showed the same animal. Teachers who are learning to document often wonder how they will know what they might want to "follow" in the classroom before it has happened. Experienced teachers say they learn to sense when and where such potential moments of learning may occur; for example, Virginia Ogada, who works with toddlers, says she can tell from the children's intense focus of concentration that a moment for documentation may be taking place.
3. Choose from several such documentation moments one occasion that you will try to make intelligible to others via more polished documentation, selecting the strongest documentation to make your point. Try naming the learning yourself by giving it a title after documenting. Try doing documentation with a colleague. Lay out what you think is happening as simply as possible and remove extraneous material. Share the documentation with several colleagues and invite them into a dialogue engagement (Wong, 2006) during which they tell you what they perceive and how they interpret the documentation. See how the discussion opens up surprises and new possibilities.

What we have shared here are early steps we experienced in approaching an understanding of Reggio-inspired documentation. Teachers who are comfortable with the first three aspects of Reggio-inspired pedagogical documentation discussed previously—having a habit of documenting, being comfortable with going public, and

developing a more sophisticated level of visual literacy—can more readily create documentation that reflects a clear purpose and expresses children's and adults' theories in ways that contribute most effectively to teaching and learning.

It is not clear to us how the educators of Reggio Emilia use their documentation or the processes of vetting and reconstruction of documented material that they ultimately share internationally. We interpret the cultural products of Reggio Emilia—books, videos, presentations—through the lens of our own cultural preferences and dispositions. But such interpretations are creative—something from outside is taken into our own culture of teaching and adapted, and out of that transformation, something new is created within our own culture. This new creation may or may not bear any resemblance to its original in Reggio; in fact, we can expect it to be quite different. Reggio educators might well look with some perplexity at other cultures' interpretations of their ideas. Our good fortune is that they have shown the extraordinary grace of sharing their ideas and letting them go, not trying to control them, but rather attempting different ways to articulate their experience for other languages, other cultures, other histories. They and others (Davis & Sumara, 2006) challenge us to see locations of learning across multiple domains—in individuals, in groups, classrooms, disciplinary domains, communities. Such an expansive vision carries educators into new realms of thought and action, with pedagogical documentation as process and tool for research and design of a curriculum that listens to children.

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Making Learning Visible Through Pedagogical Documentation

Written by Dr. Carol Anne Wien

York University

“Documentation is not about finding answers, but generating questions.”

(Filippini in Turner & Wilson, 2010, p. 9)

We have always documented as a society – from cash register slips to medical records, family photo albums to report cards. But pedagogical documentation offers more than a record. It offers a process for listening to children, for creating artifacts from that listening, and for studying with others what children reveal about their competent and thoughtful views of the world. To listen to children, we document living moments with images, video, artifacts, written or audio recordings of what children have said, or other digital traces. These documented traces of lived experience, when shared with others, become a tool for thinking together. To hear others’ thoughts makes us realize there are many viewpoints.

Pedagogical documentation goes beyond the foundation of the developmental continuum to welcome both children’s perspectives and our study of their views. Here, for example, we see a child outside on a playground looking in a window. She has recently moved up from a toddler unit to the preschool room. She sees her former caregiver through the glass and puts her hand up to the window, as does her caregiver, the two of them matching palms, one large and



Photo credit: Ellen Brown

one small, through the glass. What does this moment tell us about this child's reality, her social and emotional world? What does it tell us about her former caregiver? What does it tell us about the person who took the image? When we lift such moments out of the flow of time, we can hold them still, study them, and consider a thoughtful, caring response.

*P*edagogical documentation was developed in the 1970s and 1980s by the educators of the infant-toddler centers and preschools of the municipality of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy and has spread world-wide (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2012). It supports educators in both including child development in their view but also looking beyond development to capture broader aspects of experience for reflection. Pedagogical documentation opens us up to relations and meanings that we have not thought to look for: this expansion of what we might learn to know and interpret is its gift to us.

How pedagogical documentation supports early childhood settings

Pedagogical documentation invites us to be curious and to wonder with others about the meaning of events to children. We become co-learners together; focusing on children's expanding understanding of the world as we interpret that understanding with others. We document not merely to record activities, but to placehold events so that we might study and interpret their meaning together. Out of that slowed-down process of teacher research, we have the potential to discover thoughtful, caring, innovative responses that expand our horizons. We discover what we did not yet know how to see. Pedagogical documentation inserts a new phase of thinking and wondering together between the act of observation and the act of planning a response. Rather than looking for what is known through assessment, pedagogical documentation invites the creativity, surprise and delight of educators who discover the worlds of children.

To see children as researchers working with others to make sense of the world, and educators as researchers bringing their curiosity to generate theories about children's social, intellectual, physical, and emotional strategies of communication is to view both children and educators in a new way – as participating citizens engaging their cultural surroundings in their full humanity: this process allows our humanity as thinking, feeling beings a richer place in our life as professional educators.

Learning to create pedagogical documentation

Educators learn new habits of mind in order to document (Wien, Guyevskey & Berdoussis, 2011). The first step is to make documenting a daily habit, in an ongoing process of inquiry. Learning to have the tools we need close at hand can take months of practice. Learning to choose what to document, because we see potential meaning

arising for children, requires practice, judgment and reflection. Here for example, an educator has noticed a boy bringing a pipe over to the bead stringing table. The educator is curious, and snaps a photo and notes these questions: “What does Miles want to know? What does he already know? Is this a place to begin a conversation with Miles about pipes?”

As the educator continues to observe, the child enjoys sending beads down the pipe and the educator notes: “Miles joyfully explores the combination of beads and pipes. He is able to peer down the length of the tube and see the bead he has inserted. He hears it skitter its way along the pipe” (Avery, Callaghan & Wien, forthcoming).

A second step in creating documentation is the willingness to share what we have noted and our curiosities with others. Educators “go public”, willing to show others their documentation and to be interested in others’ responses to it. We hold onto this stance of curiosity. What does this experience mean to this child? To other children? To parents/caregivers? To other educators? As we widen our frame of reference for reflecting on experiences, and share our practice with children, families, and colleagues, we strengthen partnerships, and open ourselves to new understandings.

Alongside these developing interests, educators develop visual literacy skills, gaining understanding of how the eye reads information. Removing clutter, selecting just the images that show what we are noticing, and offering documentation in amounts that can be absorbed by children, or parents/caregivers, visitors, and colleagues takes considerable practice. Educators grasp that documentation for children is highly focused with child-friendly text. For parents and visitors, documentation may be at adult height, with expanded text and commentary.

A leap in understanding occurs when educators grasp that documentation is more than a record or retelling of an experience that shows what children said and did – though this is indeed the starting point. Documentation offers insight into children’s thinking, feeling, and worldview. When we make their ideas and working theories about the world visible to others, we may then study those views with others to broaden our perspectives and our responsiveness. With Miles, we see a child delighted by his discoveries about beads coursing down a pipe and his educator notes: “there is something of beauty in setting a thing in motion and watching it go” (Avery, Callaghan & Wien, forthcoming).

It is when we have made children’s thoughts, feelings, and values visible that we can study the meaning of events to children, offering our thoughts collaboratively so that our own understanding widens, deepens, and takes in multiple perspectives. This process of group study of educators’ attempts to make children’s thinking and feeling visible is what makes documentation pedagogical. Documentation becomes pedagogical because the group study of documentation teaches educators about ways that children learn, and



Photo credit: Jason Avery

ways that adults read children's learning. Our intent is to deepen empathy, to construct ethical relationships (Bath, 2012; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2006; Rinaldi, 2006).

What will we make of pedagogical documentation in Ontario? What will it become in our minds, hearts and hands, as we strengthen partnerships with families, value diversity and inclusion of all and support children's right to an empathetic childhood in which educators are willing to look at the meaning of life for our youngest citizens?

Questions to ask when studying documentation

- What are we trying to understand? What are we asking pedagogical documentation to help us look for?
- What do we see when we look closely and attentively at the documentation?
- What questions does this looking raise for us? What do we wonder about?
- What are our working theories about what we see?
- What does the documentation reveal about children's working theories, feelings, attachments and interests?

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A Study of Hands: Chicago Commons Explores Reg-

by Karen Haigh, Diane Rodriguez, and Gigi Schroeder

Chicago Commons is a 107-year-old non-profit, social service agency that chooses to work with low-income, inner city communities of Chicago. Its Child Development Program offers care and education for just less than 1,000 children from infancy through school-age at six different locations. Types of programs include Early Head Start, Head Start, Subsidized Child Care, State Pre-kindergarten, and a Family Child Care Network.

RATIONALE FOR EXPLORING THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH

Exploring Reggio for Chicago Commons was about new possibilities. It was about offering staff opportunities to become more reflective thinkers and facilitators who could support children in becoming problem solvers, decision makers, negotiators, collaborators, and good communicators. Most of our children come from communities lacking in resources and lacking in possibilities. The Reggio approach suggests new possibilities — possibilities of developing skills, knowledge, and attitudes in children that could help them become more competent adults and life-long learners.

A secondary rationale for exploring Reggio has evolved over time — this approach demonstrates a powerfully strong and

unconditional respect for children and their ideas. In addition, exploring the Reggio approach invites and encourages adults, including teaching staff, directors, family workers, and even parents to be thinkers, creators, communicators, and collaborators as they become more thoughtful and reflective.

DEVELOPING STUDY TOPICS

Over the past three years, Commons has developed a flexible framework for approaching the inquiry process with children in the form of what we call studies. We chose to use the term study because it tends to promote the idea of wondering and exploring as opposed to following a grand theme driven only by the adult's agenda. We spent time discussing an older article from *Journal of Education* called "Building from Children's Strengths" by Patricia Carini (1986). It discusses that the teacher's role as a facilitator is to imagine future/possible experiences or activities while trying to stay with the spirit of the child's interests, feelings, and areas of pursuit.

Within this process teachers spend a great deal of time observing, listening, and documenting children's ideas, feelings, and experiences. Teachers then meet weekly with a team from the site consisting of a site director, a family worker, and



Karen Haigh has been the child development director at Chicago Commons for over 13 years, operating six child development centers within inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago. The program has 170 staff members who provide

care and education to almost 1,000 children. Since 1993, under the direction of Karen Haigh, the Chicago Commons Child Development program has become especially involved in and committed to exploring and interpreting the Reggio Emilia Approach to early childhood education.



Diane Rodriguez is a family worker at Chicago Commons New City. She was once enrolled as a child, served

as a parent volunteer, and is now a staff member. Her experiences at Chicago Commons have provided her with insight to the many dynamics of the child development programs.



Gigi Schroeder is the studio coordinator for Chicago Commons. She has been involved within the field of art education

for the past ten years. She uses her past experiences in visual arts education to support teachers, children, and parents in the learning process.

either a studio or education coordinator. At these weekly team meetings, the group views the documentation of children's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in order to interpret interests and motivations.

The dynamics of the different roles within each team provides for many perspectives. Some ideas stem from those who work directly with children and others who make connections to parents and the community as a whole. Every team member has unique qualities that come forth in reflection and dialogue and has his/her own interpretive abilities. Plans are made to support, challenge, and extend children's interests and experiences.

We began a new endeavor that involved choosing some topics to study agency-wide. Some of the reasons we began to look into research/study topics are:

1. To pursue the idea of teachers as researchers.
2. To provide a structure and direction for staff and parents. This structure of study topics offers a framework to hang onto and provides a sense of direction.
3. Using study topics offers teams the opportunity and challenge to study something that is relevant to children, staff, and parents.
4. Exploring these study topics together enables us to share our action or practical research with others in the field of education.

Teams are encouraged to individually explore, study, and research additional topics that may emerge with a particular group in a classroom or center. The following is a list of study topics for the last year:

- Materials/identity and community
- How to ask children questions and have a conversation with them
- The beginning and end of the day for children
- Where should/can children play in the classroom
- Holidays
- Posing a problem/how children make decisions
- How children see roles differently
- Exchanges with other communities
- Letters
- Numbers
- Nature
- How things work
- Communication
- Social phenomenon
- Chicago/neighborhoods

THE EVOLUTION OF A STUDY OF HANDS

In September our Pre-Kindergarten classroom at Chicago Commons New City began exploring drawing materials. The teachers introduced many items that were new to the children such as charcoal and Conti pencils, china markers, and oil pastels. By paying close attention to the dialogue and interchanges that children expressed while using each drawing material, the teachers noticed that children displayed a great interest in their hands. The children began tracing or drawing their hands and using the materials directly on them. One child used charcoal to color his whole hand and then used it as the drawing material rather than the pencil. From these observations by the teachers, we began to discuss ways in which to pursue and extend the children's interests during our team meeting. Ideas were discussed that incorporated the study of identity and how the materials could enhance the identity of the child.

The classroom teachers wanted to provide children with many opportunities to study and explore hands in a variety of

Commons slowly and gradually has been exploring some of the elements of the Reggio Emilia Approach since 1993. They are as follows:

- An image of the child as capable, ready to learn, and wanting to socialize;
- An environment that provokes and supports a sense of wonder, experimentation, thinking, socialization, and connection with nature and culture;
- Use of documentation to see, reflect, and revisit ideas, feelings, experiences, and the learning process of children and adults;
- Use of the visual arts as a means to express and represent experiences and understanding;
- Use of observation and listening in order to promote emergent curriculum and in-depth studies based on the interests and motivations of children, as well as teachers;
- Use of collaboration among children and adults;
- Parent partnerships where teachers and parents work together and share different perspectives; and
- Organizational structure and professional development that allows for vision, dialogue, flexible planning, experiences, revisiting, and reflecting.

BEGINNINGS WORKSHOP

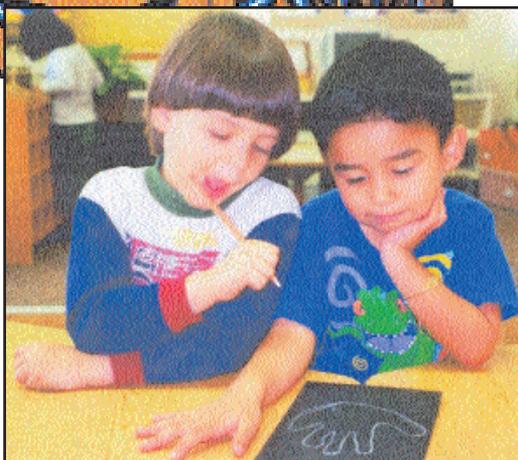


situations. They used different contexts, techniques, and tools to study the children's hands. In outdoor experiences, as well as indoors, they projected their hands to make them larger and encountered their hands in multiple situations. The

situations, the more they began to see the differences and similarities among the other students. As the team revisited drawings throughout the duration of the study, a progression of the children's drawings became obvious. The drawings became more detailed and children expressed much of their identity within these details. They added identifying marks into their hand drawings and revisited prior experiences connected to those lines. The progression of the study moved into the children noticing other classmates' hands and they began to express an interest in drawing a friend's hand. During this process, the child whose hands were chosen to be drawn would critique the drawing and point out details that his friend may have forgotten.

The team discussed the possibilities of connections with parents in relation to the study and decided to extend the experience into a parent meeting. The parents were introduced to some of the materials that children were using, and they explored with charcoal in ways similar to their children. Parents were challenged to use the charcoal to discover attributes of the materials as they filled a large paper with as many lines as possible. The parents also used the material to speak or communicate an idea as the children often do. Parents were asked to draw their hands, and they compared and noticed similarities and differences with each other. Some of the parents noticed unique lines, shapes, or the size of their hands. They, too, discovered identity in their drawings.

The team also began to discuss that this thought of identity was greater than the children and their parents; it also connected to our communities. The children and parents are part of the communities that



teachers also paid attention to those children who found drawing their hands challenging. The teachers found that pointing out the lines and shapes within children's hands and using the light tables to trace photos of their hands gave children new possibilities to studying and adding detail. The teachers asked the children what their favorite things were to do with their hands and took photographs of them demonstrating this activity:

Cara (teacher): *What is your favorite thing to do with your hands?*

Joel: *To make a pumpkin. Make a circle.*

Leonardo: *To paint my hands.*

The photographs were placed on a table and the children were able to notice and recall the uniqueness of their hands. The more the children encountered their hands in new and familiar

they live in and so they are also a part of the identity of the community. First, the teachers asked the children what people in the community used their hands for:

Monica (teacher's aide): *What do you think other people use their hands for?*

Isabel: *They drive with their hands. Daddies use the keys to open the door.*

Nelson: *People use their hands to plant seeds, to buy stuff, and feed their children.*

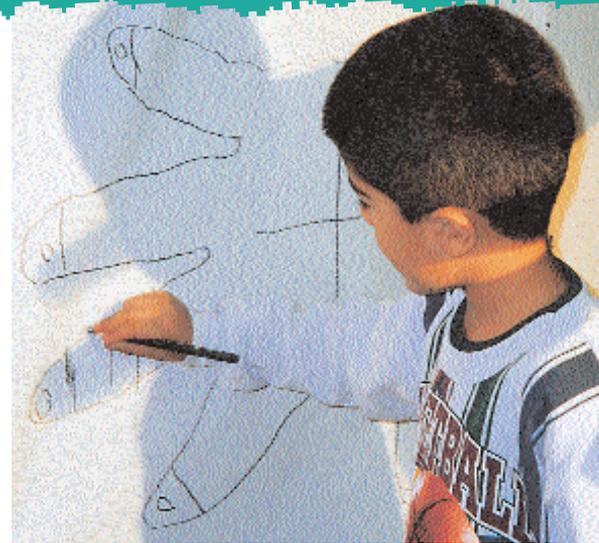
The teachers planned a walking field trip to visit local places of business that children connected to. These were places that the children frequently visited with their parents or passed on the way to school. In some cases they were their parents' places of employment. The children visited a bakery, a restaurant, and Goldblatt's (a neighborhood department store). They were asked to focus on what people were using their hands for.

After each visit, the teachers would return to the center and dialogue with the children about their experiences. They communicated that the people used their hands to produce items or in ways that were related to their professions. Some children created interpretations of the way people use their hands using clay or drawing materials, and identified the uniqueness of each person they encountered.

Again, the team collaborated and invited the parents to a meeting. But this time, they explored along side their children. As the parents arrived at the meeting, the classroom teachers photographed their hands. The roles of teaching were reversed when the children led and demonstrated for their parents how to draw hands. They also recalled and problem-solved challenges independently by walking parents over to the light table or using other techniques that they had previously used in their classrooms. At the end of the meeting, the parents were asked to identify their children's hands from photographs that were laid out on the light table. We hypothesized prior to the meeting that this would be a difficult task because many of the hands appeared very similar. We discovered that the parents had a very strong connection to the identity of their children's hands and many could describe them detailing the size of their fingers, the amount of hairs, and lines or marks.

Through this exploration of hands and identity, we, as staff, realized that this idea goes further than a description of what we look like, further than our names, and our hobbies. It is about valuing differences in people and identifying things that we also have in common. Our identity is what makes us unique and individual, but also connects us with a group. In the process of this learning experience we began to think

beyond identifying children by their appearances or names and challenged ourselves to find new ways to identify a child's identity. We all have hands and each hand is a unique representation of an individual.



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Using Beginnings Workshop to Train Teachers by Kay Albrecht

What study topics appeal to your program?: The journey described by these teachers began with identifying topics to explore. Do any of these study topics interest your teachers? If not, make your own list. Send teachers back to their classrooms to research children's interests by observing and listening to children. Then, encourage teachers to pursue a topic and see what happens (see ideas for developing study topics, p. 42).

Setting the stage: These teachers used Carini's article as a discussion springboard. Share a copy of this article with staff and see what happens in your discussion.

When will we get this done?: At a staff meeting, brainstorm strategies for increasing the amount of time teachers can spend observing. Choose some of the ideas you identify and try them. Record actual observation time on the classroom calendar as a strategy for assessing effectiveness. If the ones selected don't work, try again.

What are children learning?: In the US, pressure continues to mount for teaching accountability. Analyze the hand project to identify what children learned as practice for sharing skill and process knowledge with families and others.

Families have hands, too!: Teachers found many ways to include families in the hand project. Do any of their ideas spark family participation ideas for the study topics you identified for your program?

The challenge of assessment: scaling-up the Reggio Emilia approach in the USA?

Lella Gandini, United States Liaison for the Dissemination of the Reggio Emilia Approach, Reggio Children, Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

The distinctive approach to early childhood education that was developed in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia is known and admired by many educators around the world. Yet, given its renown, the number of schools practising a Reggio-inspired approach is arguably smaller than some would expect. In this article Lella Gandini examines the challenges faced in assessing the Reggio approach in the United States – notably the demands for measurable proof of results.

Over the past three decades the early childhood educational experience of the Italian city of Reggio Emilia, population 170,000, has created a worldwide movement. It has inspired educators in a variety of cultural, political and economic contexts, testifying to both the high quality and the adaptability of this approach. Since I published the first article about the Reggio Emilia approach in the USA in 1984, I have encountered many hundreds of teachers at presentations and conferences and visited many schools inspired by the principles of the Reggio philosophy and practice. Interest continues to increase.

Yet this story of success also presents a puzzle for some people: why, they ask, has the Reggio approach not spread even more widely among schools in the USA, given the high regard in which it is held? Three main factors can be identified. The first is that Reggio educators have purposely not set out to encourage their way of working to be copied. Unlike some other educational approaches, such as Montessori, there is no prescribed written definition of what constitutes a Reggio approach, and no way to be officially certified as a Reggio Emilia school. Integral to the

Reggio philosophy is a deep respect for place, culture and social diversity, such that the overall approach is not codified into a rigid orthodoxy or intended to be instituted and observed in precisely the same manner wherever it may be found.

On the contrary, the local topography, climate, ecology and human history should be considered fundamental raw materials for children's exploration. Dictating how educators should organise a curriculum built around the local environment, or how children should follow a set sequence of developing one specific skill before moving on to the prescribed 'next step', has no place in the Reggio approach. It is, rather, a philosophy to be adapted in a way that respects new cultural and social contexts. There are many ways to create a Reggio-inspired school without compromising fundamental principles of the approach.

A second factor has to do with the question of 'cultural knots' – a term used by Ben Mardell in the book *Making Learning Visible*, published by Harvard's Project Zero and Reggio Children in 2001 (Giudici *et al.*, 2001). Cultural knots are deep-rooted ways

There is a widespread and mistaken view that the Reggio approach is incompatible with assessments of children's progress.

of thinking and doing that may be difficult to challenge and change. To take one example, in US culture time is often divided into strictly scheduled chunks, with educators thinking of their days as fragmented into blocks of 30 minutes. The Reggio approach, in contrast, offers a much more flexible attitude towards how the day develops, with learning experiences typically running over considerably longer time periods. Educators in other cultures may need to untie this and other 'cultural knots' before they are able to apply the Reggio philosophy in their respective contexts.

Thirdly – and this is the main subject of this article – there is the question of measurement and assessment. While private providers in the pre-primary sector have substantial flexibility to adopt the approaches they choose, educational providers in the USA who rely on public funding must demonstrably meet defined standards to maintain that funding. Assessments of these standards have a positive intent, namely to ensure that children are learning. But they can also generate fear of trying anything new. Teachers may understandably focus on ensuring that children know what they need to pass tests, often to the detriment of other learning.

There is a widespread and mistaken view that the Reggio approach is incompatible with assessments of children's progress. As this article will show, numerous examples testify to the fact that Reggio-inspired schools can

pass assessments required to maintain public funding. It will then also describe how researchers are working to develop new methods to assess children, with the potential to persuade more schools to adopt the Reggio approach.

Reggio-inspired schools and assessment

How can the Reggio approach – featuring children's construction of learning through inquiry and expressive language – be combined with a curriculum that demands specific outcomes and assessments that require demonstrations that children are learning according to defined standards? Several schools and even school systems have found satisfactory answers.

Some of these answers build on a distinguishing feature of Reggio early education: documentation. In-depth documentation reveals the learning paths that children take and the processes they use in their search for meaning. Documentation helps teachers and children reflect on prior experience; listen to each other's ideas, theories, insights, and understandings; and make decisions together about future learning paths. A commonly noted feature of children in Reggio schools is their meta-cognitive understanding of their own learning processes. Documentation does not mean measurement. Documentation consists of 'traces of learning', but no trace of learning

The Reggio Emilia approach

The educational journey of Reggio Emilia started with the spontaneous initiative of parents in the countryside who, at the end of the Second World War, built a school from the ruins with the intention of constructing a better life for their children. At the same time, Italian intellectuals were arguing that schools could and should be an engine for social change. A young elementary-school teacher named Loris Malaguzzi biked into the countryside of Reggio Emilia to see for himself what those parents were up to. What he learned led him to emerge as the intellectual and organisational leader of the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education (Edwards *et al.*, 1998).

In the early 1980s, Malaguzzi created an exhibit on what he and his colleagues were achieving in their city. Viewers flocked to the exhibit, and soon it was on display in Sweden and other European countries. In 1987 a new and enlarged version, 'The Hundred Languages of Children', began to tour the USA. This exhibit led to further versions – such as 'The Wonder of Learning', currently in the USA and in Japan – that travel the world over. The publication in 1993 of a collection of essays on the Reggio approach, also titled *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Edwards *et al.*, 1993), did much to stimulate further interest, as have professional societies such as the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, and

those in many other countries, including for example the Korean Association for the Reggio Emilia Approach and the Ontario Reggio Alliance.

Just before his death in 1994, Malaguzzi established Reggio Children, a non-profit organisation. The Reggio Children website (<http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/index.htm>) offers this succinct statement of fundamentals:

The Reggio Emilia experience fosters children's intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation. Young children are encouraged to explore their environment and express themselves through multiple paths and all their 'languages', including the expressive, communicative, symbolic, cognitive, ethical, metaphorical, logical, imaginative, and relational.

The Reggio approach respects every child's potential for developing competencies. Educators provide multiple choices for exploration, support a collaborative and inquiry-based approach to learning, and favour small-group work and project learning. Two co-teachers work with the same group for 3 years and the school operates on a community-based management method of governance. Education is seen as a communal activity – a sharing of culture through joint exploration by children and adults who construct learning experiences together.

is limited in its interpretation to a standardised unit of measurement. Nonetheless, documentation may

be used as a basis to reveal a child's competences and learning (Fyfe, in press).

For example, Chicago Commons is a charitable organisation that administers programmes for government agencies such as Head Start. Each agency establishes its own standards, although some offer a choice of ways to assess progress. For the Department of Children and Youth Services of Chicago, Chicago Commons' preferred assessment instrument is the 'Work-Sampling System' (wss). The wss asks for evidence, for example, that 4-year-old children show eagerness and curiosity as learners; demonstrate self-confidence; use classroom materials carefully; interact easily with one or more other children; and so on. An assessment is based on regular documentation of children's work that is stored in the portfolios, binders, and journals of the Commons preschool classroom. All this is readily compatible with the Reggio practice of documentation (Scheinfeld *et al.*, 2008).

The same system used for assessment in this disadvantaged environment in Chicago serves equally well in the Fort Hill Infant–Toddler Center and Preschool, a private entity operated by a liberal arts college in Northampton, Massachusetts, serving the children of college professors and others from the community (Lees, 2011).

Chicago Commons personnel treat the various external requirements as challenges; they brainstorm to find creative responses compatible with the main focus of their programme.

A commonly noted feature of children Reggio schools is their meta-cognitive understanding of their own learning processes.

Photo: Courtesy Ochoa Elementary School



Other examples of such responses, including one by a state government, illustrate this point. After the Reggio exhibit visited Columbus, Ohio, in 1993, the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness of the State of Ohio Department of Education undertook a state-wide and multi-year project to organise groups of teachers to study the Reggio approach and to exchange ideas and experiences about implementing it. Together the 42 groups, made up of over 500 teachers, put together an exhibit that brought the fruits of their experience to their fellow teachers and the tax-paying public of the state. These included the attitude they favoured for confronting the issue of having to meet standards:

As a community of learners we know that ... if we embrace standards as guidelines for facilitating meaningful experiences ... then it is possible for school to be a place where emergent curriculum and content standards can coexist and children's research can come alive.

(Shoptaugh *et al.*, 2006)

At the Opal School in Portland, Oregon, a public charter elementary school that includes a preschool, staff members consider standards as resources rather than obstacles. They address the Oregon Academic Content Standards by 'chewing on the big ideas found in the Common Goals, rather than on the bite-sized pieces assigned

to each grade level'. Children at this school score well on the required tests (Graves and MacKay, 2009).

Our final example is the Ochoa Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, just 65 miles from the Mexican border. Children are predominantly from low-income, Spanish-speaking families. Over three harrowing years, the school was brought back from the brink of closure for failing to meet performance targets under the No Child Left Behind Act. Instead of being left behind, Ochoa, by embracing the Reggio approach, became a model for others to follow. The school recently received a grant to become a Reggio-inspired Community Magnet school. Ochoa intends to follow the examples of and collaborate with the Opal School and Chicago Commons with regard to assessment (Krechevsky *et al.*, 2011).

New directions in assessment

In parallel to these efforts of Reggio-inspired schools to address current assessment requirements, another approach is to find new ways to assess schools and children's learning that are also in keeping with the Reggio approach.

The effort to devise new assessment measures is being led by Making Learning Visible researchers Mara Krechevsky and Ben Mardell at the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero, and Karen Haigh from Columbia College, Chicago. For over a decade these individuals have worked with

educators in public schools to adopt Reggio-inspired ideas and to help children master basic literacy and numeracy skills. Nonetheless, the lack of child outcome data hinders expanding this work to other public settings that serve children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Baker *et al.*, 2010).

The Project Zero researchers therefore plan to create authentic measures of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity in order to assess the impact of Reggio-inspired teaching on children's learning. The assessments will target three primary contexts: teacher-led conversations, child-directed activities, and structured small-group tasks. For example, the assessment of teacher-led conversations with children (whole or small group) will consider such questions as:

- How do teachers facilitate the conversation? Do they refer children to other children?
- Are new statements linked to previous ones and do ideas build on one another? Do children and adults listen to each other?
- What is the purpose of the conversation? Is it to share what children already know or build new knowledge? How do children structure their sentences?
- Do children help each other by providing critiques or explaining ideas to each other? How do they handle conflict? Do they use a language of thinking and emotion?

• Is there laughter and are there expressions of excitement and joy? The assessment of child-directed exploration in groups will focus on:

- What is the quality of the exploration? Given the children's ages and experiences, is the play scenario sophisticated and complex or more limited? Are the children open to multiple solutions?
- What is the quality of the children's interactions? Do they share ideas with one another? How do they solve problems and deal with conflict?
- What is the role of the teacher? How does the teacher respond to children's ideas and questions? How does he or she deal with conflict and issues of sharing and equity?

The structured, small-group task will involve a standardised activity where children will be asked to solve a problem (such as communicating to a new classmate the rules of the school) or use materials to create a product (for example, fashioning a present for the teacher). The group process will be video recorded and analysed for the degree of collaboration and creativity. How the group communicates its ideas (for example, whether it uses some form of written notation) will also be assessed.

The quest for a new method of assessment, conducted thoughtfully, is undeniably worthwhile. The resulting data could provide the evidence needed to persuade administrators that Reggio-inspired schools are superior both in quality and support of

children's learning. Whether this would lead to scaling without sacrificing that quality remains to be seen.

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ABSTRACT

An art specialist and action researcher discusses the dynamic role of documentation in the classroom as influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach.

Documentation:

Ideas and Applications from the Reggio Emilia Approach



Gigi Schroeder Yu

Teachers of the visual arts have long considered the importance of how to collect and display their students' work. Throughout history, bulletin boards have covered classrooms and school hallways neatly displaying children's art work. In my own teaching as an arts specialist, I sought out ways to hang all of my students' work in neat rows with manufactured borders of apples, stars, or other themes surrounding the outside in an effort to display the achievements of my students.

But what was missing? How was I really demonstrating the learning process that existed behind the paintings, collages, or other art works? Only after a visit to Reggio Emilia, Italy, did I begin to consider other possibilities for revealing the learning that was taking place in my classroom.

This article briefly summarizes how documentation functions within the Reggio Emilia approach and then discusses the many ways in which documentation can play a key role in any arts education context. I draw examples from my own classroom experiences and examine how documentation affected my practice as an art specialist working with students in kindergarten through second grade at a northern Chicago suburb's elementary school.

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The Reggio Emilia Approach

The municipal pre-primary schools in the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia have been attracting worldwide attention from educators for several years. Reggio Emilia is a town located in the northern part of Italy that has approximately 130,000 inhabitants. In the 1940s, after the end of World War II, a group of parents decided to use money from the sale of old tanks to create a quality preschool program for children. Several years later, Loris Malaguzzi, an educational leader in Italy, was impressed by the community's dedication to their children and offered to help the town develop an approach to working with children that combined theories from Dewey, Bruner, Montessori, as well as others. Today, Reggio Emilia has twenty-two community preschools and thirteen infant/toddler centers that all focus on using a social constructivist approach to learning. There is also a documentation research center that was built to further study the educational approach.

What is now referred to as the "Reggio Emilia Approach" includes many remarkable features that have influenced teachers from a variety of backgrounds and teaching situations. Perhaps one of its most unique contributions to the field of education is the use of the documentation of children's experience as a standard part of classroom practice (Katz & Chard). The educational philosophy and practices of the Reggio Approach have served as an inspiration to many programs around the world for modeling how to include the voice of the child in our educational practices. They have also inspired our thoughts on how learning occurs in collaboration with others. The Reggio Emilia approach sees the family, the child, the teacher, and the artist as all being integral parts of learning. The element of documentation in Reggio Emilia creates a dialogue between these groups. The children and the adults are seen as equal participants in learning, with each having an equal voice. Documentation occurs through photographs, transcribed conversations, the graphic arts, and video recordings. Documentation also provides an inside view of the interests, needs, and experiences of children.

Documentation practices in Reggio Emilia pre-primary (ages 3–6) schools provide inspiring examples of the importance of displaying children's work using both the content and aesthetic aspects of the display. Documentation typically includes samples of a child's work at several different stages of completion; photographs showing work in progress; comments written by the teacher or other adults working with the child; transcriptions of the child's discussions, comments, and explanations of intentions about the activity; and comments made by parents. The following are only a few examples of how documentation is realized within the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

The Image of the Child: Taking Children's Work Seriously

Attractive displays are created using children's work, photographs from projects, and examples of dialogue. These convey to the children that their efforts, intentions, and ideas are taken seriously. These displays are not created to serve primarily as decoration or ways of showing off the work. Rather, taking children's work seriously in this way encourages them to approach their work responsibly and reinforces the idea that their work is considered important.

Environment as the Third Teacher

The organization of the physical environment is crucial to the Reggio Emilia approach. The environment is designed to inform and engage children and those that visit the

schools. The aesthetic display of documentation is an important element within the school environment. When you walk into schools, white panels with photographs and documented conversations decorate the walls and tell the stories of events that have occurred within the school. The documents reveal how the children planned, carried out, and completed the displayed work. Some panels remain up for a considerable length of time, whereas others change as projects and studies change to reflect the ongoing learning. Panels are displayed at eye level for both children and adults.

Emergent Curriculum

Reggio classrooms follow an emergent (continuously developing) curriculum and documentation plays a crucial role in the planning of future activities. The children undertake complex individual or small-group collaborative tasks over a period of several days or weeks. Intense reflections about conversations with children, children's work, observations, videos, or pictures help teachers to think about what directions to pursue with the activities. For example, in a study titled *Shoe and Meter* (Malaguzzi, Castagnetti, & Vecchi, 1997), children were confronted with the problem that the school needed a worktable. The children call on the aid of a carpenter to help them, and he challenges them with the task of finding the measurements for the table. Throughout the study the children discover the function and use of measurement.

Collaboration

Documentation fosters collaboration among all participants within the Reggio Approach. Children, teachers, and parents participate in collection and use of documentation. Children often compare and analyze photographs, drawings, and previous conversations to determine the direction of their projects. Teachers use documentation to guide them during daily and weekly teacher meetings. Close working relationships exist between teachers; they rely on each other's input and guidance during ongoing studies. Documentation creates a platform from which to develop open discussions among teachers and, as an added benefit, affords parents a look at not only the products of a project but the ongoing learning processes that occurred.

Views on Children's Art

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of "art" for children is a definite departure from what many teachers are taught in the United States, and challenges many assumptions about the use of art in early childhood classrooms. Children's visual interpretations are collected and studied as components of documentation that reveal their growing understanding of a subject. Their work reveals things about the process and study of a subject, not just the final product. Cadwell describes an occasion when children went on an autumn walk outside the La Villetta School and discovered holes and tunnels made by small animals. After returning to the classroom, children were invited to re-create and invent their own animal dens using a variety of materials. Over the following few days, children used several materials to help them remember, explore, re-create, and invent their own animal dens. Some used soft oil crayons by experimenting with the different colors and marks to represent their interpretation of the animal homes. Others re-created animal dens using clay and recyclable objects (Cadwell, 26). The examination and documentation of process reveals the reveals much about the artistic development of the child, for instance, that children learn that each medium has a different voice or speaks a different language.

Teachers as Researchers

In the Reggio Approach, documentation supports the teacher's role as researcher in the classroom. The teacher's role is shifted from that of giving direct instruction to allowing children's thoughts and ideas to plan the direction of the curriculum. Teachers carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom. Teachers are also committed to their own professional growth and use documentation to reflect on their own practice.

Documentation or Display?

Forman writes, "The passage from display to documentation travels the path from informing to educating and thereby changes the teacher's perspective from observing children to studying children" (245). When teachers use documentation in their classrooms, it changes the way they interpret their students work and how they make choices for what they display. Displays are created not for entertainment but to educate others on what really happens in classrooms.

In my own elementary art room, I attempted to examine how documentation can be used for four different purposes: making learning visible, classroom planning, creating a narrative context or showing the emotional aspects of learning, and professional development. The narratives and analyses that follow are not intended to provide a specific model for documentation. Rather, they aim to give the reader a concrete sense of the wide variety of purposes documentation can serve.

Making Learning Visible

Documentation collected through photographs, recorded conversations, and visual art examples can provide an opportunity for educators to make visible the learning that is happening in the classroom for individual children but also for a group of children or an entire classroom. Documentation reveals not only what children are learning but how they are learning. In my classroom, I often began a project with a proposed problem or question to my students. I collected photographs of children working; their drawings which illustrated the formation of ideas; and conversations, both group and individual, from the beginning of a project through to the end. The following project narrative provides an example of how documentation functions to reveal individual and group learning experiences among teachers and students.

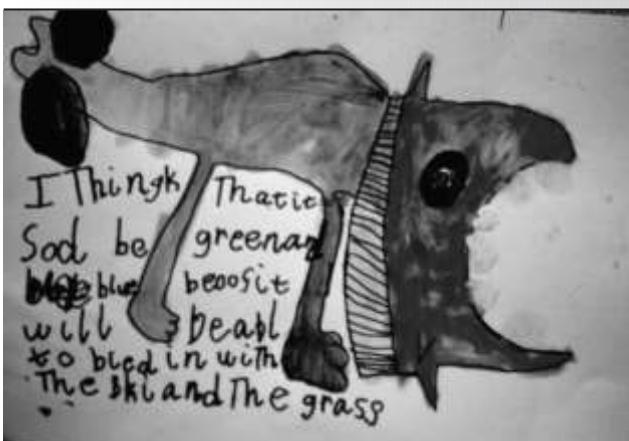
The Dinosaur Story. In a first-grade classroom, students were discussing the topic of dinosaurs. They discussed the height and weight of dinosaurs, what dinosaurs ate, and where they lived. Simultaneously, in the art room, we explored the capabilities of paint, and how to create different colors. Children individually created their own colors. Each child developed his or her own understanding of color theory through shade and tint scales and by making color wheels.

After discussing the study of dinosaurs with classroom teachers, we found ourselves fascinated by the children's interest in colors. We decided to proceed by investigating the relationship between colors and the dinosaurs. There is no conclusive information about what colors the dinosaurs were. Scientists have speculated about their colors and have advanced various theories to justify these speculations. The role of the teacher in approaching this type of investigation is to ask children questions that stimulate their thinking and provoke discussion. I went back to the children to ask them their own theories on the colors of the dinosaurs:

- Teacher: How do we know what color the dinosaurs were?
- Cristine: Tan. Because they might blend in with the ground.
- Anna: All different. We weren't there. If we weren't there how do we know what colors they were?
- Maggie: Green and black. They were reptiles. Today reptiles are usually these colors.
- Harry: Brown to camouflage.
- Ellen: Grayish, green and blackish. Because when I looked in a book that is what I saw.
- Teacher: How did the people who wrote the book know what colors to choose?
- Ellen: Because archaeologists. I think they found the bones.
- Teacher: So how do we know from the bones?
- Ellen: I don't know.
- Billy: If people dig up. They can be dirty with a little skin.
- Chris: Light green and dark green. They blend in so they won't get attacked.

Documentation of this conversation allows one to see how the children formulated their ideas. The idea of blending or camouflage is mentioned by several students who believed that dinosaurs in the prehistoric age had a need to be hidden. From this idea, another student sees the relationship between reptiles today that may be related to dinosaurs and their colors. The role of collaborative learning is evident; students build theories on each others' answers.

The children then proceeded to explore the dinosaur in more depth by drawing all of its sides and angles. The drawings were then used for the next step in the project. After hypothesizing about dinosaurs and their colors, children created their own paintings expressing their ideas about the color of dinosaurs. The paintings also revealed the children's new interest in color theories and applications as tools with which to demonstrate their ideas. For example, one child not only was able to re-create colors that represented the sky and grass but, proceeding from the camouflage theory, also applied the colors to her image so that the head of the dinosaur, which was closer to the sky, was represented by the color blue and the body was green similar to that found on the ground: "I think it will be green and blue because it will be able to blend in with the sky and grass."



Dinosaur with camouflage coloring.

Gigi Yu

Classroom Planning

The Use of Documented Dialogue to Plan Work: Having Genuine Conversations with Children

Dialogue and recorded conversations offer opportunities to reveal how individuals and groups of learners create meaning of subjects. Recording a dialogue with students is much different from having students write about their work because it allows teachers to examine the dynamic interplay of conversation and how we as teachers respond to students' interactions. Dialogue can happen spontaneously or can be organized by a teacher through group or individual conversations. The dialogue can also be used with students as a way to inspire their work and also for teachers to plan the next sequence of events.

The Campbell's Soup Can Story. What follows is another example in which documentation, in the form of recorded dialog, illuminates the subtlety and complexity of children's critical response to, and reinterpretation of, art. During a visit to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's education department, I was struck at the lack of materials available for young children. I expressed my concern to one of the department employees, who responded that young children were not able to analyze and understand modern art.

In response to this assertion, I decided to try an experiment with my students in my own classroom. I set out several examples of artwork and played a game with my students in which they were to choose their favorite and least favorite. There was an overwhelming dislike for the image of Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Can. I then planned a conversation with my students in which I asked them about their dislike for the artwork. The following conversation unfolded:

Teacher: Explain to me why you do not like the Campbell's Soup Can artwork.

Teddy: It's just Campbell's soup. He only had the Campbell's soup can. You should have something else in the picture to make it more interesting. You should have like background to make it more interesting.

Teacher: Okay. Maria?

Maria: Um, a lot of people see a Campbell's soup every day and so it might be kind of boring for them because they are so used to seeing it.

Teacher: Anything else?

Amanda: But some people like Campbell's soup and they would like to see a picture of it.

Eric: It is really detailed.

Teacher: What do you mean by that?

Eric: Like they really, they didn't do everything you see, but they zoomed in on so you could see everything.

Charley: Some people might not like red and it doesn't have many other colors on it.

Morgan: I don't really like it because it kind of matches, because it's not that interesting and it's cause some people they have like a soup can and they pour soup from it and it is something they see every day and it gets very boring. And it just doesn't have a background and it's really borrrrrringg.

Zachary: I don't like it because I don't like Campbell's soup.

Teacher: That makes sense.

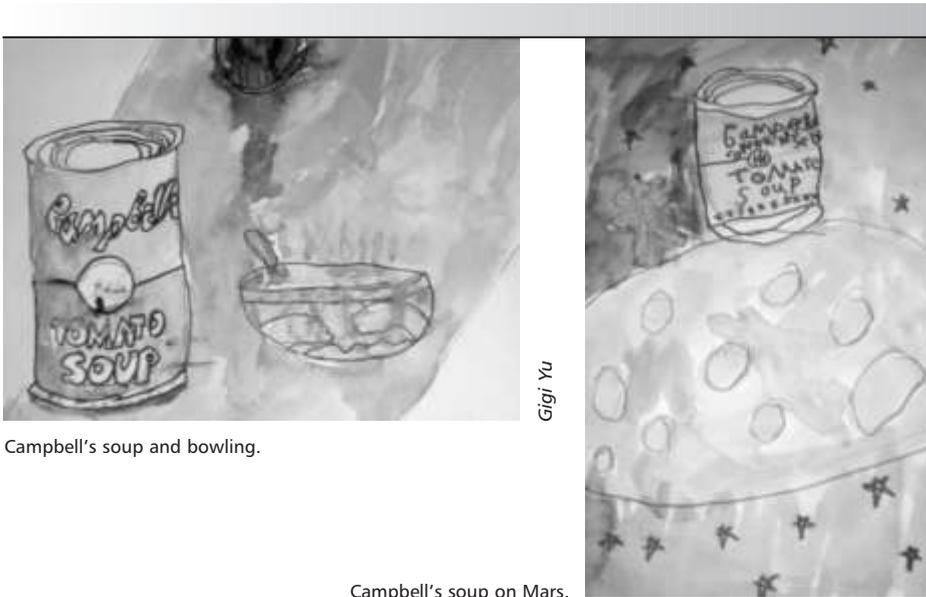
Natalie: I don't like it because it doesn't have that much color.

Morgan: I still don't like it, but I do like chicken noodle soup.

Kelly: I don't like it because, um, it's just a can of soup and there is not that much color and it's not that grounded and I wish there was something else in it like a pretty colorful picture. Soup is boring.

Kristin: There is something on the bottom of the can and you can't really see it. He could have shown it and it would have been more interesting.

I was intrigued by the advice students provided on how to make the Campbell's Soup Can painting more interesting. I decided to ask them to reinterpret the image. I provided Campbell's soup cans for students to use while drawing, and then they added their own elements to the design to make the image more appealing.



Campbell's soup and bowling.

Campbell's soup on Mars.

Emotional Aspects

Learning is an emotional experience that cannot be fully engaged or understood through simple paper-and-pencil activities. Successful documentation strategies reveal the daily struggles, triumphs, fears, and joys that exist between children, teachers, and artists. Documentation moves us beyond an interest in outcomes and moves us to an exploration of the relationships and feelings that form the context and stuff of educative experience.

Jamal's story. Documentation does not need to be restricted to project work; it can also capture a single learning experience.

Jamal was a first-grade student who often struggled with drawing concepts. In class, students were experimenting with the concept of taking an object and drawing it up close. Jamal seemed to struggle with this idea, and his drawings reflected his lack of understanding of the subject. They were at times scattered and not focused on one object.

Jamal sat next to Jessica in the art room. Jessica, on the other hand, was a bright student who was seen as an exceptional artist. She was often quiet, kept to herself, and enjoyed making art on her own. Jamal seemed oblivious to Jessica's skills and often seemed distracted by other events around him. One day I was making my rounds in the classroom when I glanced down at the paper in front of Jamal. Jamal had drawn an exquisite flower, very similar to Jessica's. I was astounded at this transformation; what others might have seen as copying, I saw as a huge accomplishment for Jamal. I praised his new drawing as his face beamed with a smile from ear to ear. I took Jamal aside and asked,

Teacher: Where did you get the idea for this drawing?

Jamal: Jessica. I saw Jessica and got the idea.

Jamal was able to see Jessica as an outside resource who helped him to model new techniques. Jessica, in her quiet and unobtrusive way, supplied new alternatives for his struggle with drawing. I was also fascinated that Jamal was not ashamed at giving his fellow student credit for helping him overcome his struggles. He appeared proud of his work. All art is, to some degree, "copying." A conscious embrace of this truth is a really powerful tool for any artist.

As successful documentation, Jamal's story demonstrates both the struggle and joy of learning for an individual student. It also powerfully reveals how unexpected forms of collaboration can allow a student to move beyond his or her limits and to expand their capabilities.

Professional Development: Educating Educators and Teacher Growth

Successful documentation allows for the child's voice to become a part of the education community and creates opportunities for teachers to share learning that occurs within their classroom and might not otherwise be revealed. In a larger sense, documentation provides a community of educators opportunities to study what is taking place among learners and to develop strategies for global and systemic changes in education. Documentation of children's work in a wide variety of media also provides critical and compelling public evidence of the intellectual powers of young children, evidence that is not otherwise available (Katz, 1993).

Teachers can use documentation to promote professional development in a number of ways.

1. Panels hung in hallways and classrooms are opportunities for teachers to communicate the ongoing learning that is happening in the classroom. Observers may include parents, other students, other teachers, administrators, and others who visit the school. For teachers of the arts, this is an important way to demonstrate the effectiveness of arts instruction and its important role in learning, but it also helps such teachers develop into advocates for arts education.
2. Teachers can use documentation as a basis for publishable articles, other professional writing, and contributions to research in the field. I used the documentation collected from my classroom to create presentations that were shared at national conferences and in an International Arts Education publication for a UNESCO conference in Seoul, Korea.

As an educator, it was very rewarding to share this information with my colleagues from around the world and to receive direct feedback on my work.

3. In addition to advocating for pedagogic value of the arts, documentation can provide the basis for teachers to advocate more specifically for their own profession. This is particularly important for arts specialists who often find their jobs on the budget chopping block every year. I often used documentation at parent meetings to inform parents on the learning that was happening in the art room.

Conclusion

For teachers, learning to document what takes place in the classroom means learning to listen, see, observe, and interpret student intentions and actions. This process moves teachers of the arts away from simply collecting works for displays to collecting and creating pieces that can educate others. This display and collection of work can radically heighten the effectiveness of arts learning as an educative experience and can play a key role in advancing the field as a whole.

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Appendix

Web Sites on Documentation on the Reggio Emilia Approach:

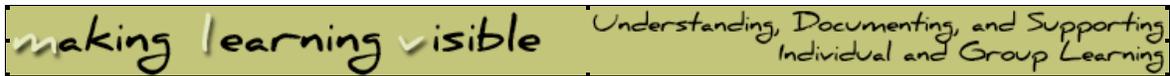
<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/mlv/documentation/index.cfm>

<http://www.reggioalliance.org/>

<http://www.capeweb.org/appproc.pdf>

<http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/reggiochildren.htm>

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The Anatomy of a Documentation Panel

Consider the following components when creating documentation for exhibition or display.

Title A good title helps give the viewer an immediate sense for your piece. Try for something that gets at the meaning of the documentation. You might want to use a child's or adult's quote or a metaphor—anything that will pique viewer interest and convey what the learning is about. The title should be prominently placed and large enough to draw the viewer's attention to it.

Context Try to keep the context to no more than two short paragraphs of background information that will help set the stage for viewers. The context should include the teacher/documenter name(s), the age group of the learners, the names of the school and town, the purpose of the learning experience, and the date or time period. Photos or images of the learners are helpful to provide up front. Other information to include as relevant is the learning prompt or project, the size of the group, related previous experiences, or materials used. Photographs or other visual documentation can also provide some of this information.

Supporting Artifacts Carefully select from the various artifacts you collect (transcripts, photographs, student work, etc.) the documents that are most critical for helping viewers see how you came to your interpretations about learning (see below) or allow for other interpretations. The artifacts should represent the learning process as well as product—the *how* as well as the *what* of learning. If possible, choose at least two media, e.g., text (narrative and/or quotes) and images, to display.

Your Analysis or Interpretation Include your own learning in the documentation. What was exciting or surprising to you about the experience of the learners? What moved you or furthered your thinking? What connections can you make to broader issues or images of teaching and learning? Consider including brief reflections throughout the piece as well as at the beginning and end to communicate your interpretation of the documentation. What story of learning do you want to tell and what conversations would you like to provoke? You might also want to note how the documentation will help you shape future learning experiences.

Format Consider coming up with a uniform format for your documentation so that viewers won't have to figure out how to "read" it every time you post something new. In a school setting, consider providing criteria such as using technology that is accessible to everyone and easy to use. Format your documentation on a computer or by hand on small, standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11 or 14") rather than big posters. This allows it to be easily copied and distributed to colleagues for feedback, or brought back to the classroom and added to over the course of a project. If you choose to put up panels, their size will depend on the setting, but dimensions of 4' by 3' are often manageable. Try to present things in a way that allows the viewer to take in the key information in roughly five-ten minutes. For those viewers who want to explore the work more deeply, you can provide additional information or artifacts on the table or wall near the main piece.

Things to Watch Out For Beware of including too much written text... Try to balance learning about learning and learning content... It is sometimes more powerful to document the experience of one small group, moment, or event in the learning experience rather than an entire lesson or unit... Asking yourself, "What is the learning I want to make visible?" can help guide you if you are feeling adrift in a sea of data...

Creating Documentation Panels

(inspired by Lella Gandini)

- I. Ideas for Title: Choose a title from the words of children, followed by a quote from the teacher OR Create a title that reflects a research question or hypothesis

- II. Remember that the reader “reads” panels from left to right, top to bottom

- III. Enlarge some of the photos, and place emphasis on a certain part of the experience through larger photos – vary the other photo sizes

- IV. Include many languages: children’s dialogue, teacher interpretation, photographs, children’s works

- V. Vary the text size – titles in a larger font. Make sure you can read from afar.



Section 3

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Guide: Classroom Environment

<p>Colors</p>	<p>Plans to add or change colors to represent nature or culture and identity of children in the classroom:</p>
<p>Light and Transparency and Reflection</p>	<p>Plans to add sunlight and/or interesting light sources to the classroom. Plans to add transparency – areas to see through. Plans to add more opportunities to view reflections:</p>

<p>Sound and Texture</p>	<p>Plans to add natural sounds and textures to the classroom:</p>
<p>Arrangement of Space, Levels, Furniture</p>	<p>Plans for rearranging space, including more levels, bringing in interesting furniture pieces.</p>

Introducing One Teacher's Research

Teacher researcher Isauro Michael Escamilla is an early childhood head teacher with a strong interest in ideas from High/Scope, Reggio Emilia, and project approach theory. He is a leader in district inservice and mentorship programs and has participated in many district-level workshops. A native of Veracruz, Mexico, Michael immigrated to the United States as a young man and is bilingual in Spanish and English.

In the following example of teacher research, Michael represents some of his thinking in excerpts from the research project.

Isauro Michael Escamilla, a teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District for the last 10 years, is currently a preschool lead teacher at Las Americas Child Development Center in the heart of San Francisco's Latin neighborhood. He has an AA and is working toward a BA in education.

A Dialogue with the Shadows

Isauro Michael Escamilla

My teacher research was conducted with kindergarten-age children at an after-school and holiday care child development center and was sponsored by a California school district. The center primarily serves Chinese families and other recent immigrants.

Although I have also taught school-age children, I currently work with preschoolers. I use ideas from project approach theory and Reggio Emilia as the inspirational forces for my teaching. The ideas from these approaches not only strengthen my daily teaching, but also help me understand how and why children learn and I myself learn as a teacher.

We know that learning is based on a system of relationships and connections. Looking at my teaching and at children's learning helps me see those hidden connections and understand what goes on under the surface of our everyday interactions and projects.

Working on projects and documenting our learning is a form of research into understanding what the children and I are learning. In this article I discuss

one project on shadows that kindergarten-age children carried out with me and my assistant teacher.

Teacher research focus

I used this project, in one way, as an assessment of my own teaching skills. I asked myself, How do I listen to children, and what do I learn about what is in their minds, how they think, and what skills they have? It was important to find the children's voices, because we were trying to create an atmosphere in which children's ideas are supported and heard without any judgment on my part.

Doing project work and understanding it really is about learning how ideas grow and develop and what they mean for children's learning and our own development as teachers. For instance, there are many ways for children (and for us) to express ideas. Many times children are not able to express their ideas with fluency, but this does not mean that they do not understand what is going on around them. Some children are very verbal and contribute to a discussion; some can't speak yet—maybe because they are shy or don't know the language—but they do understand and do have ideas.

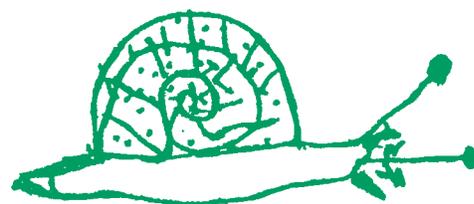
In project work we observe and we listen. If not, we have no ideas. Beginning a project and researching our teaching might start in a subtle, quiet way for children and us. For example, if children are quietly playing with blocks and trying to make a car go from one place to another, we have only to look—there is an idea right there.

We ask children and look for ourselves to see if they have any problems. Maybe a bridge is too short or not strong enough. When that revelation happens, it is the moment we are looking for. And when there is a problem, there is an even bigger idea. If the bridge falls down or one car comes one way and the other comes the opposite way, we ask, "What would happen if...?" The answer to that question becomes a hypothesis to research and understand. So my own understanding and teacher research are really embedded in my children's research and learning. Our data collection included transcriptions of adult-child conversations, group discussions, observations, and documentation panels with children's drawings, photos, and quotes.

Our **data collection** included transcriptions of adult-child conversations, group discussions, observations, and documentation panels with children's drawings, photos, and quotes.

The shadows project emerges

When the children in our kindergarten class found a snail in the garden, we thought this small creature could be the springboard for our new class project (we adults had been paying close attention to children's conversations, and they seemed genuinely interested in this slow mover). We carried the snail inside the classroom and put it on a white sheet of paper on a table next to the windows. The children looked at the snail very carefully with magnifying glasses and made a few remarks about its slow, dragging motion. Seizing the opportunity, we teachers supplied the children with paper and pencils so they could draw a likeness of our visitor. Some of the children's representations follow.



A snail out for a walk.

— Francisco



A snail in love.

— Bryan

As the children set about drawing the snail, sunlight came through the window and created the snail's shadow on the white paper. This led the children to try drawing the snail and its shadow. These are some of those drawings.

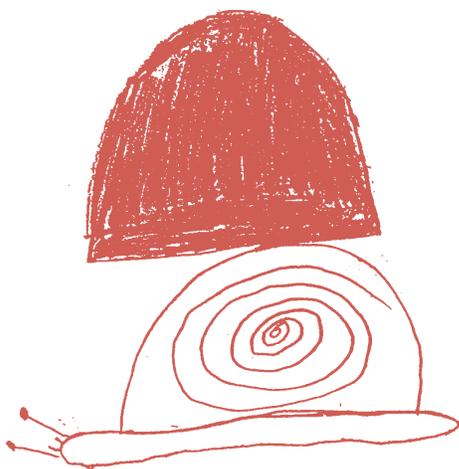


The shell has a shadow, but not the snail.

— Javier

A small snail has a small shadow.

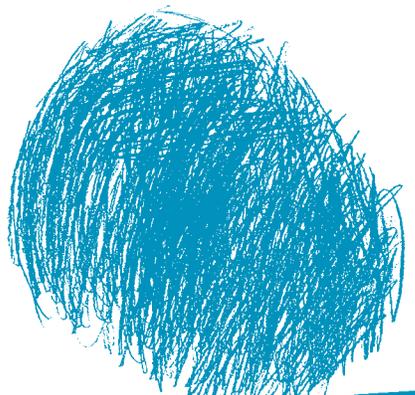
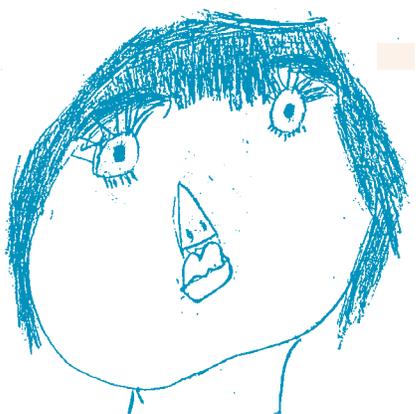
— Michelle



A big snail has a big shadow.

— Ernesto

Later the same day, Annie presented a carefully drawn self-portrait of her new haircut. When she presented it to the class, the children couldn't decide if the dark-colored image they saw on the reverse side of the paper was a shadow of her head. What Annie had created was a back view of her head to fully show her new haircut.



This moment of debate provided a good opportunity to record the children's ideas to present them back to the children on another occasion. From then on, we tried to follow up on the children's interests in shadows. The project on snails that we thought might begin and the project on self-portraits begun several weeks before were shifting and merging.

This commingling marked the beginning of our project on shadows. In doing project-based work, I find this is often how projects develop. Projects are not linear processes. Sometimes we don't even know a project has started, but in this instance I could see that the shadows project had begun.

Discussing our shadows project

In having a discussion with a group of 18 children, 10 felt confident enough to express their ideas to the group. In conversations like this, teachers are not making judgments; our role is to facilitate the dialogue with open-ended questions. All responses are accepted and written down on the board.

At the initial level of project work, it is not important whether children's answers are right or wrong. What is important is that they are expressing their thoughts and formulating theories. Children support their theories with explanations based on their own experiences.

Through children's explanations, as teachers we are able to see how the children perceive the world around them. When children try to make sense of their world, they are making connections. This is why it is important to ask meaningful open-ended questions and to take seriously the children's answers.

I began the conversation by asking, "Why do we have shadows?"

Francisco: I think because the sun is shining.

Javier: Because the sun makes shadows.

Ernesto: I know. Because the sun is bright. And the sun comes out and the shadows come out. And then, when the moon comes out, the shadows go away.

Francisco: When the sun follows you and the...

Javier (*interrupting Francisco*): The sun doesn't follow you. The shadows follow you. When it is very hot, the shadows follow you every place you go.

Bryan (*apparently still thinking about Ernesto's statement about the moon*): At nighttime we don't see the shadows.

Michelle: But if you come home and then you turn the lights on, then you have your shadow.

Maria: When it is nighttime, you can see a little bit of shadows.

Michelle: When you turn off the lights, then you don't see the shadows.

The conversation extended through three more questions, “When you don’t see your shadow, where do the shadows go?” “Why do you like your shadow?” and “How many shadows do we have?” Maybe this last one was not a good question because nobody answered. But then after a few moments, Tony, who had been silent until then, spoke: “We have only one shadow because there is only one sun.”

Teachers reflect

As teachers we also need support—to develop a stronger sense of professionalism in the classroom. Besides the technical support (camera, tape recorder, film, and film development), we also need the collaborative support of not only our coworkers but also the administrators and children’s families. I was able to do this project at my center because I knew that I could count on everyone’s open-mindedness and flexibility. For example, there were times when I didn’t take a break because something important was happening with the children, and I just couldn’t leave. I coordinated with my co-workers to take my break at another time. I asked this of my staff as well so they could keep working on a particular activity. Our site manager made staffing arrangements for them to leave early another day.

At the end of each project, families made an effort to participate in a celebration of the project. They were invited to a slide presentation and review of the documentation of the children’s work. Parents brought healthy snacks for the kids, and this turned into a family evening.

Role of the teacher

We are working to find the role of the teacher. Some teachers are not comfortable writing or taking pictures, but we need to be empowered and to empower each other. Our site supervisor Lynne pushed a little as well. She was someone with a vision for what children can do, and we all have had open dialogues with her.

In all, this project worked because a whole system of relationships grew into place and provided support. My assistant teacher and I became a team, and we had great respect for one another. We blended the boundaries of the traditional hierarchy of assistant teacher and teacher, and that is how these projects took place. We listened to the tapes together and talked about what we heard.

We shared a close relationship. And for this to happen, we needed to talk about the children. The more we talked, the more we documented, and the more we came to realize that what we were doing was just a start. I thought, for example, that after we had been doing documentation for about a year, we had gotten it. But gotten what? There is just the experience. The more you experience, the richer you become as a teacher, a

It is important to ask **meaningful open-ended questions** and to take **seriously the children’s answers.**

person, a professional. What we did was small in comparison to what is being done in the Reggio Emilia schools—which are our inspiration to actively listen to the children and to make their learning experiences visible through the art of documentation.

Conclusion

This is how our projects go; layered into them are the words, drawings, gestures, and other ways of expression that the children have within them and that we try hard to document and reflect back to them. Children have a tendency to use the narrative to experience and to dream—everything becomes a story. As I record and document the children’s drawings, conversations, and ideas, I then engage in my own research process of understanding the power of the children’s learning and of my teaching.

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Five Elements of Teacher Research in Michael's Project

1. The teacher research focus

Michael assesses his own teaching. He asks himself how well he listens to children to find out what they know and what they need.

2. Background information about the children and the child care setting

This project is on kindergarten-age children in a public, district-level after-school program. Most children are multilingual English-language learners.

3. Process for collecting and understanding the data

Michael's data includes transcripts of conversations, collections of children's work, photos, and the documentation panels created as the project evolved in the classroom. To analyze and understand the data, he refined his original question, Do I listen carefully enough to all of my students so that they see themselves as capable theory makers? Using criteria and in collaboration with colleagues he reviewed the data to find specific evidence that he had heard and honored both talkative and more silent children's theories about shadows.

4. Reflection on the findings and learning

- Strong projects arise in nonlinear ways when we are able to listen closely to children and follow up on their interests and excitement.
- Children have complex theories about how things work and fit together.
- Children who don't speak up often know a great deal; our openness and attentiveness is key.

5. Recommendations for other teacher researchers

Deepen your teaching and your own learning as a professional by making the children's voices visible through documentation. Experiment by working with your colleagues. See each teacher research project as improving and learning about yourself as a teacher researcher and as an early childhood professional.

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Making Your Environment “The Third Teacher”

by Margie Carter

“In order to act as an educator for the child, the environment has to be flexible: it must undergo frequent modification by the children and the teachers in order to remain up-to-date and responsive to their needs to be protagonists in constructing their knowledge.”

Lella Gandini (1998)

The Italian Schools of Reggio Emilia are acclaimed for the stunning environments their educators have created, and they provoke us to recognize the instructive power of an environment. This is not a new concept, but in their schools we see vibrant examples of learning environments that dazzle our senses, invite curiosity and discovery, and most importantly, foster strong, respectful relationships. Reggio educators seem to have a different notion about the role of the environment in educating children, for unlike the typical U.S. early childhood classroom, their walls aren't covered with alphabet letters, calendars, and job charts. Nor do you find commercially produced bulletin board displays, labels on every shelf and surface, or rules posted. What could they be thinking?

In the name of early education, homogenization and institutionalization are sprouting up everywhere in early childhood programs across the United

States. Our programs have been developing what author and Harvard educator Tony Wagner (2001) calls “a culture of compliance” aimed at regulations, not dreams for children and ourselves. For instance, teachers in a Head Start Program told me they were dinged “out of compliance” because they had a replica of the solar system hanging from the ceiling, not at the children’s eye level. A child care teacher described how the children’s enthusiasm for using the block area to create “the tallest building in the world” quickly waned when her director arrived with a reminder of the rule not to build higher than their shoulders. These and many other stories tell me that we are not working with the idea Gandini suggests above, creating flexible environments that are responsive to the need for children and teachers to construct knowledge together. If we want our environments to be teachers in this way, it’s time we do some careful reexamination to see how our standards and rating scales have begun to limit our thinking, and how commercial and political interests are shaping more and more of what we do.

In my opinion, if we are to embrace the idea of the environment as a significant educator in our early childhood

programs, we must expand our thinking beyond the notion of room arrangements and rating scales. We must ask ourselves what values we want to communicate through our environments and how we want children to experience their time in our programs. Walk down the halls and into the classrooms of your program. What does this environment “teach” those who are in it? How is it shaping the identity of those who spend long days there?

When Deb Curtis and I were writing *Designs for Living and Learning* (2003) we found ourselves in a dilemma. We were eager to share photos of the inspiring environments we had begun encountering and working with programs to shape. But, we feared people might just flip through the pages looking for “decorating” ideas and bypass the text explaining the underlying concepts and principles the photos represented. Indeed, we have

Margie Carter works as a teacher educator in various settings across the U.S. and Canada, often consulting on environments drawing on her book, *Designs for Living and Learning*. To learn more about her work and publications, visit www.ecetrainers.com.



continued to invent training strategies to engage teachers in constructing their understanding of the environment as the third teacher in their room.

Strategy:
Bring words to life

Depending on their learning style, people take different paths to bring words to life for their everyday teaching practice. I like to find inspiring quotes and have teachers pair them with their own visual images or ideas about how these words might be reflected in an actual environment. For instance, offer a selection of provocative quotes about environments, such as the following, and have your staff choose one to either draw a representation of what it means to them, or create a collage of magazine pictures.

- *First we shape our buildings. Thereafter they shape our lives.*
Winston Churchill
- *More than the physical space, (the environment) includes the way time is structured and the roles we are expected to play. It conditions how we feel, think, and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives.*
Jim Greenman
- *Our thoughts as reflected in our designs, in turn shape children's beliefs about themselves and life.*
Anita Olds
- *The environment is the most visible aspect of the work done in the schools by all the protagonists. It conveys the message that this is a place where adults have thought about the quality and instructive power of space.*
Lella Gandini
- *Every person needs a place that is furnished with hope.*
Maya Angelou

Strategy:

Eliminate as well as supplement

An environment that is crowded or cluttered may obscure the values you have in mind. Try to gather some sample pictures of the contrast between cluttered, harsh, or boring environments and well organized, thoughtfully planned ones and go through them one by one with some questions for discussion (see box on adjacent page). For instance, if you were a child, what might your experience be in this environment?

Strategy:
Explore values for your environment

Use some of your staff meeting time to identify the values that you want reflected in your environment. Pass out a set of blank index cards and ask teachers to use one for each value that they want to be influencing their work with children. Collect these, and together organize them into groups with common elements. Then, to move these values from abstract ideas to practical examples, assign each group of cards to a dyad or cluster of teachers with the task of using the back of the card to outline or sketch how this value might be specifically reflected in the physical environment and also in the social emotional environment created by your policies, routines, and rituals. Consider values for the adults as well as the children. Keep the following ideas in mind to prompt your staff should they need it.

Values for children:

- being a home away from home
- connecting children to their families
- helping children to be powerful and active
- providing softness
- being a steward of the natural world
- seeing oneself as a capable learner
- recognizing and being curious about

different perspectives

- forming mutually interesting and respectful relationships

Values for adults:

- feeling valued and respected
- having tools and time to do what is needed
- being intellectually stimulated and engaged
- providing opportunities to collaborate and grow professionally
- experiencing oneself as part of a caring, learning community
- finding strong relationships with children, their families and co-workers

Strategy:

Set goals and address barriers

Showing teachers inspiring early childhood environments usually generates one of two responses: either excitement about making changes and adding lots of new things, or a litany of comments like “the licenser would never allow that; my kids could never handle that; we don’t have that kind of money” and so forth. Help your staff work with the notion that in many cases, “less is more” and we want to be creators, not consumers when we set up our learning environments. After looking at examples of inspiring resources (Curtis & Carter, 2003; Greenman, 2006; Harvest Resources, 2006; Isbell & Exelby, 2001), give teachers worksheets, such as the one above, to identify their values, goals, and barriers to overcome.

Conclusion

Despite my concern that a focus on the design of learning environments could mislead teachers into a home decorating, superficial window dressing mindset, I’ve found that when we continually emphasize that the environment is actually a powerful teacher, early educators are provoked to

If you were a child, what might your experience be in this environment?

Study each picture with the following questions in mind:



■ *What does this environment tell you the teacher values and expects of you?*

■ *How do you think you might behave if you spent your days in this place?*



■ *What is in this environment that helps you focus and be intentional about your use of time?*

■ *What support and guidance might you need to benefit from this environment?*



get beyond notions of Martha Stewart. Thinking about the environment as a communicator and shaper of values can stir up a new sense of the significance of early care and education work. When teachers and parents find themselves in environments that are beautiful, soothing, full of wonder and discovery, they feel intrigued, respected, and eager to spend their days living and learning in this place. Aren't these the very feelings we want the children to have?

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Worksheet for Considering the Environment as a Third Teacher (developed by Ann Pelo and Margie Carter)				
	Value: create connections and a sense of belonging	Value: Engage the senses, invite physical play	Value: provoke curiosity, intellectual engagement	Value: _____
Aspects of our environment that support this value:				
Aspects of our classroom environment that undermine this value:				
Changes we will make to bring this value more fully into our environment:				

Worksheet for Goal Setting and Addressing Barriers

(developed by Margie Carter and Deb Curtis)

Goals for next Monday	Goals for next school year	Goals for next three years	Barriers to overcome	Support I need
Things to add:	Things to add:	Things to add:	In me:	Specific support to ask for:
Things to eliminate:	Things to eliminate:	Things to eliminate:	In the environment:	
Things to change or rearrange:	Things to change or rearrange:	Things to change or rearrange:	In our policies:	Specific education or training to seek out:

*Teresa Strong-Wilson
Julia Ellis*

Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment As Third Teacher

Education is often understood as the sole responsibility of parents and teachers. Reggio Emilia identifies a 3rd teacher between child, teacher, and parent: the environment. In its attention to how space can be thoughtfully arranged, Reggio Emilia has reconceptualized space as a key source of educational provocation and insight. In what ways does this idea support and challenge existing understandings within early childhood education? The article draws on educational literature on space(s) and early childhood education, including but not confined to Reggio Emilia, as well as classroom-based practice, to pursue the implications of the notion of environment as 3rd teacher to classrooms and teacher education and how

both preservice and experienced teachers can use this knowledge to inform their practice.

THE REGGIO EMILIA approach to education talks about three educators as being in the classroom at any one time: the teacher, the child, and the environment. We do not usually think of the environment as alive, in the way that a person is; instead, we see it as coming about as a result of human imagination and work (Arendt, 1958; Frye, 1963), that is, if we truly see it at all. Maxine Greene, drawing on Virginia Woolf, reminded us of how we become immersed in the “cotton wool of habit” (Woolf, cited in Greene, 1995, p. 115). By seeing the environment as an educator, as the Reggio Emilia approach does, we can begin to notice how our surroundings can take on a life of their own that contributes to children’s learning.

Childhood is often the first place where we begin to see and use the environment imaginatively. Kytta (2002) described the affordances that enhance children’s environments as what it is possible to do, or imagine to do, due to aspects of a

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place that children perceive as valuable. Take swinging, for instance. Swinging is possible where a child can find nonrigid, attached objects, such as a strong rope attached to a tree or pole, or a swing in a park. When one of the authors was teaching elementary school in a First Nations community on the Central Coast of British Columbia, she liked the corner classroom at the end of the hallway. Because it was located where the undergrowth was thickest, the classroom was often enveloped in a greenish light. Topics rich in local anecdote and story, like the sasquatch, could come alive. The filtered greenish light also reminded her of her “deep down” image of the child (Fraser, 2006, p. 20) and those “secret spaces of childhood” (Goodenough, 2004, p. 1) where she used to play hide-and-seek with other children in the neighborhood.

Fraser (2006), in her work with preservice teachers, has identified eight Reggio principles as key to the environment as third teacher: aesthetics, transparency, active learning, flexibility, collaboration, reciprocity, bringing the outdoors in, and relationships. If we interpret these principles in light of research on children and place, we find that a Reggio Emilia approach to the role of the environment in teaching and learning draws deeply on how young children perceive and use space to create meaning. In this article, we explore Reggio Emilia's idea of the environment as a third teacher and consider how teachers (preservice and inservice) can look again at the messages and invitations contained in their classroom surroundings so as to draw more deeply on children's perspectives.

Environment As Third Teacher: What Does That Really Mean?

When we think of the environment, we tend to think of what we can see around us. However, the environment is much more than visual. Tarr (2001, 2004) studied the environments of kindergarten and primary classrooms, imagining not only how they looked but how they felt from a child's perspective:

From a small chair in a corner, I counted 19 different, decorated, scalloped borders segmenting portions of the bulletin boards lining the walls. The boards were filled with words: a word wall, class rules, a calendar, alphabets, numbers, shapes and colors, and a plethora of cartoon people and animals, each with a message and at least 50 of them with horseshoe-shaped smiles rather like a capital U ... St. Patrick's Day mobiles created from brightly painted rainbows and black-line masters hung from the ceiling just above the children's heads. Rainbows, leprechauns, and pots of gold jiggled before my eyes. (Tarr, 2004, p. 88)

Tarr (2004) wondered how this “visual busyness” influences children's concentration (p. 88). She also questioned the implicit messages behind the choice of materials and whether “the mass of commercial stereotyped images silence the actual lived experiences of those individuals learning together” (Tarr, 2004, p. 90).

An important and desirable human activity for young children is interaction with others. Bearne, Dombey, and Grainger (2003) further comment that “interaction should have the dynamic to move thinking and learning” (p. 2). How the configuration and conceptualization of spaces work to invite, hinder, or facilitate interaction has been the subject of study for scholars in early childhood (e.g., Ellis, 2004) as well as scholars in several fields (Jacobs, 1961/1992, 2004; Project for Public Spaces, 2005; Seamon, 1979). Jacobs (2004) explained that “For communities to exist, people must encounter one another in person” (pp. 36–37; cited in Robertson, 2006). Seamon (1979) has drawn on Jacobs's (1961) work to describe *place ballet*, or the bodily regularity of people coming together in time and space. A Reggio Emilia approach involves maintaining a “delicate balance” between providing structure and encouraging children's free exploration (Tarini & White, 1998, p. 379). Seeing the “environment as third teacher” is one way of playing this place ballet, but how?

A Reggio Emilia approach advocates that teachers pay close attention to the myriad of ways that space can be made to “speak” and invite interaction (Cadwell, 2003; Fraser, 2006), such as positioning small mirrors around the classroom or

placing easels close to natural sunlight. Educators can introduce “provocations” meant to surprise children and spark discussion, like a pizza box in the kitchen corner, paper and pencil in the blocks center, or aromatic scents to tantalize the children’s noses when they first enter the classroom. Other strategies include bringing in realistic objects for children to use in their play, such as different colors and shapes of pasta in the house corner. By storing colorful objects in transparent containers (markers, buttons, fabrics, wrapping paper), which children can help sort by color or texture, children’s curiosity and imagination are piqued. Cadwell (2003) explained how, before seeing the environment as central to learning, children used to dump their blocks on the floor or empty containers of sequins on the light table. Now, the materials are carefully selected and arranged to invite exploration. On low shelves, the child can find “transparent jars of shells, buttons, beads, wires, tiny pine cones, dried rose metals, sequins in the shape of flowers, and spiral shavings from colored pencils,” all of which “reflect the light and reveal their enticing contents” (Cadwell, 2003, p. 117). From a child’s perspective, such small changes animate the environment, making it feel “electric and alive” (Cadwell, 2003, p. 118). “Life attracts life,” Jacobs (1992, cited in Robertson, 2006, p. 26) explained. Children come to care for their surroundings as well as see them in unexpected ways, which becomes part of a planned approach to curriculum and evaluation that is organized around “expecting the unexpected,” a favorite Reggio Emilia saying. This approach to curriculum planning is called the *negotiated curriculum*.

Through negotiated curriculum, also called *emergent curriculum* (Jones & Nimmo, 1995), teachers engage in a recursive cycle of design, documentation, and discourse (Forman & Fyfe, 1998; Fraser, 2006). They introduce a provocation. They listen closely to children’s conversations as they engage with their surroundings. They document the children’s learning using such devices as note-taking, sketches, tape recording, video recording, and photographs, so as to create a visible trace of the learning process. Teachers also reflect and talk with other teachers or with the

children. They use what they hear, see, and think about to plan a next activity, one that will build on as well as deepen the children’s interest and investigation. A group of teachers described how teachers’ views of glue changed when they stopped seeing it as instrumental to creating a collage and instead first created opportunities for children to explore the properties of glue: What did it feel like when wet and dry? How could it be “dripped” and into what shapes? What could be done with glue and a paintbrush, stick, or cotton swab? The teachers observed the children during this exploratory phase and recorded their observations. At one point, the teachers wondered whether they should continue with exploration or challenge the children in a new direction. By reviewing their observation records, they decided that the younger children were still exploring whereas the older ones were ready to move on. Rather than separate the children into two groups, they set out, on different days, bowls of glitter, sequins, and beads. The older children began to construct objects, whereas the younger ones discovered that a paper containing all glitter but no glue needed glue as a necessary adhesive. When the children then moved on to create collages, the teachers observed that they were much more thoughtful and deliberate, rather than “impulsively and randomly” gluing the materials on the paper (Kantor & Whaley, 1998, p. 330).

Huyssen (2003) reminded us that “lived memory is active, alive, embodied in the social” (p. 28). Documentation is a living testimony to interactions that happen within a social space. Their story can be told through children’s portfolios, drawings, three-dimensional structures, words, photographs, videos, and documentation panels. Cadwell (2003) described how classroom shelves became a living archive of the interactions that had happened in that space: a matching game made of clay shapes, stones from a visit to a beach, a carved wooden puzzle donated by a family, and a paper sculpture of “Girl Land” with movable parts (pp. 109–110). Behind each is a story. Further, the objects invite other children to take them out and play with them. If prefabricated commercial images serve to silence children’s voices (Tarr, 2004, p. 115), documentation gives voice to the “in-

dividual and group histories” (Gandini, 1998, p. 168) of those who inhabit the space, creating a community memory. By making the walls “speak” with the children’s learning, parents and other adults are also invited into a dialogue so that messages do not “bounce away” (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 176) into empty or overly cluttered space. The practice of making the walls “speak” draws on the idea of creating “places for children.”

Children’s Places Versus Places for Children

From a child’s point of view, an environment is what the child can make of it. Children will often find uses for objects and spaces that adults do not anticipate or intend. For instance, Armitage (2001) has documented that one of the most popular spots where he observed children playing marbles on school grounds was on metal drains. During “marbles season,” “the whole feature [of the drain] disappears under a crowd of people [namely, children] playing marbles along the metal slots that run across its length” (p. 46). Another popular spot was the drain cover. Children considered some drain covers as more challenging than others, depending on how the ridges were dispersed in the maze of lines surrounding the center. Rasmussen (2004) invited children to use disposable cameras to take pictures of the places where they most often played and that had meaning for them. One enclosed courtyard flanked by apartment buildings shows play apparatus that adults had installed for children: swings, a slide, a sandbox, a basketball post, and net. While mentioning all of these places, Line (one young girl with a camera) focused on the tree, which was actually off limits to the children, as was a green box covering electricity cables. Nevertheless, the children climbed in and around both of these places when “the caretaker” was “not looking” (p. 161). Rasmussen wryly commented as follows: “The last two spaces are places that children take to be very important, at the same time as using them gives rise to conflict between children and adults” (p. 161). She distinguished between the structured places that adults create for children and the places

where children invest imaginative energy; she called the latter, “children’s spaces.”

Children, Place, and the Classroom

Children love to create their own worlds at their own scale in any environment they can manipulate or modify. Young children also like novel objects to explore and interesting events to witness. What children also value most in favorite places are opportunities for social affiliation and creative exploration or self-development. As Ellis (2002, 2003, 2004) has reviewed, place is a source of meaning, belonging, and identity largely due to the relationships facilitated by bonds to place. In his research with children, Moore (1986) concluded that exploration of the natural environment intensifies friendships just as friendships prompt exploration of the environment. Langhout (2003) has reported consistent findings that autonomy, social support, and positive feelings are associated with children’s place attachment or sense of place. Reviewing research related to the greening of schoolyards—a movement to replace some of the barren grass, asphalt, or wood chips areas with naturalized environments for children’s exploration and play—White (2004) pointed out that natural environments stimulate social interaction between children, are important to children’s development of independence and autonomy, buffer the impact of life stress on children and help them deal with adversity, and improve children’s cognitive development by heightening their awareness, reasoning, and observational skills.

Because children’s experiences are limited by the places they inhabit, it is vitally important that we pay attention to those places (Chawla, 1992, 2002; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Ellis (2005) argued that thinking about planning for teaching as “planning for place-making” can productively support children’s development of community, positive identities, and successful learning. By using a Reggio-inspired assignment called the “Marketplace,” preservice teachers became excited about perceiving the world through the eyes of a child.

The Marketplace of Learning

You'll know where you are because of the people with bulging white plastic bags heading in the opposite direction, bags that if opened would spill out with color, life, and the week's groceries: apples, strawberries, lettuce, red peppers, figs, a brown loaf of bread studded with seeds. We are within the vicinity of the Jean Talon market. The sounds grow louder as we approach a large square crisscrossed by rows of stalls and throngs of people. Each stall features fruit, vegetables, pies, maple sugar, or flowers, laid out in a feast of multi-colors, rich and layered, a sight bewildering at first until you learn to discriminate by color, texture, and of course, price. Meanwhile, there are also sounds to take in (people jostling, laughing, speaking in a number of languages; merchants hovering, poised to discourse on the value of their produce) as well as the smells, with the expectation of taste, whetting the palate.

This is a short account that Strong-Wilson wrote based on her impressions of a popular fruit and vegetable market in Montreal. For 3 years, the author has been working on recreating such a marketplace in an undergraduate course. "The Kindergarten Classroom" is one of the required methods courses that elementary preservice teachers take in the 2nd year of their 4-year program and just prior to their first extended field experience in schools. Her use of the marketplace was first inspired by Fraser (2000, 2006), who described an assignment in which student teachers bring in objects to elucidate principles central to a Reggio Emilia educational philosophy: aesthetics, transparency, collaboration, relationships, bringing the outdoors in, reciprocity, flexibility, and active learning. Fraser's idea originated with Malaguzzi (1998), who has provided intellectual direction for Reggio Emilia, and first used the marketplace as a metaphor to describe the kind of stimulating learning environments that teachers can create in classrooms: "Customers look for the wares that interest them, make selections, and engage in lively interactions" (Malaguzzi, cited in Gandini, 1998, p. 173).

The author combines Reggio Emilia's notion of "environment as third teacher" with her own interest in touchstones, that is, memories of places (real

or imagined) to which adults continually circle back and that are often formed in childhood through play and stories (Strong-Wilson, 2006). Her purpose is twofold: (a) to encourage preservice teachers to see the world as if from a child's perspective, and (b) to perceive classroom surroundings in a new way, as a "third teacher." The course is divided into four themes: image of the child, teacher role, environment as third teacher, and curriculum. Linking across the four themes is a teacher portfolio. The format of the portfolio invites student teachers to draw connections among themes. The process begins with the image of the child theme, in which they compose two autobiographies about their childhood; one on stories, the other on toys and games. In small groups, they share and discuss their autobiographies. Outside of class, they also complete one of the following: a short narrative or sketch of a secret childhood place (Goodenough, 2004), a neighborhood map showing their favorite haunts from childhood, or an interview with a relative about stories or games that they remember from childhood. The author has found that through this initial writing and sharing about their early experiences, student teachers recall with often uncanny precision the spaces that they inhabited as well as the details of the interactions that they experienced there. Student teachers often comment that through the remembering, they relive the childhood experience. The author has also conducted this activity with inservice teachers, with the same results. The most poignantly remembered experiences are often those in which teachers, as children, had used their imagination to transform their environment in ways that the adults around them had not planned for or did not anticipate, thus creating "children's spaces." Tree branches became houses; cramped spaces became secret hide-outs; discarded building materials (wire, netting, pieces of wood) imaginative fodder for art, drama, and science; and a hammer transformed into a doll.

If we look closely at the eight Reggio principles in light of research on children and place, we find that they also coincide with how young children use and perceive space in unplanned ways, that is, with Rasmussen's (2004) notion of "children's places." For instance, aesthetics and trans-

parency draw our attention to how children are attracted by and curious about anything that engages their senses. The principle of flexibility articulates how children will often use objects in their play in ways not explicitly intended by the teacher or curriculum. Active learning recognizes how children learn through experimenting with and manipulating objects, whereas bringing the outdoors in acknowledges children's curiosity about the natural and social worlds surrounding them.

The marketplace creates a context in which preservice teachers become more thoughtful about how they can provoke children's interactions using everyday objects; the objects, placed in relationship with one another within the classroom, can carry messages that invite children to engage with the world. Because the assignment follows on memory work into early childhood experiences, the teachers' choices of objects bear traces of their remembered experiences of how stimulating and full of unexpected surprises the world often was as children; those remembered experiences are mostly of unplanned rather than planned opportunities for learning. The challenge that Reggio Emilia has taken up, through the notion of environment as third teacher, is to create rich contexts (a "marketplace") that allow children to find their own "affordances" through their interaction with objects and other people (Kyatta, 2002), and in which teachers, through documentation and negotiated curriculum, learn from children, thus creating a community memory.

Translating Theory Into Practice

How might the notion of "environment as third teacher" invite teachers to imagine new ways to use classroom space? One powerful strategy, as just discussed, is for teachers to have opportunities to recall as well as collectively discuss images of the child as formed within their childhood experiences. A particularly effective way of eliciting such childhood memories is through drawing a map of the neighborhood where one grew up (Frank, 2003) and identifying secret places where they played alone or with other children (Goodenough, 2004). Teachers can then examine class-

room and school environments for what they allow and what they prevent children from exploring and investigating. Another idea is for teachers to involve the children in the process, as in Rasmussen's (2004) study when she gave children disposable cameras and asked them to identify which places were most significant to them and why. Following on Tarr's (2004) suggestion, teachers can also conduct an informal inventory of what they see on their walls, in particular, looking for the presence of commercial images, and ask questions (like the following, based on Tarr, 2004, p. 90) about whether, how, or to what degree (going back to Bearne et al.'s [2003] definition of "interaction") their present uses of space "move thinking and learning," including their own as teachers as well as those of parents and caregivers: Why am I displaying these materials and for whom? What image of the child does the display communicate? Does the display honor children's voices and work? How can the walls invite active participation and learning on the part of the children as well as of their parents and caregivers? The classroom is more likely to become a child's favorite place if it supports autonomy, social affiliation, and creative exploration and expression. Attention to the "environment as third teacher," because it is so close to children's ways of interacting with the world, is one way to accomplish these goals.

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Paulette Maggiacomo is a former early educator with 25 years of experience. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Reading Education. Paulette has dedicated her career to instilling a love of learning in her students and providing her fellow teachers with support, encouragement, and information.

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TO TURN MIRRORS INTO WINDOWS."

SYDNEY J. HARRIS



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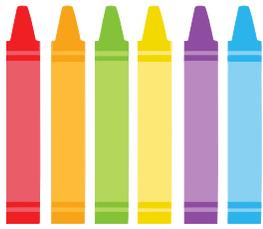
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with Harvest Resources Associates Kelly Matthews and Ijumaa Jordan



Matthews and Jordan will conduct a half day Center Director facilitator training followed by a day long training presenting Supporting Reflective Teaching. The Thinking Lens will be used as a protocol to frame the day. *Reflecting Children's Lives: A Handbook for Planning Child-Centered Curriculum* will be the essential text.

How often do we hear "Kids learn through play"? Has it turned into an empty phrase? How do we protect kids' fundamental need to play? One way is to be articulate when explaining what kids learn when they play. As requirements weigh on us, and our time with young children feels more precious, it is our responsibility to be able to speak to parents, community members, and other stakeholders about what important things happen in play.