



Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

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Introduction

For the Network, the time after our Enter, Encounter, Engage event is a time for reflection. Are we aware of who we are and what we bring to our work with children, parents, teachers and communities? Are we creating conversations and events that invite participation? Can we identify the ways these events are consistent with the values that we promote? Does the way we work together reflect the values that we hold dear? Do we welcome new possibilities?

In this newsletter, we see glimpses of movement in relation to these questions. We see inspiration after collaboration. Victoria Snyder reflects on a game-changing moment she had while collaborating with teachers from the Boulder Journey School.

We see a teacher's confidence grow when she lets go of prescribed outcomes. There is an interview with Kelsey Lepa from Willow & Sprout, exploring her experience as a new teacher in a center that approaches early childhood education in a way that contrasts with her recent formal training.

We see the value in taking care of ourselves so that we can do our best work with our children and families. We talk to Jen Johnson, Director of Willow & Sprout, who discusses the importance of self-care in a teaching practice that requires collaboration, research and reflection.

Each of these articles highlights the impact of reflection and the change that can result. Reflection can help us modify our practice and our feelings. Reflection can help us take better care of our partners and ourselves so that we can be more present for our children. We, as a Network, reflect on our offerings and continuously try to bring new and inspiring

ways to deepen your practice. May this time of year bring you joy and time to reflect and inspire growth.

Sincerely,
Lani Shapiro
Editor, Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Newsletter

It's All in the Details **Victoria Snyder**

Victoria Snyder is a teacher of 2 year olds at Westwood Lutheran Early Childhood Center in St. Louis Park, MN. Westwood teachers collaborated with Boulder Journey School (Boulder, Colorado) consultants Alison Maher and Andrea Sisbarro in July, 2016. Westwood opened its doors during their visit and Westwood provided an opportunity for the public to hear them speak about documentation.

I experienced a real game-changing moment while collaborating with consultants from the Boulder Journey School. From the moment my teaching team sat down with Alison Maher and Andrea Sisbarro, I knew that my practice would be forever changed. They invited me to think about my written observations of my students. What they shared was not new information to me, however, it was about the way in which they delivered the advice, so specific and relevant to my work, that helped me understand on a deeper level. The conversation was not only inspiring, it prompted me to put into motion some plans that I had been thinking about for a long time."

For example, my toddlers are currently very interested in Matchbox cars. Now, when I write an observation about their interactions with the cars, I write exactly what they are doing with the cars. I ask myself, are they making noises as they roll the cars? Are they lining them up in a row? Who is involved in this scheme? My next action is to consider an abundance of ideas and ways for the children to use the cars in different ways. Alison and Andrea challenged us to generate a list of 50 different things children could do with the cars. In addition they challenged us to think about why the children are so attracted to these cars. Is it because they are new? Could it be the variety in shape and color or is it because there are a lot of them? These observations help me be more intentional and deepen the children's experiences.

To read more of Victoria's article, *It's All in the Details*: www.mnreggio.org/Blog/4766760

From Novice to Researcher

An Interview with Kelsey Lepa

Eileen Galvin

“I am a perfectionist, but I don’t want to be one,” says Kelsey Lepa, a recent graduate whose first teaching position is at Willow & Sprout in St. Anthony, Minnesota. “I like to plan and I like to know outcomes. I was taught in school that that is what you are supposed to do when you are educating children. That is what teachers do. We write lesson plans. We know where our lessons are going. We know what the children will get out of it by the end of the lesson.” Willow & Sprout is different; their work with children centers on project-based learning opportunities. They believe in the inherent curiosity of children and they give the children the space and time to follow their own curiosity.

Kelsey knew she didn’t want to teach within a traditional American educational environment. From the moment of her interview she knew she wanted to be at Willow & Sprout, but being there meant being very uncomfortable as a teacher who was taught to plan. “It was overwhelming, very overwhelming, especially as a new teacher in my first job. You want to do well and doing well to me was writing perfect lesson plans and knowing exactly what was going to happen.” The time spent reflecting on her work and the collaboration with the other teachers helped her get past being overwhelmed.

Jen Johnson is the school’s director and Kelsey’s teaching partner. “Jen and the other teachers were very supportive. I kept wanting to go back to lesson plans and Jen would say that I could use lesson plans if I wanted to, but she would challenge me to go without. During the day or during our weekly meeting, my fellow teachers would ask me, how did that go? Or how did that feel? What did you notice? What did you learn?”

To read more of Eileen’s Article, *From Novice to Researcher An Interview with Kelsey Lepa*: www.mnreggio.org/Blog/4398382

Avoiding Burnout: The Importance of Self-Care

Jen Johnson

Jen Johnson is the Director of Willow & Sprout in Saint Anthony Jen with Children Minnesota. Last spring they hosted a Saturday Gathering at their center. During that Gathering, Jen talked about the importance of self-care which resonated with those attending. We followed up with her about the importance of self-care in a teaching practice that requires observation and reflection. We separated the conversation into three posts. This is the first of three.

How do you define self-care for yourself and your teachers?

For me, it is about being mindful and intentional to nurture and love one's whole self - your mind, your body and your spirit. We, the staff, sit down and create personal goals for each of those areas and it is the same thing that we do with the children. We have leading questions – how do you love yourself? How do you notice yourself – your whole self, your mind, spirit and physical body? And then, how do you nurture yourself? How do you love yourself? We separate those because nurturing can be different than loving. I tried to make it as simple as possible. This could be a new topic for some of us and I didn't want to make it too complicated.

One of the things I think about is how do you rest? How do you replenish? How do you find those quiet spaces in your day so you can replenish and get a break from daily rhythms?

How do the goals work? Weekly? Yearly?

We have yearly goals and then every month I do a check-in and then if they need something different in between we can talk about it and change it. Up until now the check-ins have been via email because that was what we all wanted. This year we are going to go deeper into the work with a physical check in vs email only. We need to figure out if email needs to be bi-weekly. With email it is easy to let the work go; with a physical check in there is a different level of accountability. It is vulnerable work.

Why is it important for a practice that requires teachers to be present and reflective, to have self-care as a priority?

To read more of Jen's article, *Avoiding Burnout: The Importance of Self-Care*:
www.mnreggio.org/Blog/4461502

Upcoming Events

Our Gatherings have ended for the year. We will send out information about next year's calendar in August.

Sunday Monthly Book Study continues through the summer

Book study is the third Sunday of the month at Open Book's entry level cafe, 3:00 - 4:30.

We are continuing to read Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia, by Veia Vecchi. New participants are always welcome. Email Patti at pattiroseoftus@gmail.com for more information or to be added to the book study email list.

You can also check the calendar at mnreggio.org for dates.

Job Postings

There are currently 6 jobs posted on mnreggio.org. Click here for more information: www.mnreggio.org/jobsforum

For more news and events visit us at www.mnreggio.org and like us on **Facebook!**
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