



Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

Volume 5, Issue 3 | Summer 2018

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Editor's Introduction

Lani Shapiro

Welcome to the summer newsletter of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota. Summer is sometimes a quiet time for those who work in schools, and a time ripe for thinking about possibilities for our practice. In this issue we offer practical information and rich reflection for your practice. There are insights from Reggio Emilia as well as stories about local efforts to both inspire and empower your work. We hope you'll join the Network this year and participate, whether you drop in for Documentation Lab, join the Open Book Study one Sunday afternoon, or attend one of our many Gatherings this year.

There is something exciting on the horizon. The current traveling exhibition of pedagogical documentation from Reggio Emilia, Italy is called The Wonder of Learning and it will be hosted from January through May of 2019, in Madison, Wisconsin. Our planning for Network activities for the coming year is informed by this proximity. The introduction to this exhibit describes their principles for education which,

*“above all else . . . are capable of guiding our choices for humanity, for liberty,
for democracy.”*

In Spring, 2019, the Network will coordinate a visit to this unique exhibit, with planned opportunities for dialogue in Madison. We are very excited about this opportunity to think together about this captivating work and hope many of you will travel to participate in this special event. Take some time with our 2018 - 2019 Professional Development Calendar, included in this issue, and see what might help you grow your own practice or challenge you in some way, and join us!

Pedagogical documentation is essential to the Reggio Emilia educational project and is a central theme of this issue. This newsletter offers a reflection from a visit to the Research and Documentation Center in Reggio Emilia, Italy. We revisit information about the RINM Documentation Lab, which will be convening about once a month next year, followed by reflections from those who have brought work to study, and those who have come to study it. In addition, you will find an essay about the impact of the monthly Book Study and an introduction to a new school in the Twin Cities based on principles from Reggio as part of its foundation – St. Paul School of Northern Lights.

With deep thanks to contributors,

Lani Shapiro

Editor

Save the Date: Fall Network Conference

Saturday, October 6, 2018

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Lunch served

Enter, Encounter, Engage:

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota 7th Annual Conference

*The Wonder of Learning – Challenging Our View of the Educational Relationship
– Rethinking the Role of Children, Parents and Teachers.*

See details below!

2018-2019 Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Professional Development Calendar

This year the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota has planned a series of monthly gatherings, which will focus on the guiding principles of the Educational Project of Reggio Emilia, as illustrated in [The Wonder of Learning Exhibit](#) and applied in our own contexts. It is the continuing hope of the Outreach & Growth Committee that these events not only create deep connections to the philosophy of the educational project of Reggio Emilia, but also allow participants to connect with each other. We aspire to provide opportunities for regular dialogue, camaraderie and mutual support. These events are one aspect of our multi-tiered plan to offer educational, inspirational and transformational events that focus on professional development for educators and educational information for families and community members. In addition to gatherings, there are two other kinds of opportunities to meet monthly for learning: the Documentation Lab and Open Book Study. The cumulative benefit of regularly coming together with colleagues to dialogue and support one another can be a catalyst for change and professional growth. It is our hope that each of us can increasingly bring about positive change in our schools and communities here in Minnesota by joining together in the supportive community that is RINM.

[Download 2018-2019 Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Professional Development Calendar](#)

Sunday, August 19, 2018

3:00 – 4:30 pm

Open Book Study

Cost: Free

All are welcome. Join us!

Location:

Open Book/Conexion Cafe

1011 S. Washington Ave.

Minneapolis, MN 55415

Over the last 12 years, an open and changing group has gathered the third Sunday of each month, to join an ongoing conversation in response to various Reggio-inspired readings.

We are currently reading *The Logic of Action: Young Children at Work*, by Frances Hawkins. Later in the year we will begin *The Wonder of Learning*, from REGGIO CHILDREN.

We arrive as individuals with diverse perspectives, as parents, students, teachers, or administrators. We work or learn in contexts that vary by age or development throughout the life span, in homes, preschools and child care centers, schools, clinics, and civic institutions. Each meeting we form a flexible learning group without a fixed destination, with the intention of cultivating a context for uncertainty, diversity and complexity.

We read slowly, never more than one chapter per month; sometimes we repeat a chapter, if we don't feel finished with it. The dispositions we strengthen include close reading, careful listening and thoughtful conversation.

Contact: pattiroseloftus@gmail.com for more information or to be added to the mailing list.

Open Book Study continues on the following dates:

Sunday, September 16, 2018

Sunday, October 21, 2018

Sunday, November 18, 2018

Sunday, December 16, 2018

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Sunday, February 17, 2019

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Sunday, April 21, 2019

Sunday, May 19, 2019

Sunday, June 16, 2019

Thursday, September 27, 2018

6:30 – 8:00 pm

Documentation Lab

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota DOCUMENTATION LAB continues to offer educators an opportunity to study traces of children's actions - photographs, video clips, transcripts of conversations and children's own work - as a way to learn in collaboration with colleagues.

These gatherings are always free and open to anyone, whether you are new to the idea of documentation or whether it has been part of your practice for a long time.

Monthly meetings will continue once a month on Thursday evenings, specific dates will be announced as space can be identified and reserved.

Location:

Roosevelt Library

4026 28th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55406

<https://www.hclib.org/about/locations/roosevelt>

Cost: Free

Contact: jesser@blakeschool.org

Saturday, October 6, 2018

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Lunch served

Enter, Encounter, Engage:

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota 7th Annual Conference

The Wonder of Learning – Challenging Our View of the Educational Relationship – Rethinking the Role of Children, Parents and Teachers.

What is your view of education? Are you inspired to view your work with children as an avenue of opening them to unimagined possibilities for the future? Are you dedicated to the belief in children’s competence to go beyond the surface of learning, to be inventive and creative thinkers of the future? In the words of Jerome Bruner, “The infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia have been doing just that for almost 50 years!” Join us as we spend a morning together to look at some of the guiding principles of the Educational Project of Reggio Emilia as illustrated in [The Wonder of Learning Exhibit](#) and applied in our own contexts. This conference launches a year dedicated to examining the underlying premises that are embedded in each section of this amazing exhibit!

Location:

Westwood Early Childhood Center

9001 Cedar Lake Rd

St Louis Park, MN 55426

<http://www.westwoodlutheran.org/childcare-center>

Cost: \$48.00

Students: \$24.00

Group Rate (5 or more, 10% discount): \$43.00

Current RINM Board or Committee members: \$36.00

To Register: <https://www.mnreggio.org/event-3009158>

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

5:30 - 6:00 PM: Tour of the environment

6:00 – 8:00 PM: Presentation

Light refreshments served

Our Documentation Journey

Documentation can be a powerful tool for educators who value thinking, inquiry, exploration, experiences and communication. We will:

- explore strategies for making thinking visible
- experience the process by collaborating in groups using provided artifacts to create a documentation panel
- discuss being brave by taking professional risks together

Facilitated by:

Sharon Rosenberg, Director and the staff of Temple Israel Early Childhood Center

Location:

Temple Israel Early Childhood Center

2324 Emerson Ave. S

Minneapolis, MN 55405

<https://templeisrael.com/pages/ecc>

Cost: \$38.00

Students: \$19.00

Group Rate (5 or more, 10% discount): \$34.00

Current RINM Board or Committee members: \$28.50

To Register: <https://www.mnreggio.org/event-3009170>

Saturday, December 8, 2018

9:00 AM – Noon

Light breakfast served

The Many Languages of Boys

There are many ways to be a boy: dressing up, painting, reading books and playing rough. Explore the diversity of boys. Discover ways implicit bias shows up in the classroom and strategies to address this bias and build authentic relationships with all children.

Facilitator:

Mike Huber

Early Childhood Education Supervisor

St. David's Center for Child and Family Development

Location: TBD

Cost: \$38.00

Students: \$19.00

Group Rate (5 or more, 10% discount): \$34.00

Current RINM Board or Committee members: \$28.50

To Register: <https://www.mnreggio.org/event-3009186>

Saturday, January 26, 2019

9:00 AM - Noon

Light breakfast served

The Enchantment Of Words: Young Children as Poets

Children's words, both spoken and written, are powerful agents. Join us for a conversation with our poet-in-residence and hear about the possibilities of incorporating poetry - children's own poetry - into your educational plan. Julia will describe how young children can discover the joy of playing with words, and through the process, come to see themselves as poets.

Facilitated by: Julia Klatt Singer, Poet-in-Residence and the staff of Grace Neighborhood Nursery School

Location:

Grace Neighborhood Nursery School

1430 W 28th St.

Minneapolis, MN 55408

<http://www.gracenns.com>

Cost: \$38.00

Students: \$19.00

Group Rate (5 or more, 10% discount): \$34.00

Current RINM Board or Committee members: \$28.50

To Register: <https://www.mnreggio.org/event-3009190>

Friday and Saturday, February 1-2, 2019

MNAEYC Annual Conference

Look for the RINM table in the Exhibit Area! Network with other RINM members and future members!

Location: MNAEYC Annual Conference, St. Paul River Centre

Saturday, March 2, 2019

9:00 AM - Noon

Topic TBA

Location TBA

Friday & Saturday, April 12 & 13, 2019

The Wonder Of Learning: The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibit

Join with other RINM colleagues as we head to Madison, Wisconsin to view and discuss The Wonder of Learning Exhibit on display at the Central Library in downtown Madison.

Plans are still being finalized. Here is our preliminary schedule for the two-day experience:

- RINM is arranging for a block of hotel rooms for participants to reserve at a downtown hotel.
- Friday afternoon: Take a tour and participate in a mini-workshop at the Preschool of the Arts, primary host of the exhibit.
- Friday evening: Post-dinner RINM gathering and dialogue to prepare for viewing the exhibit.
- Saturday morning: View the exhibit.
- Saturday afternoon after lunch: Gather as a group to debrief and dialogue.
- Saturday late afternoon: For those who are able to stay, revisit the exhibit.

*We will host pre- and post-trip meetings in March and May for participants.

Dates and Times TBA

May 2019 - Evening Event

Annual RINM Social Gathering and Celebration of the Year

Date, Time, and Location: TBA

A Visit to the Documentation and Research Center, Reggio Emilia

Emily Benz

Many of us who are influenced by the work of the Educational Project of Reggio Emilia find the documentation panels from Italian educators objects of admiration, desire and often, great mystery. Here in the United States, our first encounters with them might be through the “Browsing Through Ideas” set from Reggio children. I remember vividly my first exposure to these panels, in a course that explored principles of Reggio Emilia. The panel I studied was “the tree alphabet the tree song” from the Diana school, and as I read about the children and their strong relationship to a grove of eighteen trees that form a circle in a city park, I was struck by their imaginative leaps. In this panel, we see and hear the children caressing the trees, listening to them, and studying them. The children construct a kind of alphabet of symbols from the trees’ unique markings that the children then use to write poetry and listen to the trees and interpret what they are saying. To see such power affirmed in the children and their ideas as the educators truly listened to them, and to witness that power magnified as the teachers joyfully conspired alongside them was such

an unusual experience that I sat right up in my chair, alert to the creative possibilities of all children. And yet, when I studied the panel for clues as to how the teachers of the Diana school had supported this incredible project, I couldn't find a satisfying map, only that teachers posed a few provocative questions and had taken photos of the children as they turned the symbols from the bark into their own creations on the computer in Photoshop. The rest of the panel focused on the children and their relationship to the trees and the poetry they had written for them, appropriately keeping the focus on the children's words and actions. My curiosity was strongly piqued.

For those fortunate enough to find themselves on a study tour to Reggio Emilia, some of the mystery behind the Italian's documentation process is revealed in the Documentation Center inside the Loris Malaguzzi International Center. Here in a large room sits an unassuming space that requires some investigation to reap its many riches. It isn't flashy like the Ray of Light atelier, or stunning visitors with unexpected beauty like the Living Organisms Atelier where a dead and dried onion wows participants with its gorgeous paper-like layers (who knew the beauty of dead onions?). It presents more quietly, and asks more of the visitor who enters into the room and may at first feel overwhelmed by the many enormous panels hanging from the walls, perhaps twelve or fourteen in all, and even more by the work on the tables. These panels offer documentation of more current projects emerging from the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools. But more important than the panels are the long tables that sit in the middle of this room where artifacts from these projects are piled. When I visited Reggio recently, I studied a few panels and then sat down with the companion artifacts to see what I might understand about the Italian's process. I was not surprised to see the amazing amount of work that goes into their documentation.



One of the panels I spent time with was "The Plant Effect" from the Bruno Munari Preschool, in which the beauty and tangle of the passion flower inspired the children to investigate seeds and eventually create something they called "the plant effect," which represents the "strength and vitality of nature growing." It begins when the children notice the purple passionflower vine on their playground, otherwise known as "the flower of God's weeping" and how it has grown to tangle itself up with other plants. The children are fascinated by this plant's tenacity and beauty.

The panel documents the children's observations about the plant, "There are a hundred coming out here! Look, this one is already growing! Let's draw them all!" The documentation makes visible some of the projects the children and teachers undertook, such as drawing the passionflower vine, intently studying the seed of the passionflower physically, then drawing that as well, subsequently taking these drawings and multiplying them by working in Photoshop, to eventually create their "plant effect." With all of this documentation, we see the observations of the children as they create theories about the

plant and the seeds. They super impose their enormous tangle of drawn passionflowers onto a photo of the wire fence of their playground, “a sort of installation that weaves together nature and representation.”

This panel is impressive in its own right, rich with intricate drawings and astute observations and hypotheses. But it shows only the tip of the iceberg. After spending some time with the panel, I looked around the room to find its companion material. Things are not neatly labeled in the Center, but the space is generous in what it offers. I dug through the supporting materials and found a treasure trove of unpolished documentation: delicate raffia sculptures of vines, drawing upon drawing of passionflowers and vines, smudged pencil drawings, photos of children joyfully making discoveries with the vine, photo images of seeds merged with elaborate drawings blooming out of them via Photoshop, dozens of grainy photos of children working with handwritten notes beside them, and many iterations of photos beside dialogue and explanations, with more handwritten notes, some sections crossed out, some circled and highlighted, the beginnings of the beautiful panel in a much more raw form. The depth of their work in this project was striking. But this particular panel wasn't unusual. In fact, some panels had even more supporting material. While browsing through material for “Fake that is more real than real” a project in which children investigated with a webcam and a pen microscope, I observed three evolving photographs of a wall where teachers had pinned up twenty five pages of supporting material; photographs, conversations, drawing, teachers' questions, children's hypotheses, research articles relating to the project and drafts of a documentation panel. The level of dedication behind the scenes that goes into these panels is breathtaking, and might feel intimidating. At the same time, it's a relief to see so much raw work of the children, and the messy notes from the teachers, showing us a meandering, long path to their finished panels.

Because there is so much mystery in the beauty and power of the documentation from Reggio, we often can't help but ask, “How did they do that?” grasping about for some kind of road map or guidance on how the teachers and children got from point A to point B. After spending some time in the Documentation Center, I would argue that what one sees in a panel from Reggio is often a group going from point A (the question) to point X, Y or Z. We often don't notice the rigor and depth of the project work when we encounter a panel. The Documentation Center, with the vulnerability of its artifacts, shows us that the road of a project is long and winding, and though the result is often lovely and polished, much of the work on the way there is tentative, more messy and layered- the way any real learning should be. Perhaps we shouldn't look at the panels and ask, “How did they do that?” Instead, we should see the panels for the inspiration they are and let our minds run wild with possibility for our own children's investigations. These investigations have so many smaller moments of creativity and learning. Just imagine the places our children's work could go if given the time and space it so deserves through diligent documentation in its myriad forms, not just the pretty, polished end piece for the wall.

[The Wonder of Learning Exhibit](#)

Documentation Lab

Joanne Esser, who initiated the Network's Documentation Lab, has written frequently over the course of the last year in the Network's newsletters and blog. The Documentation Lab meetings take place monthly during the school year, where participants take time to study local work. They are open to everyone interested and the next meeting is scheduled for September 27th, at the Roosevelt Library in Minneapolis. Here are some excerpts from her articles about pedagogical documentation.

“At its heart, pedagogical documentation in the Reggio-inspired sense is the practice of paying close attention to what children say and do. It is a stance, a way of seeing with intention and curiosity. The practice of documenting is based on the belief that young children are innately driven to learn, that their actions and words are powerful and purposeful, and that they are actively engaged in making meaning all the time from their daily lives.”

“One definition of documentation in the Reggio sense is: ‘a process for making pedagogical (or other) work visible and subject to dialogue, interpretation, contestation and transformation,’ (Gunilla Dahlberg, in *The Hundred Languages of Children*). It is only through sharing with other thoughtful educators the visible traces of our work with children that we can more deeply understand and support the children’s work. The Documentation Lab creates a forum for comparing interpretations, providing multiple perspectives to inform our practice, whether we are presenting documentation or we are participants studying another’s work.”

“Each time we gather, one participant offers visible (or auditory) observations from their own work with children. These could be photographs, video clips, transcripts of conversations, anecdotal notes, work samples done by the children or any other tangible recordings of their thinking and play. Then the group follows a specific step-by-step discussion protocol that we are adapting from a process used by Steve Seidel and colleagues at Project Zero ([Documentation Lab Protocol](#)). We spend time in turn to observe, describe, raise questions and speculate about the work we see children doing in the traces offered. Then the group hears more from the presenting teacher, who has been listening all along to what was said about the children’s work. Finally, together we discuss implications for learning that have arisen from the conversation.”



“Perhaps the place in the structured conversation where the deepest learning happens is discussing the implications for teaching, learning and understanding children’s strategies. Everyone is invited to share thoughts stimulated by examining the work. One of the big questions we consider is, ‘What could we do next or differently to move this learning forward?’”

“We hone our skills at observing, critical thinking and planning in collaboration with supportive colleagues. Then we can return to our own settings and apply to our work with children what we have discovered.”

“Authentic documentation in the Reggio sense involves making intentional choices about what data to collect, reflecting on the data, interpreting and analyzing it with colleagues, communicating what you’ve observed with families and with the children themselves, listening to their interpretations and using what you’ve learned to plan for new experiences. It’s a very complex cycle!”

[Link to original article](#)

“When we document, we make the deliberate choice to observe and record what happens in our environment in order to reflect and communicate the surprising discoveries in children’s everyday lives...Documentation is not...the collecting of data in a detached, objective, distant way. Rather, it is seen as the interpretation of close, keen observation and attentive listening, gathered with a variety of tools by educators aware of contributing their different points of view. In fact, our views about childhood and our personal theories influence what each of us sees and hears; that is why we need to compare interpretations among colleagues.”

- Lella Gandini

Documentation Lab Reflection: An Administrator's Point of View

Jeannette Lutter-Gardella

I was able to attend a Documentation Lab in the early spring with Marshall Anderson, kindergarten teacher at Friends School of Minnesota. As the assistant head of school, my role is to support teachers and provide the resources they need to do their jobs as an aspect of ensuring the strength and vitality of the overall educational program. For many years, Marshall and I have been in dialogue about the Reggio-inspired concept of seeing children as capable. We have explored how to provide sustenance and guidance on children’s journey of discovery about themselves and the world around them. We have supported each other to increase and deepen the practice of listening to children, following children’s interests and identifying ways to document what the children are learning, in order to inform what might come next.

Yet, for twelve years we have struggled to maintain an intentional and focused practice of reflecting on children’s learning as it is happening. School is a busy place packed with the unexpected and fluid nature of many small bodies moving in time and space. The urgent can crowd out the important, and before we know it, we are on the downhill side of the school year and summer is fast approaching.

At the Documentation Lab I somehow experienced time being stretched out in a thoughtful and deliberate process using a protocol ([Documentation Lab Protocol](#)) through which to view and think about children's learning. The protocol promoted a lively and robust dialogue as we explored and mused over a series of pictures documenting the dramatic play of a group of preschool children. It was fascinating to hear others' thoughts and questions and, equally intriguing, the silence the protocol required of the presenting teacher. It created such a deep curiosity and openness for seeing possibilities. It brought to mind a reoccurring mantra... All teachers deserve this time, all children deserve this reflective "gaze."

"A gaze which...sees the resources and potential of each."

(referenced multiple times in the reflection from the NAREA Conference: Ideas in Motion, by both Cagliari and Soncini: <https://www.mnreggio.org/Blog/6111777>).

Most profound to me was the realization that I, the administrator, need this time with teachers. I need to see what teachers notice, what they hold and what they wonder. The Documentation Lab has fortified my role in ensuring there is collaboration time for teachers during school, to embed the seeing and wondering into our weekly schedule. I want to elevate the learning journey between the teachers and the children, to commit more fully and deeply to the power and promise of what comes from observing, collaborating and documenting. Part of my responsibility is to provide an administrative "gaze" of understanding and honoring the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning.

The Documentation Lab was a wonderful experience and reminder of the power of collaborating and thinking together about the capacity of children to learn and to teach each of us everyday.

I encourage teachers *and* administrators to come to any one of the Documentation Lab gatherings that will be coming up, resuming in the fall. The meetings are free, held in various locations around the cities and you can participate fully, whether or not you bring student work. Joanne Esser can provide further information (jesser@blakeschool.org). The dates will be announced on the [Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota website](#).

The Magic of Dandelions: A Study in Abundance

Sandy Burwell collaborated with filmmaker Audrey Favorito in inviting a group of children to a meadow filled to the brim with dandelions. It was an invitation to explore abundance, and watching the children partake in the sea of dandelions was a delight that posed some thoughtful questions. Sandy workshopped this project in the Reggio-Inspired Network's Documentation Lab, where with the engagement of the group, she discussed many possible stories and worked to decide which one to select, looked more deeply into the experience to identify a big idea, and discovered new perspectives to support clarity. This experience

reinforced her knowledge that ideas generated in a group can be more complex than those generated in isolation. You, too, are invited to be a part of the group and bring work to the Documentation Lab. And you are invited to watch Sandy and Audrey's film, *The Magic of Dandelions: A Study in Abundance* [here](#).

“A big step for us was finding a forum to talk together and build trust. Documentation helped us to share experiences in a more meaningful way. We began to rely on each other, until it became impossible to work alone; the interconnectedness of experience and relationships did not allow it. Inviting other points of view, paying attention to the experience as it unfolds in all the particular details and mini-stories throughout, and chronicling the thinking of children to make it visible to others.”

-Jennifer Azzariti



Photo: Audrey Favorito

End-of-Year Celebration: When Joy Visits Us

Eileen Galvin

If you asked me what I think of first when I think of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota's celebration on Friday, May 4, I would say, "yellow dandelions," but then I might say, "joy."

As the last event of the night, we watched a video of children in Reggio Emilia exploring a poppy field. Then Sandy Burwell presented her video, *The Magic of Dandelions*. Sandy and Audrey Favorito invited children to a large meadow where there was a sea of yellow dandelions. It was an invitation to explore abundance. What will children do when there isn't an adult there saying, "don't pick too many," or, "remember to share?" What will children do when they are faced with limitless amounts of a material, without restrictions or parameters?

One of the “sculptures” that the children created really moved and inspired me. They picked dandelions and together they placed rows of dandelions in the bark of a tree. My memory of that part of the video is of the image of these fuzzy, bright yellow rows crawling up the tree. It was like sunlight was breaking through from the inside of the tree and trying to get out.

Sandy and Audrey were inspired by the work of environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy. The works that the children created with the dandelions on the trees were images that rivaled anything by Andy Goldsworthy. They illustrated such creative thinking and amazing attention to detail.

The images made me gasp and brought me such joy—a joy filled with awe and reverence for the work of these children, the creative lives of these children, the dedication and commitment of these children.

Loris Malaguzzi said, “*nothing without joy.*” There is joy that we purposely “create.” We are silly, or clever and we experience joy. There is also joy that is visited upon us. It comes to us and overtakes us and we get to be awed by it and surprised. We get to experience its fleeting nature and the knowledge that we don’t control that kind of joy, we can’t create it, we receive it. This kind of joy lives where children live. They stumble upon it all of the time and we, as adults, are lucky if we take the time to see it, if we take the time to observe.

The image of those trees, with sunny, golden fuzz peeking out of the grey bark made me feel joy and gratitude, gratitude that I was able to come to the event and reconnect with people I hadn’t seen in a long time. Gratitude that earlier I was able to sit outside on a perfect evening and be inspired by new ideas discussed with a co-worker.

I also felt gratitude that a few years ago, when my children were small, I was introduced to Reggio-inspired work, work that encourages me to observe and be ready for a visit from joy.

www.mnreggio.org

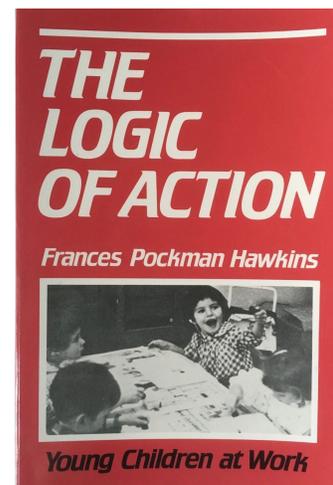
Monthly Open Book

Krista Evans

Busy schedules and closets crammed with multiplying toys can cause parenting in 2018 to easily run counter to the values I wish to share with my children. Once a month, I’ve had the opportunity to attend the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Open Book Study. The opportunity to participate offers me a couple of hours each month in conversation with experienced Reggio-inspired educators who share their experiences and learned wisdom. I’m currently a stay-at-home mother, with a background in engineering -- not education. In our current U.S. culture of making all things fast and “easy,” this is a time for me to slow down, listen, and reflect. I am the student when I attend book study.

Our monthly Network book study group recently finished the book, ***Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia***, by Veia Vecchi. As a parent who is relatively new to Reggio ideas, this book challenged me with the early childhood pedagogy of Reggio Emilia, while better explaining the role of art and aesthetics woven into the daily preschool education. Group discussion about the historical context of the beginning Reggio schools helped me understand how the schools emerged from their experiences under a fascist dictatorship. This context seems so relevant in a year of politics and never-ending news cycles. Raising children who value community, arts, and creative thinking are important values for me to share with my community. These book discussions were a breath of fresh air during a weary Minnesota winter.

As my oldest child begins his formal public school education in St. Paul, graduating from Kindergarten, our Reggio Book Study started discussing a new book: ***The Logic of Action: Young Children at Work***, by Frances Hawkins. This book takes a step back from pedagogical discussions and focuses on how young children communicate through their bodies and their actions. This kind of body communication and action of young children is my daily life. The preschool classroom studied in the opening chapters of this book has six children who are profoundly deaf, attending an inner-city school. They had little exposure to free play prior to the introduction of a visiting teacher, and demonstrate how communication is fundamentally shared through our actions. The photos shared throughout this book document the increased free play and simple, loose materials provided to these 4 year-olds. The 1969 classroom and children's work shown in the images remind and inspire my choices as a parent when seeking new opportunities for play with my 6 and 2 year old at home and the children's programs we choose for them to attend. Providing time for choice, action, and observation are all critical pieces of learning, parenting, and teaching. Of these, I need to be reminded to provide time. Book Study provides me time to reflect, and in turn, encourages me to provide that time for my children.



I encourage you to join us next month for warm coffee, engaging conversation, and time, time for discussing choice, action and observation. I am a book study and Reggio novice, and the discussion and ideas shared at book study speak to me and about values I hope to share with my children.

3rd Sunday of each month
3:00 – 4:30 pm

Open Book | 1011 S. Washington Ave. | Minneapolis, MN 55415

There is no fee; **all are welcome**. Join us!

Building a New School

Reba Batalden

For nearly two years, a small cohort of passionate parents and educators has worked to develop the broad outlines of a vision for a new charter school. **St. Paul School of Northern Lights**, will be a Reggio-inspired school, rooted in equity for all learners. Exploring our urban ecosystem, St. Paul School of Northern Lights ensures a progressive, relationship-based learning process, educating students to be kind, curious, critical thinkers who are advocating for positive change in their diverse community. Currently, the school is approved by the state as a public charter school for grades K-12, and plans to open in the fall of 2019 with grades K-8. Jeannette Lutter-Gardella, formerly the Assistant Director at Friend's School, was recently hired as the Executive Director.

I was motivated to engage in this work because of my own children and the wellspring of curiosity, determination and ingenuity I see in each of them. My older daughter walks nearly a mile to her elementary school, rain or shine and whether the temperature dips below zero or climbs into the 90s. One bitterly cold January day, as her two younger siblings and I walked home with her, she expressed her disappointment at yet another day of inside recess. The irony was not lost on her that she was outdoors walking in temperatures her teacher and principal deemed too cold for outdoor play. In an effort to explain her school's policy, I reminded her that not all children have warm enough winter gear and would not be able to enjoy recess outdoors on such a day. She silently reflected on this for a few blocks, and then proudly came up with a fitting solution for a 6 year old.

Mama, I want to knit mittens. Many, many pairs of mittens. And then I want to build a box. I'll need some wood. And probably a hammer, a saw and some nails. And then I'll need a map. I want to find the absolute center of the city. And I will fill the box with my mittens and place it in the middle of St. Paul. Anyone who needs mittens can have some mittens and we can all go outside any time we want!

I was struck by the simple perfection of her idea. Embedded here were values important to our family: equity, community, civic engagement, advocacy, and the outdoors. I saw her innate desire to develop a creative, unique solution to this problem she identified. In addition to fostering these at home, I desired a school community where this type of thinking would be nurtured and flourish for all children, from early elementary to high school. And so, taking cues from my children, and in collaboration with other committed educators and parents, I am working to build this school that will welcome all children.

At St. Paul School of Northern Lights, students and staff will be co-constructors of knowledge, learning side by side, with mutual respect and curiosity. Learning will occur in the school, and as much as possible, also outside of the school's four walls, in the surrounding natural and civic communities. We will be seeking K-8 educators, beginning in early 2019, with similar values and desire for an inclusive learning environment.

As with the schools in Reggio-Emilia, Italy, I see the act of starting this school as a political statement. I am deeply troubled by events unfolding on our national stage and, like many others, feel compelled to action. At the root of our country's struggle, there is a lack of dialogue among citizens, and the immediate crisis at the border demonstrates a troubling disregard for the fundamental rights of children. Working towards this Reggio-inspired school, valuing children as citizens, and practicing civic discourse gives me hope.

The table is set; we are seeking families, educators and citizens to join us.

Contact rebabatalden@gmail.com to be added to our mailing list.

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