



Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

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Editor's Introduction

Lani Shapiro

The desire to know, to understand, to grow, to create, to transform, to improve, to share, increases the value of learning. It is a way of being that is never satisfied with the accomplished, never put back by difficulties or limitations. It is a way of being, an attitude towards life that is learnt and practiced. Discipline is important for learning but even more so is motivation and desire.

<https://www.entreculturas.org/noticias/secret-learning-desire-learn-jorge-cela-sj>

We seek to publish work that is worth your time to read, inviting you to think more deeply about childhood, education and culture and to (re)consider whatever role you play in this consequential work. Our goal is to highlight and engage in practices central to the Reggio Approach: building strong relationships, collaborating, using varied “languages” of expression, investigating multiple perspectives through observing, interpreting and documenting.

This critical reflection is, at the same time, personal and social. Experience is not enough...we need to examine that experience.

Reflection is more potent when:

there is space for multiple perspectives;
when it asks, whose voice haven't we heard?
when it occurs through multiple media or across disciplines;
when it is offered with humility, this is my experience, what is yours?
when we are more curious about what you think, than whether you know what I know.

How is your practice affected by your lived experience? How will your insight inform future decision-making?

We invite you to take new learning risks, to join in, to reflect, unpack, collaborate, and think critically about your context through participating in various Network-sponsored events, NAREA conferences and the "Wonder of Learning" exhibit.

Embracing social constructivist theory and embodying practices consistent with that understanding, at every level, educators in Reggio tether the absolute uniqueness and subjectivity of each individual alongside the essential presence of others in a shared project of learning. The schools of Reggio Emilia offer a different vision of how we could be 'together' as a learning community. They say, "Io sono noi," "I am us."

Writing and reading is another form of collaboration. This edition of the Newsletter contains reflections and responses after various Network activities: our recent trip to the Wonder of Learning Exhibit, Gatherings, Documentation Labs, the process of establishing new schools, and the Winter NAREA conference. Perhaps you weren't able to attend these opportunities; authors offer their point of view. Perhaps you did participate; reading will give you the chance to encounter another's perspective.

"Reggio speaks to those of us who long for something else, another belonging. It gives comfort and hope by being different, by showing the possibility of different values, different relationships, different ways of living."

*Carlina Rinaldi
In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia*

With gratitude to authors who share their reflections and to readers for engaging with those thoughts,

Lani Shapiro
Editor

Remembering to Marvel: How to “See” and Amplify the Moment

Tam Weiss Rhodes and Heidi Wolf

Marvel: to become filled with surprise, wonder, or amazed curiosity, to feel astonishment or perplexity at or about, intense surprise or interest

I. Learning in context

The Exhibit:

The “Wonder of Learning” exhibit brought a multi-media display to the Madison, Wisconsin Public Library sharing the work of educators and children from Reggio Emilia, Italy with educators, parents and child advocates. The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota coordinated a study visit to the Exhibit April 12 – 13, 2019. An event on Friday evening framed our experience and helped us start thinking of moments in our lives with children that were moments of wonder. In small groups, we shared a photo or described a moment when we witnessed a moment of wonder in learning.



Through the exhibit we were offered a deeper look at potential ways teachers can implement and support child-centered learning, and teachers and children can co-construct knowledge around projects.

Heidi: Many of the exhibit panels had sentences or paragraphs that I had to read and reread and even write them down to ponder later. One that stood out was:

“Environments can multiply these marvelings – singling out certain phenomena and ‘amplifying’ them, making them more spectacular.”

Tam: The exhibit triggered reflections and questions on our interactions with children, heightened our awareness of patterns of adult thinking that can hinder us from seeing children and gave guideposts, generated ideas and posed new questions.

Where are my “aha” moments, and why?
What happens when I see this learning in the children around me?
How do I respond now and what can I change?
How can I bring about this change?

Heidi: Since seeing the “Wonder of Learning” exhibit, I am making a renewed effort to REALLY observe the youngest in my classroom, to set up the environment with simple materials that engage children and to slow down and let them take in the magic and be in the moment with them.

I am still learning to observe the toddlers in my care and join in their delight and surprise, and to remember what magic each of these experiences might be for them.

II. The photograph

We are standing together at the “Wonder of Learning” exhibit; independently stopping in silence for a long time in front of one particular panel.

Tam: I turn to Heidi and launch into an exchange that seems to continue a conversation begun the night before, during the Network welcome, to launch our work. We are looking together at an image in which children are walking, there are vines tangling their feet, and the teacher appears to realize that something magical is happening.

What grabs my attention is this moment here. Much of the other work is beautiful, but it seems familiar to me because it is situated within the context of the school and classroom. (I point to the photograph.) But here - here’s what I can’t stop thinking about.

Heidi: *I was struck with how closely the teachers watched the children for evidence of learning, especially reading body language since these children are just beginning talkers. This reminded me how important observation is, especially with the youngest learners.*

Tam: *As an adult, attuning to the emotional lives of children distorts time. I have to slow down to value the child’s frustration simply feeling a vine tangling tiny feet – feet that have just mastered walking. At the same time, I have to speed up to act quickly enough to snap the mental image (or photograph), listen to the child, envision the possible trajectories of this learning opportunity, and ensure the child is safely able to negotiate space once more.*

And so, I’m here. I get stopped right here.

Heidi: When I was looking at the panel and that photo of feet, entangled in a vine, I too get stuck, but in a way that makes me speculate how often I miss moments of opportunity with children when I rush them along, especially the toddlers, in my effort to keep up with the group of older children in our multi-aged classroom. How often have I robbed the toddlers in the group of a moment of wonder or missed a chance to notice a discovery? I stop myself here, asking, how can I remember to SLOW down, and join the moment of discovery and to see it?

It occurs to me that as adults, as we gain knowledge in life, the routine of daily life becomes mundane. I wonder if we have lost touch with the feeling of what it is like to marvel. Maybe it's a version of childhood amnesia. With children, especially toddlers, everything is new, everything is magical – a true MARVEL. I think adults forget that the joy and struggle of discovery is more important than the final skill acquired.

Annual Meeting, April 10, 2019

Emily Benz

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota held its annual meeting on Friday, May 10th to celebrate the 2018-2019 year, discuss the ongoing “Geography of Childhood” project, exchange ideas among committees and talk about scholarship opportunities as well as other Network initiatives. A focus of the evening was hearing from the contingent who traveled to Madison, Wisconsin in April to visit “The Wonder of Learning” exhibit from Reggio Emilia.

A theme that surfaced again and again in the exhibit was the Italians’ notable ability to slow down and truly give children time to dig deeply into their work. For example, a literacy-based project highlighted the marks children made as they gave each other gifts. Teachers understood this offering of objects-as-communication as an early form of literacy. The teachers celebrated the marks on their way to becoming letters, knowing how much learning was happening. Once the children moved from letters to words, the teachers noticed the way they made metaphors, for example, writing “smoke” in a wispy way.

Another project, based around materials, involved what might have appeared at first glance to have been the children studying a well-known artist, Alberto Burri. Rather than exposing the children to the artist’s work and then giving them materials and the opportunity to create art, this project took a remarkably different approach. This artist is well known for crushing leaves and other natural materials as his medium. The teachers took the children out to gather items from nature and invited them to experiment themselves, crushing the items to make powder that could be used to make paint. The children then painted and made projects in a process similar to the artist. It was only then, after the children had gone through their own process, that they were introduced to his paintings. Because of the process-oriented way that the teachers introduced the work, the children were able to have a much deeper understanding as they encountered the art, having had a similar artistic experience themselves. These are just a couple of highlights from the exhibit, which is extensive and leaves one marveling at the learning.

[Children, Art, Artists](#)

[The Wonder of Learning Exhibition Catalog](#)

Group members asked each other before visiting the exhibit, “When have *you* experienced a wonder of learning?” It is a good question to ask in general, perhaps, to take stock of one’s year and to consider during the respite of summer. It is a question the Network will be considering,

too, as we think about our work together over the last year and plan for time with you next year. Until then, enjoy the beauty of summer, and we will see you this fall!

How Far Can Your Experiences with Young Children Go Without Collaboration and Reflection?

Ross Thompson, Director and classroom teacher at Wildflower Early Learning Center

One of my bigger takeaways with starting Wildflower has been the idea that “it takes a village.” Collaborative reflection is paramount when it comes to creating the best program possible. It took countless hours of conversation and collaboration with many different individuals to establish Wildflower as the amazingly warm and welcoming place it is today. This could only happen through group reflection and discussion. No one person could have created the current Wildflower on their own. It was the collective knowledge and reflection of the larger group that has helped it blossom into a growing educational community.

When I was offered the opportunity to create a brand-new Early Childhood program, I knew there would be a tremendous amount of work to be done...and the reality did *not* fall short of my expectation. Not only did it involve deciding on the aesthetic of the space, searching for and selecting materials, writing a number of handbooks, training a new staff, scheduling tours to meet and talk with curious families, but it also involved last-minute construction changes, going through the Rule 3 checklist several times to quadruple-check that our space was ready and countless attempts at answering the, “What if...” and “What about...” questions. But it was that constant questioning and reflecting upon the answers that got us ready to open Wildflower Early Learning Center on January 2, 2019. And it’s that same process of asking and reflecting that continues to move us forward to be better educators, Early Childhood professionals, and (dare I say) human beings.

One of the biggest questions that came up for us initially was, and arguably still is, “How do we do this?” There are many details and logistics that come with creating and operating a business, but I’m talking about that bigger, “How?” It’s a question we all face when working with young children, whether as a teacher, childcare provider, or parent – “How do we support these children to help them become their best selves?”

Ask any teacher or parent, and it’s safe to say it takes years before any of us feel like we’ve got a handle on how to effectively work with young children. Even those of us who have completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in Early Childhood would say we didn’t *finally* “hit our stride” when it came to teaching or parenting until after a few years of experience. That feeling of confidence takes time, experience, and trust. Education and experience will fall flat if we don’t take time to reflect on the why’s related to the interactions between our intentions/choices and the children’s actions. Our facilitation and the children’s learning don’t happen in a vacuum. Every experience will be different because of _____ (insert all possible variables of life that come with working with children.)

We also have to know that we are going to be unsuccessful from time to time – much more so if we happen to be new to the teaching world. But that’s learning! We don’t stop infants from learning to walk because they fall over the first few times they try it. On the contrary, we applaud and cheer their continued attempts, and we celebrate *with* that child once they figure it out! So, a question to ponder and discuss with our collaboration group might be: *When (and why) do we stop celebrating the attempts to learn new skills and information...especially as adults?*

We all have to try and try and try again until we finally feel like we have figured something out. And then as soon as we get that one thing figured out, our strategy will likely have to change again because children, temperaments, social dynamics, environments, etc. are in constant flux (or to keep a positive tone – growth)! The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “You cannot step into the same river twice, for other waters are continually flowing.” Just like the waters of the river – the children’s temperaments, as well as our own, are ever-evolving and changing. So just like the river, we can enter the water from the same dock, however, the water our feet touch will be different then the last time we dipped our toe in...just like our classrooms. For those of us who lead the same activities in the same way for several years in a row, i.e., pulling down the “Spring” box now that the snow has melted, and doing the exact same month’s worth of activities that have been in the same order for X-number of years, simply ask, “Why?” We can’t make the “river” be something it is not. Just as we can never fully predict how an activity will go with a group of young children, we are even less successful with trying to predict the seasonal changes in Minnesota! No year will be the same, just as no classroom will be the same – especially year to year! Taking the time to reflect on the weekly, if not daily, happenings invites us to truly see and honor the interests of the children rather than asking them to conform to what we want them to do.

In the world of plant life, we know that monoculture biomes do not survive for very long. It is when there is a variety of plants, animals and insects that a biome can truly thrive! The same is true for our work with young children – multiple ideas and perspectives are needed to create a rich and diverse educational environment that will foster the development of all of the children attending that program. It’s easy to say that there is not enough time to fit reflective practice into the day, but is that true? From the beginning, the staff at Wildflower has acknowledged how important collaboration and reflection is to creating a school environment where everyone thrives. Therefore, we have made it a priority to find the time throughout the week to spend time in meaningful dialogue. And it seems to be working – *we are all thriving!* What if we prioritized finding time to collaborate? How would programs, as well as individuals, change? I’m guessing it would be for the positive. So, no more hypotheticals. How can you find more time for collaboration and reflection? Make it a priority and find the time. You’ll be glad you did.

Saint Paul School of Northern Lights: An Update

Jeannette Lutter-Gardella, Start-Up Coordinator

Reba Bataldan, one of the founders of St Paul School of Northern Lights, wrote in the Winter Newsletter, “St. Paul School of Northern Lights will be located in the West 7th neighborhood of St. Paul.” We are excited to share that our new home is located in the former St. Francis Elementary School at 426 Osceola Ave. St Paul, MN 55102. This lovely school building has been the home to Nova Classical Academy, Upper Mississippi Academy and now, St. Paul School of Northern Lights. We are minutes away from the vibrant West 7th Avenue, where theatres, business, artist and local nonprofits have all warmly welcomed us to the neighborhood. The trails along the Mississippi River are within walking distance and the Ford Road Association has invited our students to become involved in a community garden as an opportunity for community service.

We have received over 174 applications and enrollment packets have gone out to families. We currently have openings in 1st-6th grade. Please share with families and others who are seeking a school whose vision is to see and nurture the whole child and which will provide time for children to engage with the both built and natural world as the third teacher.

We have held several events for both interested families and educators, listening to what their hopes and dreams are for the school. Our vision of creating a community that supports teaching and learning centered on the whole child has been affirmed time and again. Most recently, we held an event for interested educators; thirty educators showed up on a frigid, icy and rainy evening. Together we imagined how teachers could drive professional development and shared what might alternative ways to assess learning look like. Teachers and families alike want to keep the love of learning alive by tapping into children’s inherent curiosity and motivation to learn.

Educators! We are collecting resumes for grades K-6, and all postings will be on our website: www.schoolofnorthernlights.org, [Edpost](#) and [MAC](#). We are seeking candidates who desire a values-driven educational environment who are committed to furthering our mission: 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. We hope you will join us in reimagining education.

Documentation Lab

Cheryl Vargas

I am speaking to the tired and uninspired.

When seeking new experiences to develop professionally, we are often faced with a few generic choices that leave us feeling uninspired, unfulfilled. We often do workshops or take classes which follow trends in child development or provide us needed professional development hours.

We may imagine what interests us but we can't find it. Sometimes we aren't even clear on what we are looking for. It's easy to get lost meeting the basic needs of the children in our care when what we really want is to connect with them authentically and instill a lifelong love of learning within their hearts and minds. There are special days when we know that has happened and it reignites our passion for educating children. Days like those, when they do happen, are the fuel to our hearts as educators and providers. We need to find more of those, or better yet, create them.

How might we go about creating more fulfilling, meaningful moments that keep us feeling motivated and connected to our work? How do we move forward and evolve as educators in a manner that feels natural, as though we are moving with a current rather than fighting against it? We have the ability to relax and be mindful of our programs, enjoying the journey while simultaneously learning and evolving. The Reggio approach connects us. It connects us to ourselves, to our children, to our programs, to other educators, possibly our community. It inspires us outwardly and within. It plants seeds within us that grow something unique - an authentic approach to our children, families, program, learning environments and even ourselves. That web of connection is what we are able to weave beyond our current awareness when we have documentation and reflection, communication and collaboration. All of this can be achieved through attending documentation labs, and they are free!

Documentation is not paperwork. It is not about producing an end result, or portfolio, although that can be part of the journey. It is about growth. It does not require special training nor do you need to know what you are doing or will be doing. You will not need expensive assessments or fancy equipment. All you need is you. Come as you are.

Please join us at a documentation lab to look inward, outward, all around you. Awaken to your work, find passion that will be long lasting. Develop your authentic approach and start really seeing the children you care for. We need one another! We are here to help one another in our journeys alongside children.

(Documentation Labs are in hiatus during the summer. Watch for dates and locations in the Fall.)

Creativity, Collaboration and the Arts

Collaboration is Essential for Both Children and Teachers

Eileen Galvin

At the Saturday, March 16 Gathering, teachers from the Friends School of Minnesota presented Creativity, Collaboration, and The Arts. Marshall Anderson, Kindergarten teacher, Laura Pereira, Art Specialist and Karen Salter, Music Specialist explored how their collaboration deepens their children's learning, and how their collaboration deepens their practice as teachers.

- What language embodies the spirit of collaboration?
- What does collaboration feel, sound and look like in your setting?

We know from research that the brain's weakest function is the retention of isolated bits of data. Its strongest function is the retention of pattern, narrative, story and system. The brain is a patterning organ, and it thrives on making connections.

Parker Palmer

The Arts and Insects

Each year, Laura collaborates with teachers from grades 1 and 2 to focus on the natural world, particularly, insects. Through collaboration, this project evolves each year depending on the children's responses.

The children explore insects from many different perspectives and using multiple media:

- observing insects outside,
- looking at pinned insects in a science lab,
- writing about how they have interacted with insects in their lives,
- painting watercolors of insects,
- making 3-D insects out of found materials,
- sharing their knowledge with their older buddy.



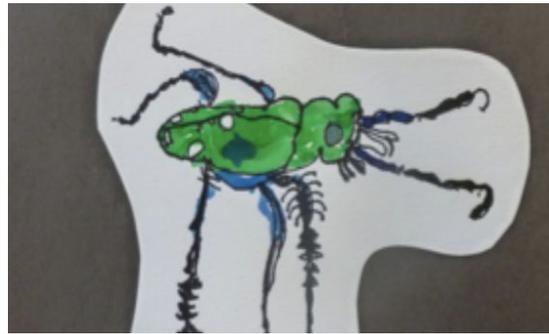
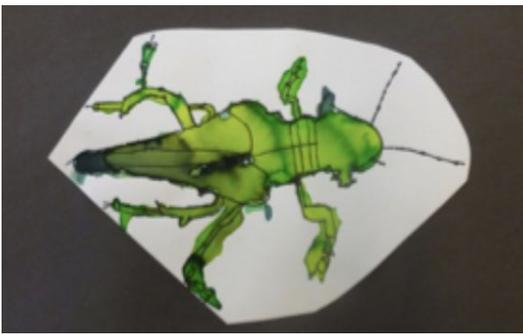
The children reflect on these questions:

“What do artists and scientists have in common?”

“How can viewing an object from the perspective of an artist help scientific understanding?”



"Artists and scientists both observe, experiment, and discover things,"
Lola, 1st grade



"What did you discover? How can you use these discoveries in your paintings?"



"What parts exist on real insects?"

"Can you create an imaginary insect that uses real insect parts?"

"How can you use found materials to imitate nature?"



Children make deeper meaning when they examine a subject from many different perspectives, in many different ways. The arts provide space for deeper thought, creativity and engagement throughout a curriculum.

“The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences. We must widen the range of topics and goals, the types of situations we offer and their degree of structure, the kinds and combinations of resources and materials, and the possible interactions with things, peers, and adults.”

Loris Malaguzzi

Scholarship Information

RINM Education Scholarship

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota's Education Scholarship is available to those interested in learning more about the Reggio Approach. Network members are invited to apply at any time of the year (a minimum of 6 weeks before an event you plan to attend). This scholarship may be used for registration costs to local, national or international Reggio-inspired workshops and conferences. Preference will be given to professional development opportunities where educators from the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy are presenting. Funds are limited and awards are made at the discretion of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Board.

[Scholarship Information](#)

[Scholarship Application](#)

Monthly Gatherings Annual Scholarship

This scholarship, established by the Network's Board, is in honor of Sandy Burwell, a founding member of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota. It sponsors an individual to participate in the Saturday Gatherings for a school year. Anyone with a deep curiosity

about Reggio Emilia is encouraged to apply. If you are awarded the scholarship, you will be asked to write reflections on some of the Saturday Gatherings.

[Scholarship Information](#)

[Scholarship Application](#)

Reflections from Scholarship Recipients

Elysia Springer

2018-19 Monthly Gatherings Scholarship Recipient

It has been a goal of mine to become more involved with the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota since I moved to the Twin Cities in 2014. Professionally, I consider myself lucky to have had a strong foundation in constructivist theory, with amazing models in my formative student teaching years. I entered a role that allowed me to reimagine an art program for young children, and put into practice what I knew of the Reggio approach with plenty of room to navigate my own language as a reflective practitioner. Attending the past year of gatherings has reinforced my own established processes and thinking, but more importantly has been a genuine inspiration for all the many manifestations of what it means to make children's learning visible.

The timing of my receiving this scholarship coincided with a shift in my role from atelierista, to collaborating on an administrative team, and stepping up as a teaching coach. I greatly appreciated having new approaches and ideas to share after each meeting to reinforce the learning happening in our classrooms. I was continually impressed by the various presenters at each gathering, and of the unique content they each shared. I am truly appreciative for the opportunity to attend these monthly gatherings, and am excited for gatherings to come!

A Reflection from the NAREA Winter Conference 2019

Johannah Rukavina

Walking away from the NAREA Winter Conference, I felt inspired, encouraged, challenged and excited about the work we do with young children. Being able to reflect and collaborate on our work with like-minded educators fuels the work we do, while giving power to the work that children do. The work that was shown and explained through the lens of the Reggio schools gave light and attention to the work of the children. Seeing the world through their eyes and helped me to understand the way in which they learn through play and exploration.

The insight that Marina Castagnetti and Nunzia Franzese shared gave great perspective to the way in which we view young children. Seeing the children's abilities and taking in all that they can do rather than what they are not yet able to do will give the children new opportunities and a new respect.

We need to understand that children are bearers of rights rather than bearers of need. Young children bear the right to wonder, to learn, to explore, to create, etc. As educators, our role with these young children is to provide a space that encourages these rights; and act in a way that supports children in their exploring, rather than guiding them through our processes. This way of thinking begins with us as the educators and leaders; with the understanding that there's a virtuous circularity between the teaching process and the learning process. As we gain this understanding, we can see that there is no longer a necessity to teach, as children are no longer the only learners in our environment. The idea, "School does not prepare children for life. School is life" gives power to the work that young children do in school.

I teach preschool and I walk through this idea and this mentality with our parents all the time. As children are two or three years old, they do not need the stress and pressure of preparing for school. We should not put the stress of preparing for the next stage in life on a young child. It is important to understand where children are at, in the moment we are with them. Expanding and growing on the knowledge and curiosities that surround them in each year of life will better support the child as a whole.

Going back to my preschool classroom, I am eager to share this passion and excitement with my teaching team. I hope to carry this understanding and language of young children into my own work.

NAREA Winter Conference, March 21-23, 2019, Madison, Wisconsin

Judy Moran

I went to this conference looking for ideas on how to apply the Reggio Emilia approach in my role as a nature preschool teacher. Based on my previous studies, I understood that there is no list of "ways to apply the Reggio Emilia approach in nature" but instead was looking for ways to use the many "languages of children" to tap into their own curiosities of the natural world. I quickly realized that I was looking under a really small stone and instead need to keep a much broader picture of teaching. The Italian way of thinking is through interconnectedness – a big, complex picture. I was trying to break down the approach into smaller pieces.

One of the first discussions that led me to this realization was by Marina Castagnetti, the featured speaker, who stated that there are "no empty spaces...between the story of the school and the story outside the school" and that "every school is different because every adult and child inside them is different." This prompted me to consider the story of our school. We are situated on 110-acres, as part of a Nature Center. This allows the children to experience the natural world around them every day, in all Minnesota weather. Opportunities exist for each child to experience their world through many languages; using their bodies, curiosities, and imaginations. For example, one large fallen tree becomes a pirate ship, ice cream shop, or horse that the children climb up, across and over. During this exploration the children strengthen their body awareness, practice social skills, and/or

focus their attention on the clouds overhead. While the outdoor space is available to all children, it is my role as their teacher to listen to and observe each child in order to honor each child's way of learning at this fallen tree.

I thought about this scene as Nunzia Franzese discussed how all of us are equally responsible for "inviting children into complexity, not simplicity." This outdoor space is a challenge, it is not "tiny size for tiny abilities." As she expressed her thoughts as a pedagoga, I began to realize that the "Hundred Languages" is ultimately about how the child is viewed. Believing the child is competent and capable is reflected in not only how we design our spaces, but also how we invite children in already existing spaces. The large log is there for all, and all are invited to experience it according to how they are processing the world at that moment.

"The more time you spend with children, the more you notice how inquisitive they are about the world and how keen is their thinking even about the most subtle things – things which escape materiality, easy recognition, definite forms, and the laws of invariance, things you can touch but can't touch, that brush against the real and imaginary, that have something of the mysterious about them and off wide margins of interpretation."

Loris Malaguzzi

Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 16, 2019

3:00 – 4:30 pm

Open Book Study

Cost: Free

All are welcome. Join us!

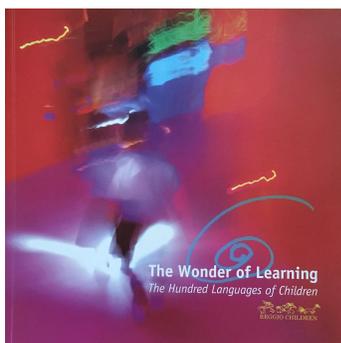
Location:

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 Wonder of Learning: A Catalogue of the Exhibit*.



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

In Memory: Marilyn Stalheim

Sandy Burwell



My first meeting with Marilyn was at MacDonald Montessori during one of the first Network meetings in 1999. I was immediately drawn to her humor, passion and human-ness. She was such an authentic professional with many years of varied service – as an English teacher, librarian, college professor and Christian Education director. When we met, she was the director at Westwood Early Learning Center which she had founded in collaboration with the Westwood Lutheran Church.

Whenever she entered a room, she brought with her a presence of strength and charm and the most stunning wardrobe.

Professional development for early childhood educators was one of her passions along with art and nature. My strongest and most delightful memory was the first SEEING CHILDREN exhibit, in collaboration with the Italian Hundred Languages exhibit that was hosted by the Network in the St. Paul City Hall, 2004. Many schools were documenting the study of environment in their own context. Westwood has nature and art as two of the mainstays of their program. All the children, infants up to 5-year-olds, participated in a huge mural of the beautiful flower gardens on their campus. This was on display along with documentation of the weeks it took to complete. It was a stunning creation and a tribute to her connection with all the teachers and children at Westwood.

I have had many opportunities to work with Marilyn over the last 20 years and have been inspired by her spirit, devotion, knowledge as well as her humor and joy. She was a mentor in the true sense of someone with qualities to which one would aspire. I know that she has touched many lives in a tremendously positive way and her memory will go on in future children and teachers at Westwood and in the Reggio-Inspired Network.

“We invite you not to do what we do, but to think differently...to think about education differently.”

Reggio Children

Shop and Support

Do you shop on Amazon? Use Amazon Smile: smile.amazon.com when shopping at Amazon and designate the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota to accept their donation. Amazon will donate .5% of your shopping total directly to the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota with no expense to you!

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