



Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

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Editor's Introduction

Lani Shapiro

Our agency as educators is comprised of time, materials and ideas. What do we do with those assets? How do we organize time? What materials do we select? How do we make proposals in our context? How do we make meaning from those decisions and how do we convey those understandings to others to invite their perspectives?

A thread that runs throughout our professional development calendar this year is 'stuff' and what we do with it. *Enter, Encounter, Engage*, which focused on 'loose parts,' drew a large and enthusiastic crowd. In the coming months, we will explore the affordance of blocks, the invitation of the atelier and the techniques of collage and printmaking. Below you will find descriptions of those offerings and steps to register. We invite you to join us in this year-long exploration of materials. Come, be inspired, and talk about the ideas that these materials spark in you, and in turn might spark in the children you work with.

Many of those who completed our membership survey indicated their desire for a deeper understanding of documentation. Please note changes to the Documentation Lab schedules and locations. Doc Lab is an opportunity to explore possibilities, strengthen your skills and build collegial relationships.

As the end of the year approaches, please contribute to the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota. Gifts to the Network provide scholarships, purchase books for our library, and allow the Network to help local educators and families engage with the Reggio approach in their own contexts.

With deep thanks to authors,

Lani Shapiro
Editor

Upcoming Events

Sunday, December 8, 2019, 1:30-3:30 PM

Current Inspiration from Reggio Emilia: The Atelier

At an advanced study tour to Reggio Emilia last spring, participants were invited to engage in one of various “ateliers” – of clay, of photography, of light or paper. We will reflect on and analyze an experience in the “Atelier of Paper” as a way to think about how we introduce materials. We will focus on how the encounter was organized and reflected upon. We’ll highlight how we introduce, select and organize materials, create invitations for their use and how documentation supports this work.

Presenter: Lani Shapiro

Location: Saint Paul School of Northern Lights | 426 Osceola Ave S | St. Paul, MN 55102

[Registration: Current Inspiration from Reggio Emilia](#)

Documentation Lab *Changes*

There are documentation study groups in two regional metro areas. 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.

DOCUMENTATION LABS continue to offer educators an opportunity to study traces of children's actions - photographs, video clips, transcripts of conversations and children's own work, sketches - as a way to learn in collaboration with colleagues.

South Metro Documentation Lab

Documentation and Context: A new twist on RINM Documentation Labs

South Metro Documentation Lab is trying a new format this fall, experimenting with the strategy of combining the examination of documentation with the importance of the environment in which it was created.

Many people have expressed the benefit of visiting other settings to understand the importance of sharing ideas as well as focusing on interpretation of the Reggio principles in one’s own context. Our initial events were on September 28 at South Metro Montessori School in Lakeville and on October 26 at Edina Daycare. Both were full of rich, productive and insightful dialogue connecting the analysis of documentation with the context in which it was created. Both hosting and visiting educators benefited in unique ways.

Schedule for the rest of the year:

(Saturdays from 9:00AM–12:00PM)

- Nov. 23 - Little Knights at Benilde St. Margaret’s High School, St. Louis Park
- December - no meeting
- January 18 - Kinderberry Hill, Eden Prairie
- February 22 - Little Trenders, Lakeville
- March 21 - Kinderberry Hill, Edina
- April 18 - The French Academie, Minnetonka

- May 1- End of Year Celebration

Please RSVP for each event:

Sandra Burwell - smburwell@gmail.com

At each meeting we will introduce the context, history and tradition of the setting; and examine an on-going investigation in that center. Please come and join in this new adventure. Questions, comments, reflections, suggestions: smburwell@gmail.com



RINM Documentation of children and teacher's work at Southdale Mall, 2011

North Metro Documentation Lab

Upcoming: December 1, 2019

(First Sunday of Each Month | October-May | 1:00-3:00 PM)

Location: Location will vary

Following the lead of the South Metro Documentation Lab, the North Metro Documentation Lab will begin meeting in different environments beginning the first Sunday of November, from 1 - 3pm. If you are interested in hosting, email me your information and we will pick a date. If you are interested in coming, email and we will let you know where we will be meeting. It will be held at a site in the Northern Suburbs

Contact: Stephanie Ponticas - heartsandmindsdaycare@gmail.com

We have started a Facebook Study with the book, *Really Seeing Children* by Deb Curtis.

Search on Facebook: "Reggio-Inspired Documentation Book Study"

The **Metro Area Documentation Lab**, which had been meeting on the second Thursday of the month at the Roosevelt Public Library in Minneapolis, has discontinued their meetings. If you are in the Metro area, please consider joining the North Metro or South Metro groups.

We would like to express our gratitude to Joanne Esser for initiating the Documentation Lab process for all of us. Anyone is welcome to begin a Documentation Lab. It could be in your place of

Judy Hodder

The beauty of presenting loose parts to young children is that they invite the child's powers of destruction and construction in almost equal measure. In moving, joining, poking, sorting, naming, stacking, painting, and tinkering with loose parts, the child continually makes and 'unmakes' configurations - adding, subtracting, pausing, persevering, evaluating, revising, concluding, revisiting and, in so doing, increasingly and exponentially expands her/his powers of cognition /personal agency while simultaneously delighting in the fun of open-ended play. The surprise inherent to using loose parts in early childhood classrooms is tucked into every individual and collaborative venture: the gift of witnessing the unfolding of a perfectly unique offering.

Jamie Bonczyk

Nearly half of the staff from Hopkins Early Learning Center (HELC) attended the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota's Annual Conference as a way to deepen our understanding of how the Reggio philosophy aligns with our current practice. We have been reflecting on how Loose Parts can be used to inspire both children and adults to help us meet our mission, which is to partner with families to create an environment that provides the security, love and stimulation where every child can make sense of the world in their own way.

As first time attendees, we found the sessions at the conference to be rich and meaningful. We expanded our interpretation of Loose Parts, especially around small world play, treasure baskets and incorporating found items with Playdoh and clay. We were energized to pull together provocations for the books "Leaf Man" and "Not a Stick" as the natural world around us changed and provided us with materials.

The Scrap Store Play Pod video shared during Dr. Carla Gull's keynote (available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqi1KyJJeKg>) led to an animated discussion. The freedom and creativity that the children demonstrated when creating and constructing with Loose Parts stuck with us, especially since we had yet to incorporate Loose Parts into our outdoor play. We immediately started collecting paper tubes from parents and staff which can easily be taken to the playground as a way to start. We hope to eventually create our own version of an outdoor Play Pod.

One teacher from HELC commented, "I was reminded that loose parts can be made out of anything, that I can establish a jar at home to collect items that can then be used for loose parts play. The conference also gave us many great ideas on how to organize loose parts by creating theme containers for all the loose parts. For example, having a box for shiny things, wooden things, or different size balls, etc. I also learned that loose parts can be water, gas, fire or anything of this nature, which was very interesting to learn about new ways to have loose parts.

When asked, "what did you enjoy most?" another educator from our cohort replied, "using materials in your classroom to create something from your very own imagination!" Another commented, "there were many good reminders to think outside of the box and to let children decide how to use an object. We can present materials, but we need to let children take it from there." Hopkins Early Learning Center staff agreed we can learn a lot about what children know by observing their play and we can use that data to inform future learning opportunities.



Year-End Giving

Why I give to the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Annual Give and Grow Campaign

Marty Watson

For the past 11 years, since I started as director at Dodge Nature Preschool, I have benefited from the work of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota and had the pleasure of watching the organization grow and mature. It continues to offer vital inspiration and knowledge, leading me to be a more thoughtful educator. During this time of year, it is the practice of the organization to invite those who have benefitted from and believe in the mission and work of the Network to share in its financial support.

The Annual Give and Grow Campaign goes until December 31, 2019.

I choose to financially support RINM because the Network provides...

- Opportunities to attend and send staff to high quality professional development that explores the Reggio Approach through a variety of topics. Often these Gatherings are Develop approved. The Network's Annual Conferences bring nationally known speakers to the Twin Cities.
- Free access to books about the Reggio Emilia Approach. The Network purchased over 50 different titles and donated them to the Debra Fish Early Childhood Library, a part of the Saint Paul Public Library. New titles are continually being added.
- A website to stay current about scheduled events, read reflections from other Network members and learn more in-depth history and growth about the Approach.

- Scholarships that will afford the opportunity to attend all Gatherings for one year without cost. A second scholarship fund offers to cover the registration cost to a conference to hear a professional from the schools of Reggio Emilia present.
- Monthly Book Study and Documentation Labs, at no cost, led by knowledgeable professionals from the Reggio Network.
- A Network of professionals that challenge my thinking about Early Childhood Education and support my growth and learning.
- Opportunities to volunteer as a board member, committee member, or to support a range of individual projects. My ideas and suggestions are valued and my voice is heard.
- A quarterly Reggio Network Newsletter with information shared by Network members.

There are no dues that need to be paid in order to be a member of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota. That has made it easy to invite other professionals to join the Network

Although much of the income that is needed to fund the Network is earned through tuition for Gatherings, donations are still needed to reach our goals and to be able to offer education scholarships.

Your gift in any amount is greatly appreciated. The goal for this 2019 Give and Grow Campaign is \$1800. Please join me in giving by using one of these three options.

1. Go to www.mnreggio.org and go directly to the Network's donate button.
2. Send a check, payable to Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota directly to our mailing address, Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota | 525 Pelham Blvd N. | Saint Paul, MN 55104
3. Go to GIVEMN.org on November 14 (or another time) and select Reggio-Inspired Network.

The Network is all of us working together. Your contributions are appreciated! If there are suggestions or questions please contact Marty Watson, Network Board Treasurer, at martywatson549@gmail.com.

Professional Development Scholarship Recipient

Jeannette Lutter-Gardella

Last March I traveled to Pistoia and Reggio Emilia, Italy as a member of the In-depth Study Group: The Role of the Teacher, the Pedagogista and the Atelierista. This was an opportunity of a lifetime, and I would like to express my gratitude to the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota for providing me a scholarship assist with my study in Italy. Thank you.

While my suitcase has long been emptied, I am still unpacking the deep learning I gained from this experience with the children, teachers and educational environments in the Pistoia and Reggio schools. I find myself reflecting on the meaning and practice of "*accoglienza*," which in English means "hospitality." Yet the meaning of *accoglienza* in the schools of Pistoia and Reggio Emilia is more than hosting and serving guests. It is practiced as an embrace, a gesture of global welcoming of all children's subjectivities.

Accoglienza is a pedagogy that honors learners as world citizens. The Italian educators consider this gesture of global embrace an invitation to the contemporary world. They take the position that the

capacity to be in dialogue with families, and one another, is a practice of generating care. This is foundational, a prelude to generating community. When we care for one another, we create community.

Accoglienza embraces subjectivity. Those who practice it understand that there is an essential act of reciprocity that establishes a community as one of welcome, evidence of ongoing political and social responsibility.

Pedagogy is movement, it is a continuous movement...I don't think pedagogy knows every day where it goes and where it could go, it is a course that is discovered along the way..."

-Loris Malaguzzi

I believe that this welcoming and receiving, these reciprocal acts of generating care and openness to learning, generates community: a group of children becomes a community of learners; a group of parents becomes a community of families. This sets the cardinal direction for what follows in the schools of Pistoia and Reggio Emilia, which are places not only of education, but also centers for the construction of personal identity and collaboration, places where cultural reciprocity is practiced. The schools work as a system of relationships among subjects who are protagonists of the educational experience, by creating space and time for a dialogue between pedagogy, educational environments, each other and the world.

School communities exist within the world as it is today. Even as they are a part of the world, schools are culturally and geographically specific. *Accoglienza* could be a pedagogical path for all of us, as we grow together, practicing our collective citizenship of the world.

Reflections on a Journey with the Reggio Approach

Marty Watson

Surrounded by family, I was sitting at dinner in Gregory, South Dakota, when a conversation about kindergarten emerged with my six year-old cousin cheerfully answering my questions about school. My cousin Steve quickly piped up that he had gone to kindergarten at his country school in 1960 with nine K-8 students and a field trip for the entire school each Friday. The teacher loaded all the kids into her car, and they visited the Carnegie Library in Dallas, the Gregory Airport, the newspaper, the Emdey Bee Farm, the County Soil Conservation Office, and the Post Office, to name a few. Although it had been sixty years, the impact was so strong that Steve rattled off the field trip experiences like it was yesterday. I asked my young cousin if she had been on any field trips yet, hoping her future holds field trips as exciting and impactful as those her grandfather experienced!

This story, particularly as I reflect on my retirement from Dodge Nature Preschool, encompasses much of what my experiences with the Reggio Approach have confirmed, enriched and inspired over a forty-two-year career in education. I first visited the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy in May, 1993. I had no idea what to expect or what I would experience. I traveled with a group of seventy educators from a broad range of settings. Our experiences included lectures and school tours, where we had time to explore and observe, take pictures and debrief with staff. The staff wanted to

know our noticings and encouraged our many questions. We Americans had 'how' questions; the Italians had 'why' answers. They used phrases like 'it depends,' 'it takes discussion,' 'we observe,' 'our hypothesis' and 'when we reflected.'

During each school visit, there was always hospitality: refreshments beautifully presented and served by the schools' kitchen staff and parents present to enhance the experience and support the staff. The Reggio school environment stood out, initially for its organization and cleanliness, and then for its natural light, mirrors, displays of utilitarian objects and beauty. Even a broom and dustpan against a wall became an object of beauty. I noticed documentation panels that included photos, words and children's work alongside adult interpretations. When a teacher shared documentation of a disagreement between two children, I began to realize I was looking at more than wall decorations; I was understanding the behavior of children. Everything held an explanation and a purpose. Educators described making decisions after lengthy discussions with their colleagues.

At the end of the week, we spent a morning with Loris Malaguzzi. He brought additional depth and understanding to many aspects of the week, but most memorable to me were his words warning us Americans to be careful not to lose our souls as we educate our children. Education is about relationships, not measurements and statistics; it is about trust, not correct answers.

Our week ended and as I boarded the airplane, I began reading the first edition of *The Hundred Languages of Children* edited by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini and George Forman. I began to process this profound experience and a new outlook for the work I would do with children and teachers throughout my career.

Once back at work, I wanted to share my new discoveries, and found my experiences resonated most deeply with older relatives in South Dakota who recognized in my stories their own relish and appreciation for education and the soul.

A year later, at a different preschool serving 200 children, I started the fall with a presentation about my experience in the Reggio schools. The response from the teachers was overwhelmingly positive. I realized, along with them, that we did not have to change our values or philosophy of education, but we could build on our existing knowledge and practices. There was still more to discover about the children and further to travel down the road of learning. As I showed a slide from Reggio showing representations children created of their summer experiences, my staff decided to start with summer memories when the children came to school in September. They would wait to discuss colors on trees until the children noticed the changing colors. This new approach worked. We connected with children in a new way. The use of questions became more purposeful. Teachers observed children for their interests and activities turned into deeper projects.

Parents noticed the change and began fundraising for teachers to attend newly developed trainings about the Reggio Approach throughout the United States. Over time several teachers participated in Study Tours to Reggio Emilia.

During my career, I traveled with my teachers to Saint Louis, California, Chicago, Washington D.C, Boston and NYC. I will never forget the power of these experiences as I witnessed educators tearing up in appreciation for Amelia Gambetti and Carlina Rinaldi's powerful words and presentations of children's work. They were seeing and feeling authentic learning. We read emerging literature on

the Reggio Approach, engaged in book studies and sought out schools in the New Jersey area being impacted by Reggio. Slowly connections were made and soon we built a network of schools meeting once a month to discuss the principles of Reggio and read chapters from *The Hundred Languages of Children*.

Because of my adventures in Reggio in 1993, my work in education has been more fulfilling and I understand clearly why those field trips for my cousin Steve, sixty years ago, are still vivid today. With the Reggio Approach, I am part of an educational practice that sees the child as competent, capable and worthy of rich relationships and experiences. Teachers, children and families are inspired in an environment that includes beauty, order and an understanding of the community in which it exists. Teachers are respected as researchers and families are part of the educational process. The work and play of children are worthy of observation, study and recording. Knowledge can be seen and represented through a Hundred Languages and certainly, as Loris Malaguzzi famously said, there is 'nothing without joy.'

In Gratitude: Marty Watson

Patti Loftus

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota is an organization of volunteers drawing from various contexts, throughout the Twin Cities. It's a (growing) number of motivated, inspired folks who offer their time, energy and talents on committees and as members of the Board. From time to time we will feature and thank some of those who have given so much, who have made the Network work!

Marty Watson's recent retirement from her eleven years as Director of Dodge Nature Preschool is only a comma in her story. Marty has been deeply involved in the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota since she arrived in Minnesota and has every intention to continue.

She learned about the Network while she was still working in New Jersey. She attended a workshop at Macdonald Montessori School one December while in town for the holidays and sought out the Network soon after she began working at Dodge. Marty was invited to be on the Board around 2009 and has served in various capacities and supported numerous initiatives. "We always all had to be worker bees!" She helped develop the first Strategic Plan on a committee led by Nan Kari, has served as Chair and worked on committees that planned the annual EEE (Enter, Encounter, Engage) events. She also serves as Treasurer, a role that came with chairing the Resource Development committee. With Marty's encouragement, some of her staff from Dodge have become involved in the Network. Her positive influence ripples out.

Marty has said that she sees "Resource Development" as "more than money" and expressed pride in purchasing a comprehensive number of Reggio Children and Reggio related books for the Debra Fish Library.

Although her career at Dodge has ended, Marty expects to remain involved with the Network, even as she pursues new interests – register as a trainer and /or mentor through Develop, explore the possibility of teaching a class at the college level, get more deeply involved in the arts, connect to her family and land in South Dakota and continue to support environmental education.

Marty doesn't consider that she has retired as much as she is "refiring."

It's hard to imagine RINM without Marty Watson. Her deep and ongoing involvement is appreciated and we wish her a wonderful next chapter in her inspired life.



Marty (lower right) with fellow participants during the 1993 Study Group in Reggio Emilia

Employment Opportunities

There are employment opportunities from Wildflower Early Learning Center, Hopkins Early Learning Center and The University of Minnesota Child Development Center posted on the RINM website. Learn more about these positions here: <https://www.mnreggio.org/jobsforum>

Shop and Support

Do you shop on Amazon? Use Amazon Smile: [smile.amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile) 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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