



Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

Volume 7, Issue 3 | Summer 2020

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Editor's Introduction

Lani Shapiro

Gratefully, I notice the days getting longer, with slightly more light each day. Though it is still cold, I can imagine the retreat of ice and snow, and the emergence of the spring garden, and all of the possibilities of the warmer season ahead.

These “*uncertain times...unprecedented times...unique circumstances...*” We struggle to find language to convey our collective surprise and confusion. The scope and scale of civic uncertainty and disruption has left us unsettled and affects our physical, emotional, financial and civic health. Malaguzzi said that “*uncertainty can be turned into something positive when we start to test it and see it as a state of ferment, a motor of knowledge.*”

These times require flexibility, innovation, collaboration and endurance. The value of listening, the practice of documentation and the importance of reflection can help us orient, not to a return to the status quo, but to a renewed vision of participation and education.

“[Education]... is a meeting place where freedom, democracy, and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted.”

Indications, Reggio Children

In this issue of the Newsletter, you will find our calendar of professional development for the coming academic year. [You can also download a PDF calendar to print and post.](#)

Elizabeth Skara offers a reflection on her response to working with Reggio ideas. Kate Arbon describes the challenges that teachers at the St. Paul School of Northern Lights faced in their transition to distance learning.

Patti Loftus offers some thoughts about the role of early childhood teachers in raising next generations who are equipped to talk about race, with every hope that the death of George Floyd (and so many others) has finally brought us to a tipping point where many join the work to usher in true equity and justice in this country. Teachers and families of young children play a crucial role.

“Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future.

Solidarity involves commitment and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground.”

Sara Ahmed

For anyone involved in distance learning, make sure to check out the exciting new and varied resources directly from Reggio Children. *“These online documents give us a glimpse into teachers’ thinking and planning which deepen experience, not only in the context of the digital environment. They provide intriguing starting points for...learning.”*

Even with the restrictions that we all face due to COVID 19, Debra Fish Library resources are available by request via your public library system. See the link to download an updated and annotated list of Reggio-inspired readings.

We hope that you find these reflections provocative and resources useful.

Thanks to contributors for their generosity, time and collaboration in making their thinking visible and to readers for engaging with those thoughts.

Lani Shapiro
Editor

Professional Development Calendar 2020-2021

Due to continually changing safety guidelines for COVID-19, ALL EVENTS will be VIRTUAL. If an in-person option will be possible, a decision will be made closer to the event date and emails will be sent.

[Download PDF Calendar](#)

October 10, 2020 | 9am- 11am Central Standard Time

**The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota 9th Annual Conference
Enter Encounter Engage: An Inquiry into How Children Think with Their Bodies, with Tom Bedard**

Keynote: Sensory Experiences and the Development of the Whole Child Featuring Tom Bedard

More info on Tom Bedard: <http://tomsensori.blogspot.com/>

**This session is Develop approved for 2 hours of training for those attending the live session.*

Children need to move their bodies. With the aid of documentation, we will reflect on how children use their bodies to explore materials and homemade constructions in the sensory table. How do we make sense of their planned, random and spontaneous movements? We will try to understand the conditions, implicit and explicit, that galvanize children to trust their bodies to make sense of their world. We will also begin to create a vocabulary of their actions/operations that sheds new light on how those actions/operations foster development in all domains: physical, social/emotional and cognitive. An overarching question will be: What are possible implications for the children using their bodies as thinking tools beyond the sensory table?

Location: ZOOM

[Registration](#)

Cost: \$30 early bird registration by 9/19/2020 | \$35 after 9/20/2020
includes Develop approved CEUs certificate

November 14, 2020 | 9am-noon

The Possibilities of Light and Shadow with Children

Develop approved Course ID: 141741

The first hour will be an introduction of the French Academie ~ its context and the history of its journey with the Reggio Approach. This will include a tour of the center.

Participants will explore the many possibilities for learning with light and shadow to learn through light and shadow experiences. The time will include powerpoint presentations, and exploration time. The morning will end with dialogue, reflection and evaluation. Folder of handouts will be included.

Presenters: Staff at French Academie & Sandy Burwell

Location:

12301 Whitewater Drive, Suite 190
Minnetonka, MN 55343
(952) 944-1930

Registration

Limit 25 participants

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after 11/7/2020

Students: limited spots available at no cost for students- email Heidi Wolf for details and registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

December 12, 2020 | 9am-noon

Virtual Documentation Lab

Link and info coming soon!

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota's 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.

Registration

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after 12/5/2020

January 23, 2021 | 9am-noon

Storytelling with Children

Story Dictation and Story Acting is a powerful classroom practice. When we invite children to share their stories, we gain insights into their thoughts and values. When we come together to act out children's stories, our classroom community connects and strengthens. Storytelling with children offers another opportunity to include their interests, ideas and exploration while also fostering their imaginations and supporting their social interactions. Join us for an examination of the role of stories in our early childhood programs.

Presenters: Joey Schoen and Ross Thompson

Location:

Dodge Nature Preschool

1715 Charlton St

West St Paul, MN

Phone: 651-455-4555

Registration

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after 1/16/2021

Students: limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

February 20, 2021 | 9am-noon

Authentic and Intentional Collage (*In the process of Develop approval*)

The first hour will be an introduction of Kinderberry Hill - its context and the history of its journey with the Reggio Approach. This will include a tour of the center.

Participants will explore the many opportunities for more complex collages that are possible if offered with more intentionality on the part of the teacher.

Workshop includes handouts of resources and samples of books. In the classrooms, many types of collage with a wide variety of materials will be set up to gain hands-on familiarity of the many possibilities of collage materials and techniques. The morning will end with dialogue, reflection and evaluation.

Presenters: Sandy Burwell and Staff at Kinderberry Hill

Location:

Kinderberry Hill

185 Cheshire Ln

Plymouth 55441

Registration

Limit 25 participants

Cost: TBD

Students: limited spots available at no cost for students- email Heidi Wolf for details and registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

March 13, 2021 | 9am-noon

Big Body Rough and Tumble Play

We know that the body is a main vehicle and tool for learning in early childhood, yet we often ask children to "slow down," "stop touching that," or "sit still," because we think/believe/forget (insert your own reasoning here) that very key principle - *children need to move to learn*. And that includes big, powerful expression from children! During this Gathering, we will look at how big-body AND rough-and-tumble play support key learning areas in early childhood that span beyond just the physical domain.

Presenters: Teaching with the Body in Mind Podcast team: Tom Bedard, Mike Huber, Joey Schoen, Ross Thompson

Location:

Wildflower Early Learning Center

5532 Hanrehan Lake Blvd

Savage 55378

Registration

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after 3/6/2021

Students: limited spots available at no cost for students- email Heidi Wolf for details and registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

April 10, 2021

Event TBD

May 8, 2021

End of year Celebration Gathering

Location: TBD

Continuing Professional Development

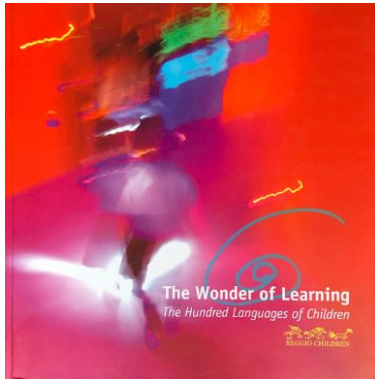
Monthly Open Book Studies: VIA ZOOM

Do you enjoy reading and thoughtful conversation?

We meet every **third** Sunday of the month from 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm.

We are currently meeting virtually to discuss *The Wonder of Learning, the hundred languages of children*. We read slowly, never more than one chapter per month; sometimes we repeat a chapter if we don't feel finished with it. We read closely and listen carefully to one another. Each meeting, we learn together without a fixed destination, embracing uncertainty, diversity and complexity.

All are welcome; there is no charge.



To receive the Zoom link for the Book Studies, send your email to reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com. You'll be added to the mail list created for the Book Studies conducted via Zoom and will receive the link a day or two before. No registration needed. Participate when you can.

Hidden Discovery

Elizabeth Skara

We regularly invite inspired writers to submit articles for this publication, asking them to reflect on the ideas, values and practices from Reggio Emilia that inform their work, and what they've noticed in themselves and their children. Elizabeth Skara is the Coordinator of the "Kids' Club" program at the Marsh in Minnetonka, MN. She's also mom to six-year old Emmett and 3-year old Grace. This poem is her response to those prompts.

Hidden Discovery

*My shoulders relax
my eyes widen
the whispers from the trees pass through
nature's classroom
My heart opens wider
like the bloom of the hyacinth in my front lawn
Scattered randomly
no order
just beauty
There is a sense of discovery
raw and genuine
I fear to move as I may disrupt
their creation of thought
Making order out of confusion
Crafting a web of understanding
I need not be let in
Imagination has formed something way beyond
what I could know
I observe these budding relationships
thriving
I take a step back instead of forward
Yet lean in rather than instruct
watching their frustrations turn into problem solving,
to watch furrowed brows turn into giggles*

So much to be learned here...

They weave together an imaginative world of influence

my lens is made new

There is a dedication to their involvement

slowly

evolving

I listen now on a deeper level,

wait more

Slow down,

Teach ME to break from what the world has tried to mold me into...

“Let them breathe” –whispers the wind

“Let them build” – the trees sway

“Let them create” – the mud gives way

“Let them investigate” – the water parts

And so I do.

Distance Learning: Resources from Reggio Emilia

Lani Shapiro

The changes that have come with the Corona virus have disrupted everyone’s lives, relationships, routines and expectations. President of Reggio Children, Claudia Guidici said (regarding COVID), *“This completely unknown and unforeseen situation obliges us to rethink our daily way of life, our work and our relations, our way of seeing others and everything that surrounds us.”* Uneasiness increases when we add inequality and civic unrest. The structure of care and education for the coming year is uncertain, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

While there is a plethora of sources for parents and teachers to access to support relationships and learning for both children and adults, we have been moved by the civic generosity of Reggio Children in making their current work freely available and translated into English. There are several kinds of offerings.

The first, via Reggio Children, offers a collection of small proposals “to develop ideas and initiatives, for us to stay together, play together, and make school together.” The accessible provocations are loosely organized: stories, sounds, drawing, number, digital, etc.

<https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/athomewiththereggioapproach/>

For many years we have wanted to better understand the work of the teachers in Reggio. While inspirations from Reggio Emilia are not intended to be copied, educators from Reggio Emilia are regularly making distance learning experiences visible, which serve as powerful examples. The Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Centre Foundation (*Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi*) promotes the Reggio Approach around the world.

"These are proposals that, despite the difficulty of not being able to attend school, going out, meeting friends or playing outdoors, allow children to investigate, think from different points of view, graphically represent, explore with the imagination to support their curiosity and desire to know."

These online documents give us a glimpse into teachers’ thinking and planning which deepen experience, not only in the context of the digital environment. They provide intriguing starting points for distance learning.

Some examples:



<https://reggiochildrenfoundation.org/onlineactivities/?lang=en>

Please regard these online provocations as a framework and consider how they might affect your planning. The breadth, depth and accessibility in the workshop design are remarkable.

Reggio Children is also offering, for the first time, live webinars at relatively modest tuition, presented by teachers, pedagogistas and atelieristas sharing narratives, images and videos of projects from their educational project. The webinars are structured very much as presentations

during Study Tours. Webinars are in Italian with simultaneous translation voiceover in English. There will be a new schedule of events for the fall.



<https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/e-learning/webinar/>

We would like to encourage everyone to document and reflect on your experiences as we adapt to our current circumstances and would love to gather traces and reflections inspired by Reggio Emilia. We are interested in working via any of the distance platforms with you, at any step along the way. It's a fresh opportunity for collaboration. Contact Lani Shapiro at lani.shapiro@gmail.com and/or send an email to reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com

Scholarship Information

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE DUE August 31, 2020, 5:00 pm

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.

[Application](#)

Monthly Gathering Scholarship

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota offers a year-long scholarship which sponsors an individual to participate in the Saturday Gatherings for the 2020-2021 school year. Anyone with a deep curiosity about Reggio Emilia is encouraged to apply.

[Application](#)

Belonging and Nurturing Relationships at a Distance

Kate Arbon

At St. Paul School of Northern Lights, relationships are fundamental to our work. By developing respectful relationships, our teachers facilitate a deep sense of belonging amongst their class and the entire school community.

Because children's sense of connection derives from feeling welcomed and valued, much time is invested in establishing and nurturing safe and positive classroom environments, which contribute to meaningful learning.

How might this deep sense of belonging be actively nurtured while students are learning from home?

With schools closed, our school community needed to see the potential in learning from a distance and develop necessary skills and understandings. Our faculty researched different online platforms to find ones they felt would best reflect the values of our school, support our students staying in relationship with one another, and provide possibilities for children to think together. Just as teachers organize learning environments at school to invite interactions, connection and learning among children, we wanted similar possibilities for offsite learning.

In addition to continued access to academic content, our teachers promoted connection by creating Distance Learning Bags. All SPSNL students received materials to enable them to participate in two community projects – The Bean Growing Project and The Loose Part Project.

As with the Finnish Education System, our teachers were driven by the desire to “*do whatever it would take*” to provide authentic experiences. Continuing the values of SPSNL, teachers identified ample opportunities for play and exploration both indoors and out, and sought to incorporate time for student reflection both independently and with their peers.

Since the launch of distance learning, our teachers have integrated elements from their existing practices that support the value of belonging. Every morning, video messages are posted that include rituals and routines to provide familiarity, connection and belonging, which is especially important during this challenging time. Students can see their teacher's face, hear how classmates are being genuinely missed, and are warmly invited to explore the learning invitations for the day.

But how could opportunities be created for students to feel like they are thinking together, something that is deeply valued by our school?

Teachers schedule *Zoom* calls with their students, sometimes as whole class experiences to listen to a read-a-loud or to introduce much loved pets to classmates. Sometimes video calls are set up for smaller group chats where students are able to think together about a particular project or

how they are navigating distance learning. *Flipgrid* is serving as our school-wide community platform where students across classes can think together and hear others' points of view.

At SPSNL we also strive to build community through kindness. Even at a distance, students continue to leave birthday wishes, sing songs and create drawings for classmates on *Seesaw*. They record comments in response to something a peer may have posted. Some students have written letters to each other and to their teacher, sending them through the mail. Others have written poems about kindness. SPSNL children have also shown ways they are extending kindness to others beyond their class community, by putting messages and bears in their windows to warm the hearts of people passing by. Some children have created thank you cards and paper hearts for their parents, recognizing that even their parents appreciate support during this time.

In addition to nurturing the relationships between children and teachers, and among the children, our teachers continue to think about how to help parents feel supported and valued during this unprecedented time. As parents and teachers are experiencing distance learning for the first time, we seek ways to be active partners in this new endeavor. Together with each child's family, our teachers are striving to create learning opportunities to support each child's growth and well-being while learning from home.

As we hope this time of social distancing will soon pass and that those whom we know and love will remain safe and well, we are reminded of the significant value of being part of a caring community and the joy of being able to think together. Forming and nurturing relationships with others contributes to one's sense of belonging. May we all look forward to being in the physical presence of one another again with renewed appreciation.

Reflection on Retirement: “Nostalgia for the Future”

Patti Loftus

May, 2020 marked the end of Patti's 36-year career in early childhood education – 28 years as a Pre-K teacher at Blake School in the Twin Cities area and eight as a Montessori and ECFE teacher.

“...gestures of dialogue and peace are still possible”

As friends and colleagues gear up for a new school year, the shape of which, because of Covid, is still being determined, I am happily unhinged from the contingency planning and restructuring. Since the end of May, when my final eight weeks of distant teaching ended and my retirement commenced, my brainspace has been entirely taken up with how to live in response to the death of George Floyd (and many others) and the seismic opportunity for awareness and change that seems to have emerged.

Although the following piece by Loris Malaguzzi to parents and children in Reggio Emilia is over 25 years old, it's remarkably relevant this summer of 2020.

"To the parents and children of the infant-toddler centres and preschools.

It has been a difficult summer for the world, for Europe, for Italy. Because of wars, sometimes invisible and often "forgotten", because of terrorist attacks, because of earthquakes – "attacks" by nature of enormous proportions – tragedies added to tragedies. In our Countries we are witnessing a human exodus. The rights of many are betrayed... starting with children... starting with the right to life and to safety.

*Those who work and live with children have a duty to renew hope in their daily action: a message of trust we must embed within us, educators and parents, in order for changes to be generated. In fact, **we would like to hope, believe and communicate to the children that gestures of dialogue and peace are still possible**, always possible, and that these are the foundation of human relations.*

Education to respect for a life and ideas different from one's own, the determination and capacity to dialogue with differences, compassion, and solidarity, are the conditions for a stable peace, capable of halting appalling "holocausts" and giving voice to human reason again.

*At the start of this new school year, what we ask of each one of us, we who are parents, educators and citizens in educational institutions, is a daily commitment to reaffirming the right of every person and every society to life and to a future, to education, to safety, to beauty, to play and to relations; continuing **"to give a human and civilized meaning to existence... to feel nostalgia for the future, and for humankind"**.*

(Loris Malaguzzi). Infant-Toddler Centres and Preschool of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia - Reggio Children - Reggio Children Foundation" found at Sightlines-Initiative.com – "Change is Everyday"

<https://www.sightlines-initiative.com/parents-views/vivianafiorentino.html>

We in the U.S. are in similarly troubled times this summer with the losses and uncertainties that Covid-19 has brought and we are in a time of social earthquakes with renewed calls that "Black Lives Matter," that racism be named and rooted out. Will this moment of heightened awareness move a critical mass of us to new ways of living so that next generations will no longer replay the same injustices that are still deeply established?

I believe that educators and parents have the potential of leading the way. Malaguzzi wrote that "*gestures of peace and dialogue are still possible*" and calls them the "*foundation of human relations.*" He named educators and parents as having a duty to "*renew hope.*"

So what are "gestures of peace and dialogue?"

Here is one example.... In our Pre-K classroom, we engaged 4 and 5-year olds in conversations about fairness, skin color, who makes the rules and the big idea that "everyone counts." I am convinced that if we begin when children are young, we can teach them to "dialogue with differences." In the book, Nurture Shock, in the chapter titled, "Why White Parents Don't Talk About Race," deeply held but false assumptions about young children are described – that

children are color blind and that it's better not to talk about race but, instead, simply expose children to diverse environments. Both of these have been found to be myths.

“The same way we remind our daughters, ‘Mommies can be doctors just like daddies,’ we ought to be telling all children that doctors can be any skin color. It’s not complicated what to say, it’s only a matter of how often we reinforce it...Explicitness works.”

Pre-K teachers at Blake let parents know in advance that, as part of our social studies curriculum, we would be talking with the children about differences and similarities, fairness, inclusion (“welcome” in Pre-K terms) and that no one is inherently better or worse than another because of their skin color. Each year the teachers drew from a lengthy list of book titles and selected those that best led to conversations. We believed it was as important for the white children to engage in conversations about skin color, fairness and civil rights as it was for the children of color. Each year’s work varied and unfolded in ways unique to that particular group and in dialogue with the parents. We shared conversations with the parents in our daily journals, encouraged them to look at the books we read to their children and provided additional titles for parents, particularly those who identified as white, to expand and deepen their knowledge about identity development and U.S. history.

Malaguzzi’s hope (and mine) for children’s “right to life and to safety” and the “capacity to dialogue with differences” will require of teachers (and parents) the determination to be and remain open and curious, to learn more about the difficult racial history of the U.S. (that we adults did not learn in school,) to introduce books, experiences and conversations into classrooms and homes so that children can grow up to be comfortable talking about differences, race, fairness and inclusion. Malaguzzi described a “*nostalgia for the future*,” a yearning for a world better than today’s, which holds the possibility of “*reaffirming the right of every person and every society to life and to a future, to education, to safety, to beauty, to play and to relations.*” With a renewed focus on justice and change building in our country, I feel hopeful that a better world is indeed possible for all, if teachers, parents, and children make a priority of having these vital conversations together.

Books for Children, including books about “change makers”

One by Kathryn Otoshi

We Are All Alike We Are All Different by Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergarten

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz

All The Colors We Are by Katie Kissinger

Skin Again by bell hooks and Chris Raschka

Whoosh by Chris Barton

Mae Among The Stars by Roda Ahmed and Stasia Burrington

Ron's Big Mission by Rose Blue and Corinne J. Naden

Wilma Unlimited by Kathleen Krull and David Diaz

Queen of the Track by Heather Lang

Dolores Huerta by Sarah Warren

A Splash of Red by Jen Bryant

Wonder Horse by Emily Arnold McCully

My Brother Martin by Christine King Farris

Back of the Bus by Aaron Reynolds and Floyd Cooper

Fly Bessie Fly by Lynn Joseph and Yvonne Buchanan

Ruby Bridges by Ruby Bridges and Grace Maccarone

In The Garden with Dr. Carver by Susan Grigsby and Nicole Tadgell

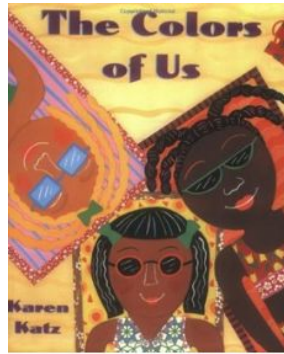
Resources for Adults

<https://www.newsweek.com/even-babies-discriminate-nurtureshock-excerpt-79233> Excerpt from Nuture Shock

Waking Up White Debby Irving

White Fragility by Robin D'Angelo

Stamped From The Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi



Hey! That's like my skin! See?

*Ooh, look what I just mixed! But that's not my color...
too tannish. A little bit of sparkle? See, I have a little bit of sparkle.*

Look what I did! That looks like my color.

Wow! Look what I did! That looks like me!

Note: Patti's status is "retired" but she is available (at no charge) to share resources and ideas with anyone interested. pattiroseloftus@gmail.com

Public Library Resources

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota partners with the Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Resource Library to provide access to literature about the Reggio Approach. All the resources are translated into English (even if the title is listed in Italian).

The Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Resource Library is located at Think Small, 10 Yorkton Court, St. Paul, Minnesota. The collection is part of the Saint Paul Public Library system catalog <http://www.sppl.org/> and is available through the statewide virtual library, MnLINK at <https://www.mnlinkgateway.org>.

All you need is a library card. Resources can be delivered and returned to ANY Minnesota public library.

[This link](#) lists the collection clustered under general topics related to Reggio thought. The links (SPPL or MNLink) will take you directly to that title in the collection. Additionally, you can search by keyword "Reggio" in the library catalogue.

Shop and Support

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