



# Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

Volume 7, Issue 4 | Fall 2020

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## Editor's Introduction

*Lani Shapiro*

These are uncertain times. The effects of the coronavirus are everywhere, affecting where, whether, when and how we play, work, gather, think and discuss. We have a complicated relationship with virtual technologies, but they also allow us to transcend distance. How do we make the best of virtual portals?

The Network continues to offer opportunities to collaborate via Zoom. There is a virtual Gathering on Light and Shadow coming up November 14th, note the details for registration below. Open Book Study continues each month. In addition to these events, there is a wide variety of opportunities for online learning. Make sure to check out the different kinds of resources directly from Reggio Children and from Sightlines (UK). These online documents give us a glimpse into teachers' thinking and planning, but not only in the context of the digital environment. They provide intriguing starting points for our learning.

In this issue, Tom Dodd reflects on his experience at Tom Bedard's keynote at our EEE conference. Erica Krugarud-Smith considers the changes at Open Book Study as we move our interaction to Zoom. Kristenza Nelson shares her experience before, during and after lockdown in her hopeful piece, *Trees in the Forest*. Ann Edgerton describes how her staff used the time of

uncertainty to revisit *The 100 Languages of Children* as a shared text to deepen their understanding.

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

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

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

*Lani Shapiro*  
Editor

## Professional Development

### **The Possibilities of Light and Shadow with Children**

*Develop Approved Course ID: 141741*

**November 14, 2020, 11:15am-1:15pm**



Introduction of the French Academie ~ its context and the history of its journey with the Reggio Approach.

The Light and Shadow presentation, stations for exploration and classroom experiences will be set up with space for social distancing. The environments can be viewed then.

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, exploration time and end with dialog, reflection and evaluation. Resources will be available via email.

Presenters: Staff at French Academie & Sandy Burwell

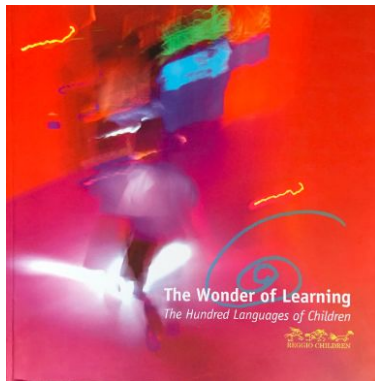
Location:  
12301 Whitewater Dr, #190  
Minnetonka, MN 55343

In-person attendance will be limited to 12, with masks, temperature check and health questionnaire required. Additional participation via Zoom - live and recorded.

Students: limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and [registrationhwolf@bsmschool.org](mailto:registrationhwolf@bsmschool.org)

## Continuing Professional Development Monthly Open Book Studies: Via Zoom

***“Listening is an active verb that involves giving meaning and value to the perspective of others, a form of assessment. This kind of listening is a way of welcoming others and their differences, and a way of welcoming different theories and perspectives.”*** Carla Rinaldi



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](mailto: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.

## Reflections: Enter Encounter Engage The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota 9th Annual Conference

***Tom Dodd***

Tom grew up in the North of England and after studying sustainable engineering and working for eight years in economic development as an architectural, planning, and design consultant, he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan where his career changed paths completely. He has spent the last three years at Grand Rapids Early Discovery Center, a Reggio Emilia inspired early childhood school, as a teacher, and a few months ago took on the role of pedagoga.

***“Children build knowledge of the world with their bodies. Their actions precede and follow one another in an unfolding process in which children continually create new actions. So many of those actions are non-verbal. Because mind and body are one, those actions are imprinted in the brain kinesthetically and lay the groundwork for later thought.”*** Tom Bedard



I did not grow up with plans to be an early childhood educator. The thought never even crossed my mind until I was 30, so anything I have learned has not come from a master's degree or even a bachelor's. All my knowledge has come from the three-, four-, and five-year-olds that I am lucky enough to spend my days with as well as information I have acquired from books and blogs by play-based educators and any others who share my pure joy and passion for the field.

One of the magical aspects of our senses is that they are universal, they cross language barriers and completely disregard race or gender. The conference featured Tom Bedard, who creates wonderful and thought-provoking experiences in sensory tables for his students. He does not hold preconceived notions. The installations are there for children (and adults) to learn, problem-solve, socialize and have fun! As I watched the videos in his presentation I could imagine the learning taking place as his students explored the oobleck dripping down through the pegboard and the sense of wonder when things disappeared into the hidden compartments.

3,000 sense receptors in each fingertip!

As we observe our students' learning we often think about what they are seeing, what they are hearing or even what they are tasting or smelling. When reflecting on myself, I know that more often than not I forget about touch! And when I say that, I am saying that I am forgetting the experience of 3,000 sense receptors in each finger, that's 30,000 sense receptors at the very tips of our hands. As adults, we have lived with these receptors for decades and have grown to take them for granted, whereas the children we are teaching have only lived with this experience for a few short years or some only months. Take a moment and imagine how it would feel to experience thousands of grains of sand cascading over your hands for the first time or if the feeling of water flowing between your fingers was a complete unknown. Better still, collect a cup of sand and a cup of water, close your eyes, hold your hands out and ask someone to surprise



you by pouring one of them over your hands. That feeling is the beginning of fluid dynamics and solid mechanics, something which, when studied, can take you into what I think is one of the most interesting areas of science.

Tom Bedard explained that building varied sensory table apparatus is his creative outlet. I would love to invite children from my class to help brainstorm, collaborate, design and build with their peers, teachers and even parents, to come up with their very own sensory experiences that we could all explore together. We miss details when we become too involved, instead of quietly observing and noticing clues such as - the interest in gravity from crashing down blocks or curiosity about water that appears from the student who waters the plants each day. From moments like these we can elaborate our sensory tables, in collaboration with our children, to ensure that we can all explore together, growing the many languages of children.

## **Reflections: Open Book Study**

### **Intentionally Virtual: How Long?**

*Erica Kragerud-Smith*

Erica Kragerud-Smith has led the KidsPark Hourly Childcare cooperative since 2012. She has been an on-again/off-again participant with the RINMN Sunday Book Study almost as long. She credits the Book Study as an important element of her self-care, a monthly renewing of her spirit in working with children and families and invites all to join-in on the third Sunday of the month as you are able.

It's been said many times these past few months, but I'll say it again, COVID-19 has up-ended our lives in many ways, especially for those of us who work with children. We took breaks from our work, not knowing our return dates to in-person work with children and co-workers, or we continued working, not knowing how the virus would impact ourselves and our communities.

It also brought a loss of in-person learning for children and adults. The Reggio-Inspired Network's Open Book Study, which has met at a coffee shop in the Twin Cities for more than a decade, went on hiatus when in-person education for our children moved online. A couple of months into the Minnesota shut-down, a group of people initiated doing the monthly Open Book Study on Zoom. I am so glad they did. Our discussions help broaden and brighten my ongoing work with children and coworkers. The ability to dialog in real time, seeing those we are talking with and listening to others has been a welcome piece of virtual normalcy.

This isn't to say Book Study is the same today as it was prior to March 13th. We have to bring our own beverages and snacks for one, no special purchases to anticipate. Awkward silences creep in as we all wait for someone to initiate or respond to a comment. Or multiple people try to jump in and we lose a thought or two. Navigating new territory – real or virtual - is often difficult.

A surprising thing happened: the move to Zoom meetings enabled our discussion group to geographically expand! Attendees still come from the Twin Cities, but we've also welcomed attendees from Chicago and Canada. Hearing what about our readings appealed to an expanded

domestic and international group and how bits and pieces of the readings and apply to their contexts has enriched our discussions.

So while I'll lament the loss of in-person gatherings for the time being, I am going to remember we can all do difficult things (like learning new technologies). I will repeat the mantra, "The way things are today won't last forever." I will delight in intentional decisions to dialogue in a group setting. And I wonder how our Book Study will innovate to integrate our old in-person gatherings with our new-found joy in welcoming geographically-dispersed practitioners, because this new development is worth continuing.

## Distance Learning: International Opportunities

*Lani Shapiro*

The changes that have come with the coronavirus 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."* The structure of care and education for the coming year is uncertain, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

We want to draw your attention to the civic generosity of Reggio Children as they make their current work freely available AND translated into English. There are several kinds of offerings.

The first, free resource is a series 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 and digital with many additional pathways to explore.

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

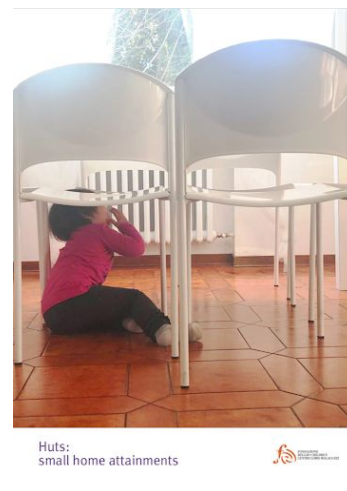
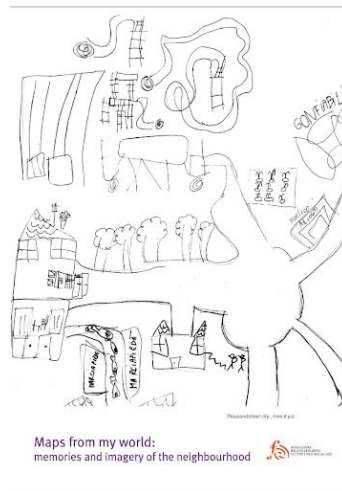
The second kind of free resource comes via the Reggio Children – Loris Malaguzzi Centre Foundation (*Fondazione Reggio Children Centro Loris Malaguzzi*) which promotes the Reggio Approach around the world.

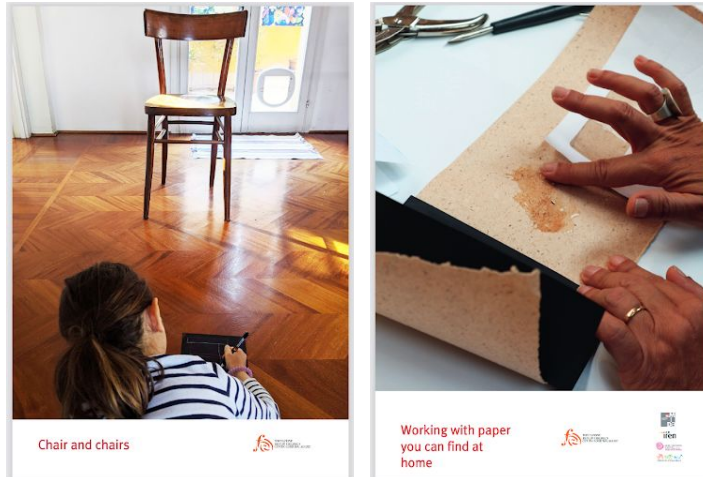
For many years we have wanted to better understand the work of the teachers in Reggio. While inspirations from Reggio Emilia are not intended to be copied, educators from Reggio Emilia are making powerful examples of distance learning experiences visible.

These online documents provide a **glimpse into teachers' thinking and planning**, not just in the context of the digital environment. They provide intriguing starting points for in-person or distance learning for both teachers and parents supporting their children at home. This link: <https://reggiochildrenfoundation.org/onlineactivities/?lang=en> will bring you to a gateway that opens up many delightful invitations.



These online provocations can be seen as a framework to inspire your planning. The breadth, depth and accessibility in the workshop design are remarkable. All the activities are structured around ordinary household materials.





The third category of offerings from Reggio Children involves live webinars at relatively modest tuition, presented by teachers, pedagogistas and atelieristas sharing narratives, analysis, images and videos from their educational project. The webinars are structured very much like presentations that Study Tour participants experience when they visit Reggio Emilia. Webinars are in Italian with simultaneous translation voiceover in English. New webinars are being scheduled each month. October webinars were focused on **100 Languages**. Find the most current schedule here:



<https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/e-learning/webinars-and-web-conferences/>

In addition, you might be interested in this intriguing virtual conference about the historical, political and pedagogical experience of the Reggio Emilia Approach, along with encounters with children, hosted by Sightlines, the UK reference point for Reggio International.

### **Bicycles & Bricks, Vision & Determination** *narratives of the real and possible in shaping education*

'Loris Malaguzzi's pedagogical influence and contemporary importance.' Professor Peter Moss, University College London



'Walking on Threads of Silk.' Marina Castagnetti, Reggio Children, Italy

'The Women and the Schools of Reggio Emilia.' Professor Sabine Lingenauber & Janina L. von Niebelschütz, University of Fulda, Germany

'How Does Learning Happen? - Ontario's vision for education' Karyn Callaghan & Kelly Massaro-Joblin, Ontario Reggio Association, Canada

'Democratic alternatives in education: Provocations from the Portuguese Modern School Movement.' Dr. Diana Sousa, University College London

'Truths and Transformation – where now and how?' Panel and Discussion with Peter Moss, Karyn Callaghan and others.

<https://www.sightlines-initiative.com/educators/forthcomingevents>

As we adapt to our current circumstances, we would like to encourage each of you to gather your notes, traces and reflections to document your experiences as you adapt to current circumstances. 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 [lanishapiro@gmail.com](mailto:lanishapiro@gmail.com) and/or send an email to [reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com](mailto:reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com)

## Scholarships

### **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.

This scholarship, established by the Network's Board, is in honor of Sandy Burwell, a founding member of the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota. Sandy has been particularly devoted to the Saturday Gatherings.

[Application](#)

# Trees in the Woods

## Kristenza Nelson

Kristenza Nelson is a lead teacher at Dodge Nature Center Preschool. She earned a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and is working on her Master Degree in Environmental Education from Hamline University. Working with children in nature combines both of her passions. She considers it an honor to foster these connections.



In early March of 2020, the children at Dodge Nature Center Preschool were tapping maple trees in the woods. Together we stretched our trunks and reached our fingers toward the blue sky. Children gave thanks to the Pancake Tree as they whispered, "Wake up!" Spring is a magical time together. The children were relaxed and comfortable in the March thaw. Hope returned with the light and the earth began to squish beneath our feet.

Then, news of Minnesota's first COVID case came. Within days our joyful preschool fell silent. Our school doors closed as

COVID arrived. It was heartbreaking on so many levels.

How were our young children and families coping in isolation? How could we continue to cultivate the many relationships we'd fostered? Could we engage three, four and five-year old children in Zoom meetings? These were trying times, a far cry from being together on the trail. How could we bring children's voices back to the center? The project that follows emerged from those days of isolation.



During the closure we invited families to stay connected to our classroom community by offering twice weekly Zoom meetings that included songs, stories, and time to share. We reached deep to find ways to stay connected. I knew that screens were not ideal and wanted to continue to support their connections to the natural world. I encouraged the children to choose a nearby tree that spoke to them. I asked them to create drawings to share in our virtual spaces and newsletter. We created our own forest, as amazing and unique as each child. How would we continue to grow in place? Perhaps like trees. This was my proposal to families:

*Hello Beautiful Spruce Families,*

*The last time we were together at Dodge we were learning all about Maple trees. Tasting the sweet sap and noticing the buds emerge on the branches.*

*We are proposing a long term project that begins with choosing a tree to observe over an extended period of time. You don't have to be experts to learn together. There is magic in discovery.*

*Begin by having your child make a drawing or take a photo of a tree.*

*Write down one observation a week to share with the Sprucies.*

*What does your child notice?*

*Remember to ask open ended questions.*

- *What do you think is happening?*
- *Who lives in a tree?*
- *Where are the leaves?*
- *Do trees eat?*

*There are never any wrong answers!*

With my whole heart I believe that nature is the best medicine for whatever ails us. Encouraging families and children to go outdoors to observe their trees brought them outside and brought us together. We came together through art, nature and observation. We came together while staying apart, just like trees in the forest.





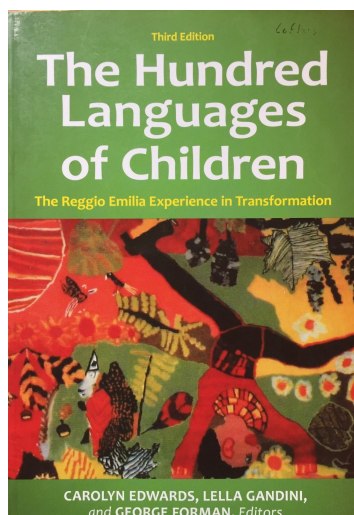


This fall we are grateful to be welcoming children back to Dodge Nature Center Preschool. COVID is still present in Minnesota, but we have learned spending time outside is the safest way to be together. For that we are grateful. It is beautiful to see children back on the trail enjoying the autumn glow beneath the beautiful pancake trees.

## Unexpected Covid Opportunities

*Ann Edgerton*

Ann Edgerton recently retired from the University of Minnesota Child Development Center as Director. Her career in the field of Early Childhood was broad and deep. She lived in Europe for eight years and completed a Montessori Diploma. Ann worked on campaigns and political issues and taught Administration of Early Childhood Programs and Infant/Toddler principles at Monterey Peninsula & Hartnell Colleges in California. Previously, she was director of the Child Development program at California State University, Monterey Bay and also worked with Head Start programs. Ann has retired to her beloved Decorah, Iowa.



In the spring of 2020, Covid-related enrollment and staff changes provided unexpected time to go back and do a deep dive regarding key Reggio principles! This offered us an opportunity to enhance our understanding of teaching practice, together and individually. We revisited parts of **The Hundred Languages of Children, third edition**. The teaching staff, teacher supervisors and education coordinator reread parts of the book, wrote papers on the chapters and discussed them via Zoom by age group teams.

In this rereading, new things arose that we hadn't noticed before: practices to try, co-actions and nuances. We reflected on where we had focused in our classrooms and where we might go.

While reviewing the chapter titled, "Teacher & Learner, Partner and Guide: Role of the Teacher," we agreed we had enriched our ideas and practices that demonstrate an asset model of the image of the child and the importance of relationships.



During this process, our view of the role of the teacher underwent a sea change. We deepened our understanding of the many roles of the teacher: director, set designer, prompter. We were on a journey together to step back and observe, like an audience, sometimes applauding, sometimes silent. Our awareness grew: we saw the opportunity to step back and watch the children, our colleagues and their interactions. As a group, we better understood and could now articulate how we had changed over time.

Rereading led us to new insights into the teacher as a *“negotiator of meaning, the exchanger of understandings and...dispenser of occasions.”* A wellspring of understanding emerged from the metaphor of *“catching the ball that the children throw us and then tossing it back to continue the game.”* The staff worked in new ways, helping the children uncover their questions and insights, revealing a deeper listening and richer co-action with the children.

Teachers shared knots, using moments of *“disequilibrium for hypothesizing, testing and comparing children’s ideas with one another.”* We discussed how to decide when to intervene, an ongoing process of calibrating one’s response to specific situations.

We examined movement in ourselves, progress toward the understanding that *“intellectual conflict in Reggio is understood as the engine of all growth.”* We could say tentatively, yes. As a group, early childhood educators tend to be conflict avoidant. Engaging in intellectual conflict in our culture can be perceived as “not nice.” The culture of Reggio sees the potential for growth in intellectual conflict, while we tend toward “Minnesota Nice.” Although we have begun to understand that diverse points of view are a gift and necessary to achieve growth, in practice, we have hesitated but want to grow in this direction.

Revisiting this foundational text was significant in moving our understanding of key concepts from Reggio and to working with small children in any setting. The readings made us more aware, enhanced our understanding and shared possibilities for practice and growth.

*I am grateful to the University of Minnesota for the opportunity to work in this capacity over time, for study trips to Reggio Emilia, to the teaching staff and teacher supervisors at UMCDC for their dedication to UMCDC. It is with a full heart and appreciation that I leave the University of Minnesota.*

## 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**

Do you shop on Amazon? Use Amazon Smile: [smile.amazon.com](https://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 network at no expense to you!

For more news and events visit us at [www.mnreggio.org](http://www.mnreggio.org) and like us on [Facebook!](#)  
Send us an email: [reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com](mailto:reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com)

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