

Inspiring News and Events

From the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

Volume 8, Issue 3 | Summer 2021

Inside This Issue

- Participation Survey
- Professional Calendar 2021-2022
- Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose
- Reflections on Teaching
- Staying in Hope
- Scholarships
- Library Resources

Editor's Introduction

Lani Shapiro

The Covid year has brought much uncertainty and constrained us in many ways, but it has also opened up new possibilities. People who are at a distance can now participate in Network activities as an author or host for a Gathering, as you will see below.

Take some time with the 2021 - 2022 Professional Development Calendar and see what might help you grow your practice or challenge you. Gatherings, DocLab, Let's Talk and Open Book Study are all opportunities for you to join with colleagues and community to reflect critically about childhood, learning and teaching and to connect your practice to your values.

Here is a pdf of the calendar that you can print and post.

Through our everyday living experience as educators [...] we have learned the high and essential value represented by human solidarity and collaboration, by respect and value for different opinions, by determining and creating conditions for an ample and free expression of different cultural, political and religious ideals.

Loris Malaguzzi

A thread weaves through the 2021- 22 professional development calendar – various ideas on how we create conditions that support inclusion, perspective taking and civic engagement.

In this edition of the newsletter, Heidi Wolf writes about exploring the possibilities of establishing a local recycle and reuse center and invites you to join this project. Drawing on her family's early childhood experience in Japan, Nancy Nakaoka brings a cultural and generational perspective to her current work as a teacher. Dawn Lees considers the many changes and stresses brought on by the pandemic.

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.

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

Participation Survey

We believe that participation in the Network should nurture and sustain your work as an educator, parent or family member. Knowing more about you and learning from your perspective is critical to us as we plan for the upcoming year and strategize for the Network's future. We also hope to inspire your active involvement in our committees and to welcome your assistance in putting on our programs. Please complete this brief, 5-minute survey by August 31 and join us!

Here's the survey link: https://forms.gle/bEM88NpnoC6TmsS86

Professional Development Calendar 2021-2022

September 11, 2021 | 9 am - 11 am Central Time

Authentic and Intentional Questions: Those we ask children, colleagues and parents; those children, colleagues and parents ask us; those we ask ourselves.

Certificate of Attendance available

Questions are a small but essential aspect of dialogue, communication, understanding, respect and ultimately, relationships. As we know from Malaguzzi and the schools in Reggio, their intention is to create a system of education based on relationships. During our time together, we will explore and examine the art of dialogue - questioning and listening. We will seek a deeper understanding of the importance of authentic and intentional questions.

Presenters: Sandy Burwell, Consultant and Shannon O'Connor with staff from Southwest

Montessori

Twin Cities, Minnesota

Location: Zoom and In-Person Hybrid

Southwest Montessori 10970 185th St. W. Lakeville, MN 55044

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4420902

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after September 4, 2021

Limit 20 in-person participants/no limit for Zoom participants

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

October 9, 2021 | 9 am - 11 am Central Time

Enter Encounter Engage: Boulder Journey School

Honoring the child: Cultivating social emotional support for the child, community and the collective

Certificate of Attendance available

Through interconnection, and by nurturing care and respect for individuals and for the collective whole of our communities, we grow as humans. Join us to examine strategies for cultivating the social emotional support we all need after this year of turbulence. Through the unpacking of stories and shared pedagogical documentation, we will deepen our commitments to truly honoring the rights of the child and how in turn, we honor all of our rights.

The conference includes 2 sessions (1 hour total) of pre-recorded presentations that you will view ahead of time and 2 hours of synchronous dialogue that will take place on October 9, 2021 beginning at 9 am Central Time.

The pre-recorded presentations will be available as early as Saturday, October 2.

Presenter: Alex Morgan Community Outreach Specialist Boulder Journey School Boulder, Colorado Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445484

Cost: \$40| \$45 after September 25, 2021

Students: Limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and

registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

November 20, 2021 | 9 am - 11 am Central Time

Using the Language of Movement to Build Culturally Inclusive Classrooms

Certificate of Attendance available

What if we could tap into the innate wisdom of our bodies to sense our connections - even across physical distance and cultural difference? This is not only possible, it's absolutely necessary in the Reggio-inspired environment, and in our increasingly diverse neighborhoods and classrooms. Join Rie to learn and practice deep listening and sensing toward a new architecture of connection, clarity and courage. Bring the Pedagogy of Listening into your body to allow emergent learning for all your children!

Presenter: Rie Gilsdorf Facilitator and Founder Embody Equity Twin Cities, Minnesota

Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445490

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after November 6, 2021

Students: Limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and

registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

Sunday, December 12, 2021 | 1 pm - 3 pm Central Time

Unpacking Democracy and Education

Certificate of Attendance available

Malaguzzi said that education is "always a political discourse whether we know it or not. It is about working with cultural choices, but it clearly also means working with political choices." The Reggio Approach welcomes differences as assets, values multiple perspectives and interpretations, integrates different disciplines and embraces complexity.

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota strategic plan states, "We envision a community that equips its people to invigorate democracy and expand the concept of learning." How are democracy

and education intertwined? What does this work look like? With examples drawn from local work as well as from Reggio, we will identify and discuss the <u>practical strategies</u> that support these values.

Presenter: Lani Shapiro

Consultant Twin Cities

Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445503

NO CHARGE, OPEN TO ALL

January 8, 2022 | 9 am - 11 am Central Time

The Language of Story-Telling: Using the Paley Curriculum to Enhance Children's Ability to Play Pretend

Certificate of Attendance available

This presentation will share a year-long study conducted in a classroom of 3 year olds during the 2018-2019 school year at the University of Chicago Lab Schools. Tom Boyle spent the year carefully documenting how the use of Vivian Paley's story dictation and story acting protocol impacted the students' ability to engage in high-quality pretend play.

Join us as we think together on how to use the Reggio Emilia lens and help us better understand Paley's achievements. How can Paley's lifelong work give us a renewed understanding of what one of these 100 languages – in this case, the language of storytelling – actually consists of? There will be time to share ideas around what goes on in our classrooms. The presentation is intended for those familiar with story dictation as well for those who have never used it.

Presenter: Tom Boyle

Teacher and Director of Zhawenimikaang ("place of unconditional love," in Ojibwe)

Bayfield area, Wisconsin

Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445513

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after December 26, 2021

Students: Limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and

registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

February 12, 2022 | 9 am - 11 am Central Time

The Hundred Languages of Humanity: Why the Reggio Way Works for Building a Better World

Certificate of Attendance available

Hundred+ Languages of Humanity & Relationships as IDENTITIES — The stories of who we are together and shared identities shape who we can be, what we can become and what we can achieve together. The mindful, intentional guidance of our relationships can create opportunities for growth and a more peaceful co-existence with the children we teach, our fellow educators, the administration we work for and the larger communities in which we live.

By connecting our shared history with theory and practice, you may find your own work with children reimagined, your conversations reinvigorated and your life purpose redefined. By rethinking key Reggio principles to emphasize our larger Human identity, you can go out into the world and make Humanity your classroom.

Presenter: Laurie Van Putten Lead Preschool Teacher Community Child Care Center Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445520

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after January 29, 2022

Students: Limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and registration $\underline{hwolf@bsmschool.org}$

March 12, 2022 | 9 - 11 am Central Time

Virtual Tour and Context Discussion: University of Chicago Lab Schools

Certificate of Attendance available

The foundations of the Reggio Emilia Approach were inspired by constructivist thinkers like Piaget and Vygotsky and progressive educators like John Dewey. John and Alice Dewey founded the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools in 1896. John Dewey believed that democratic child-centered classrooms and interaction with their communities would prepare the youngest citizens for living in a democratic society. Children's right to participate, to be a part of democracy, is central to the Reggio Emilia approach. In this presentation teachers from Lab Schools provide a window into their current expressions of the intersection of Dewey and the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Presenters: Meredith Dodd, Lead Teacher and colleagues from University of Chicago Laboratory School

Chicago, Illinois

Location: Zoom

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445524

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after February 26, 2022

Students: Limited spots available at no cost for students - email Heidi Wolf for details and

registration hwolf@bsmschool.org

April 9, 2022 | 9 - 11:30 am Central Time

Virtual Tour and Context Discussion: All Seasons Preschool

Certificate of Attendance available

All Seasons is an intergenerational preschool housed inside of Lexington Pointe senior living residence. Living as "neighbors" in the same building supports the development of caring relationships between the children and the "grandmas and grandpas." All Seasons is a nature-based and arts-focused preschool that serves children ages 2 through 5 years.

The first All Seasons Preschool, in Inver Grove Heights, was founded in 2009. Last year, a second All Seasons Preschool with a similar philosophy and focus opened in Eagan, in the middle of the pandemic! Come tour our new indoor and outdoor environments and hear about how we are gradually establishing our intergenerational program with the seniors. View and discuss documentation of the growing relationships between the children and the new tenants of the senior building.

Presenters: Joanne Esser, Director with staff at All Seasons Preschool

Twin Cities, Minnesota

Location: Hybrid: Zoom and in-person (if allowed)

All Seasons Preschool of Eagan 3385 Discovery Rd, Eagan, MN 55121

Registration: https://www.mnreggio.org/event-4445546

Cost: \$20 | \$25 after March 26, 2022

Limit 20 in-person participants (if allowed)

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

May 14, 2022

Tentative End of year celebration

We will send information as plans are set.

Ongoing, Free Professional Development Opportunities

Documentation Lab

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

Using the Doc Lab protocol we will practice looking at documentation, analyze the learning together and wonder what steps could take place next. Participants with traces related to the current Monthly Gathering are encouraged to bring them, although this is not required.

We will be using the attached protocol. You may find having a copy printed and ready for referencing during our discussion helpful. **Doc Lab Protocol (2).doc**

We look forward to thinking and learning together!

To register and receive the Zoom link for Doc Lab meetings, click the following: Doc Lab Zoom Link

Doc Lab Dates: 9-11 am Central Time

September 18, 2021 Authentic and Intentional Questions

October 16, 2021 Honoring the Child

January 15, 2022 The Language of Story-Telling

February 19, 2022 The Hundred Languages of Humanity March 19, 2022 University of Chicago Lab Schools

April 16, 2022 All Seasons Preschool

"Let's Talk"

"Let's Talk" is an opportunity for conversation, provocations and questions about working with young children and the intersection of inspirations from the schools of Reggio Emilia. The goal is to create a space for networking the Network. A facilitator will review a set of guidelines for open discussion at "Let's Talk," invite those who attend to introduce themselves and then encourage topics from the group for discussion. This platform will allow for the emergence and sharing of ideas and perspective taking.

There will be an opportunity to break into small groups for focused discussions on suggested topics if the group would like to move in that direction. "Let's Talk" is offered on the **3rd Thursday of the month from 7 - 8:15 PM Central Time** and is free.

To register and receive the Zoom link for "Let's Talk" meetings, click the following: Let's Talk Link

September 16, 2021 October 21, 2021 November 18, 2021 December 16, 2021 January 20, 2022 February 17, 2022 March 17, 2022 April 21, 2022

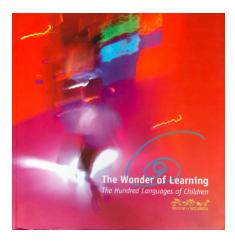
Monthly Open Book Studies: VIA ZOOM

Do you enjoy reading and thoughtful conversation?

We meet **every third Sunday of the month** (except for April, 2022) from 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm. Central Time.

September 19, 2021 October 17, 2021 November 21, 2021 December 19, 2021 January 16, 2022 February 20, 2022 March 20, 2022 No meeting in April May 15, 2022

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.

Re (3) Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose

Heidi Wolf
Teacher and Director
Little Knights Early Childhood Program
Benilde-St. Margaret's School
Minneapolis

Thank you all who responded and expressed interest in the *Minnesota Remida Dreaming Project*. Here is an update in three areas: survey results, our work thus far and an invitation to think together.

Survey results:

We had 30 responses to the survey sent in the Winter 2021 Newsletter (the survey is still open; <u>Link here</u> if you have not yet responded) Of those thirty, nineteen people replied with a *yes* or *maybe*, with interest in the committee and thinking group. Thank you to all those who responded!

Our work so far:

We met over Zoom with two people who were instrumental in developing the *Inventing Remida Project Portland* (IRPP), Will Parnell, a Portland State University professor and Angela Molloy Murphy, a lecturer at the University of Melbourne education center. They shared their experience with IRPP and we shared our hopes for moving forward on this project as a collective. We are grateful for their willingness to think with us.

From our perspective, this Remida - recycle, repurpose center - will be a place to hold materials that can:

- be reused
- be offered to children to honor and support their thinking
- offer education opportunities to educators, parents and community at large
- invite people to look at the impact of materials on our environment
- be an equitable resource that is offered to all at little to no cost

The heart of our hope will be establishing a creative recycling center with a civic focus. We are on a mission to identify a local name as we find our definition! Maybe you have some ideas.

- Do you or know of someone in your circle with grant writing skills?
- Do you have an idea of space for a first home for the project?
- Do you have a connection to a small business with possible materials to donate?
- Do you patronize a small business or local artist that could be involved?

A few committee members are investigating two nonprofits in Minneapolis in the coming weeks: Belle's ToolBox and Twin Cities Makers to see if there are possibilities for collaboration.

We have planned a virtual brainstorming session via Zoom on September 26, 2021. We will discuss, question, dream and envision possibilities! If you are interested in joining the conversation or have ideas, email Heidi Wolf (hwolf@bsmschool.org). It is not necessary to be local to the Minneapolis area to be involved - all are welcome!

Lani Shapiro recently reminded me that the "thinking with" process we hope to offer the children in our care is often left out of our adult experience and practice. In order to work this way with children, we need to have such experiences ourselves. We hope growing this *recycle/repurpose center* will be a process of true collaboration where we look at the task and move forward together.

Reflections on Teaching

Nancy Nakaoka Teacher at Grace Neighborhood Nursery School

When I was a teacher, before I was a parent, I felt I knew how I would handle most situations. Then I became a parent. My daughter was born while I was living and working in Tokyo, Japan, and she was raised there until she was in seventh grade. Her father is from Japan and I am from the US. She attended Fuji Youchien (Kindergarten) in Tokyo, for three years. In Japan, Kindergarten or preschool is not part of elementary school. Most children go to youchien (Kindergarten) or hokuen (childcare) from the age of three until they go to first grade.

My daughter is now 17 years old; I asked her what she remembers about her experiences in Kindergarten. She remembered three things: the bus ride, lunchtime and playtime.

She rode the bus every day from near our condominium. The seats in the bus were small and designed for Kindergarten children. My daughter said that if you get to sit by someone you know it was fun, but sometimes it was people you didn't know.



At lunchtime, most days they had hot lunch, prepared by the school. My daughter said that she learned the importance of having a balanced meal with healthy food. The children took turns being the servers, ate in the classroom and cleaned up afterwards. My daughter said these routines helped her to learn how to take care of herself.

She also remembers playtime on the school's roof, playing tag and dramatic play in the trees, with nets hanging around the trunks, that came through the building.



There were windows on both sides of the building and shelves acted as dividers between the classes. My daughter said, "My opinion on Fuji is that it is not a traditional school. They are more free and you can do whatever you want, just don't hurt yourself." She appreciated access to nature: ducks, a horse, small growing fields and a huge nearby park.





My daughter's memory of Fuji Youchien was one of love, acceptance and fun. I was a little sad hearing my daughter say that she could not remember any of her teachers, prompting the realization that my students might not remember me.

In my current teaching practice, I try to listen and document what the children are interested in and try to say "yes," even if it challenges me, for example, wrestling in the gym. The children and I agreed upon rules for wrestling, including having a safe word to stop the play. I expanded on the children's interests by introducing them to Sumo wrestling.

I see three challenges to letting the children take more of the lead. Sometimes I bring activities that I think the children will love but they flop. It's difficult to let go and not be so invested in my idea. Second, it's sometimes difficult to let go of a plan I have communicated to parents, when the children have other ideas. The third challenge is that sometimes the children want to do something that is pushing the boundaries for safety, like wrestling.

I'm learning and growing, which is important for the children to observe. I recently participated in a Reggio-Inspired Network gathering on storytelling which I brought back to my class. The children dictated stories, which they directed and acted out. I sent pictures home to involve parents in the children's stories.

I've learned by revisiting my daughter's experience in her first school and reflecting on mine as a parent. I've listened, documented and shared my thinking about my current experience as a teacher and practiced new ideas I've encountered through Network events. These all contribute to my respect for parents and my continuing development as a teacher.

Staying in Hope, Reflections on Covid Dawn Lees Lead Infant Teacher Minneapolis

In our program, transition into early care is supported by predictable daily routines, beginning with each family's orientation.

Prior to the arrival of the Coronavirus, our families came into our classroom, we greeted each other and had a daily health check with the child. Parents put prepared bottles away and placed car seats by their child's crib, then completed information on our large whiteboard in the classroom. Daily, parents were asked about their child's wake-up time, last feeding and mood. They were also asked to identify who to contact first on a given day, whether the child was given any medications and approximate pick-up time. Families were oriented to how these routines helped us function together for their child's well-being. At the end of the day, families came back into our classroom and saw how we built their child's day around the information parents had given us. Each child had their own schedule.

As the shutdown began in March of 2020, our precious routines were disrupted. Our child care remained open but parents could not enter the school. Instead, parents remained at the front door to complete information on a clipboard while we conducted a wellness check. In April 2020, we were required to wear masks and staff were offered furlough. There were additional challenges. We lost our communication app and came up with a way to email parents about their child's day. We recognized we were living in a pandemic, a state of emergency. Many families began working from their homes, keeping their children with them. We made a few phone calls and received some photo emails as a way to stay in touch with families. These were important to our sanity. In May, we welcomed a few families back. We watched for signs of stress. Together, we encouraged a new normal, trying our best to stay afloat and hold each other up.

In June, I was overwhelmed by the new tension brought on by civic protests and nearby property damage, knowing we had staff traveling through town and by bus. One day Metro Transit gave notice that they were closing down and we sent one of our teachers home early. Some teachers quit or did not return to the classroom. Our families and staff were additionally stressed.

Social distancing, disinfectant wipe downs, hand washing, gloves, masks, face shields and gowns were made available and used as needed to ensure safety for staff and families. Classroom staff welcomed and brought in each child from the entry. At the end of the day, one staff person was available to watch for each parent arriving. This continues to be a new dance as we respond to changing CDC guidelines. We are cross training. In the beginning, adjusting schedules helped us get used to wearing masks and working in a new way. Staff are continually needed, days off are less. We grieve for the way it was, while we adjust to the way it is. The children hesitate as we hesitate. The children embrace the situation much like we do. Trust is huge. We can't do what we do without trust. We are grateful every day.

Still, connections persevere. One cold day during the winter of 2021 as I was masked, wearing my down coat and trudging through the parking lot on my way to be tested, a weekly part of our routine, a dad and daughter pulled up nearby. I heard the one-year-old call out my name. She recognized me. I couldn't believe it. I turned and squatted down as my friend ran and gave me a big hug. We wore masks in the infant room while she was growing and learning, listening closely and assimilating language. Our connection and trust is strong, even in this new world.

Still, so many people are hurting in this new and complicated reality. Recently, I was looking forward to welcoming a new family. I left a voicemail and waited patiently, anticipating the arrival of a family of four. I was asked specifically if the older sister could come and play in our large muscle room while we went over the infant's routines and how everything was going for the family. We planned to review policy and procedures in the process and welcome the family by creating a family panel with photos.

But on this very sad day, no one came. The director came into the room. She stood in front of me as I fed an infant and said, "I have very sad news. The worst possible news." She sat down on the cushion in front of me and told me she received word that the new infant, who was to be oriented today, had lost his mother. His mom was suffering from postpartum depression, had a psychotic episode, and ended her life. Dad, in his grief, had no plans to return to work. There would be a memorial service later as he gathered her distant family.

I am sad. I grieve for this family. I grieve for the way it was and all of the rich opportunities we had for family connection and support. What next? I'm not sure. How do we keep on? Sometimes circumstances keep us from having opportunities to be with families. But still, I think of the smiling faces of the children and look at what we do have. We can still be a part of someone's day, and maintaining these bonds is important. Caring is our connection and we must look for the opportunities to care for families whenever we can.

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 2021-2022 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

Public Library Resources

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. 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).

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

Even with the restrictions that we face due to COVID-19, Debra Fish Library resources continue to be available by request. 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. To learn more, this link is a tour of the Fish Library.

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 network at no expense to you!



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Newsletter Editors

Lani Shapiro - Content Emily Benz, Patti Loftus & Reba Batalden - Copy Sarah Grundhoefer - Production