



Fall 2013

Volume 2, Issue 5

Inspiring News and Events

from the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

Inspired by Reggio Emilia, we begin with the shared assumption that human beings are always engaged in the effort to make meaning, children and teachers alike. "This work takes us from testing and standards to the meaning of life," says Michele Walsh, a Pre-K teacher in Saint Paul during a time of reflection at our Saturday Gathering, Exploring the 100 Languages: Self-Portraits. The expression, "meaning of life" sounds so grand, but we all know that it is reflected in the important work we do with children.

This quarter's newsletter highlights that meaningful work. This edition includes a reflection by Tami Eshult and Meera Patel on the past three **Saturday Gatherings**. We are also highlighting an **Arts 25 Research Project**. This documents extended project work of two groups of 4 and 5 year old children in a Saint Paul Public School early childhood program.

This winter, we invite you to learn and reflect with us in four different contexts: **A Saturday Gathering, Environmental Tours, Seeing Everyday Places** and **Enter, Encounter, Engage** – our spring event, featuring Professor Carolyn Pope Edwards. The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota is partnering with the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) to bring Professor Edwards here to discuss our role with children through a Reggio-inspired lens.

Enjoy this quarter's newsletter. We hope it inspires you, affirms the important work you do and raises new possibilities.

Sincerely,

Lani Shapiro

Editor, Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Quarterly Newsletter

Reflection on Saturday Gatherings

By Tami Eshult and Meera Patel

We participated in three Saturday Gatherings bringing unique perspectives and have thought together about our experience.

At Network Gatherings, participant Meera Patel, who is a classroom teacher, asks, "how can I use this experience or this information to



In This Issue



- Reflection on Saturday Gatherings
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- Seeing Everyday Places
- Environmental Tours
- Carolyn Edwards
- Events, Book Study and Job Opportunities

For more news and events visit us at: www.mnreggio.org and like us on [Facebook!](#)

Newsletter Eds.
Lani Shapiro - Content
Eileen Galvin - Production

Upcoming Events

Saturday, January 11
Exploring the 100 Languages: Snow and Ice

9:00-Noon
Dodge Nature Center

create new opportunities for dialogue, growth and learning in my classroom?" Tami Eshult's first questions stem from her perspective as a parent, "what do I do to create opportunities in the world around us (as well as for my own children) that inspire, that ask them to be authentic, and offer ways for them to express their emotions and thoughts, and to experience being heard?"

The essence of **Welcoming Children and Families** workshop was captured in the question, "what is belonging?"



Belonging includes children making personal connections in the classroom: to the teacher and the other learners, to the materials, environment, and the overall organization of the classroom. Teachers and parents support these connections by paying close attention to each individual's perspective of what it means to "belong" and sensitively tuning their responses.

Another participant summed it up:

"Welcoming" is a sustained, on-going act that occurs at every scale and builds community and relationships – A city welcoming newcomers and visitors, a neighborhood welcoming families, a school welcoming children and families, colleagues welcoming each other in dialogue."

How do we make time for welcoming as a sustained, on-going act? How do we stay present in our families and our classrooms and remember that there are MANY moments in our day when the act of "welcoming" or creating connection or fostering belonging is happening?

Saturday, January 25

Environment Study

9:00-Noon

Little Trender's Preschool

Saturday, January 25

Seeing Everyday Places

Kick-Off

1:30-3:30

Minnesota Children's
Museum

Saturday, January 31-

February 1

MNAEYC Annual

Conference

Saint Paul River Centre

Saturday, February 22

Environment Study

9:00-Noon

St. David's Center

Saturday, March 7th & 8th

Enter, Encounter, Engage:

Reggio Inspired Network of

MN 3rd Annual Spring

Event

Feature speaker Dr. Carolyn

Pope Edwards

Sundays Monthly

Book Study

Book study meets one Sunday a month at Open Book's entry level cafe, 3:00 - 4:30. We will continue to study the 3rd Edition of [The Hundred Languages of Children](#). New participants are welcome. Email Patti at pattiroseloftus@gmail.com for more information.

The meetings for this winter are on 1/19 and 2/16. You

can also check the calendar at mnreggio.org for dates.

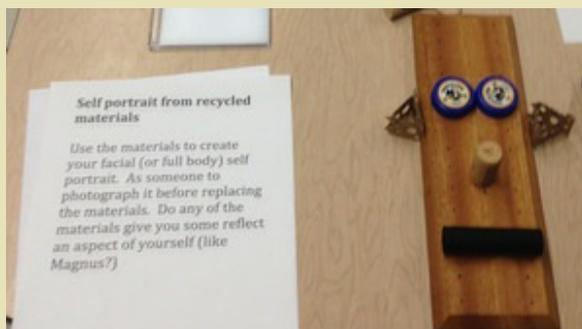
Job Postings

If you have a job that relates to Reggio inspired work, we

The **Exploring 100 Languages: Photography** workshop set out to explore how photography has the capacity to deepen our thinking. Tami observes, "What you choose to photograph needs to capture the emotional context of what the children are doing...not a face, necessarily, but the connection...to convey emotion." Instead of looking at a photograph to explain a single interpretation, capturing an emotion in a photograph creates an opportunity to have multiple stories from multiple perspectives. As a teacher, Meera reflects on the photograph as a vehicle for understanding a child's interest, a tool to open up dialogue, and an opportunity for learning.

From both a parent's and a teacher's perspective, the question becomes, what do photos look like that convey emotion, express connection and open up dialogue? We love visually lovely photographs and we can easily select those based on our idea of beauty. How do we move beyond the visually pleasing to create and recognize images that convey emotion, interest and learning? How do children react to rich and intentional photographs of themselves, their friends and their experiences?

The **Exploring 100 Languages: Self- Portraits** workshop was as much an exploration of materials as it was an exploration of self. The range and variety of materials created an opportunity for a multi-language exploration of self and others.



As adults we were offered the opportunity to experience the challenge of representing ourselves through various materials that would express our identity, in particular the face. The challenge invited us to consider, who am I? What do I know about myself and what details do I identify as "me"? Our representation and reflection lead us to ponder, how do children's consideration of who they are affect how they interact with other children? How they see other children? How they explore relationships?

As we reflected on the series of three workshops together, we each noted that feeling welcomed is not just an emotion, but has physical sensations and responses, as well; that coming to recognize one's own perspective opens up the possibility of understanding that others have a unique point of view, perhaps different than our own. When we welcome others in order to create connections, photograph and share our work so that it tells a story and invites dialogue, or provide materials so that learners can explore who they are with interest, care and respect, participants experience a wider world and their essential role in it. This is our challenge and our responsibility.

to Reggio inspired work, we would like to publish a link to it in this newsletter. Email information to Patti at pattiroseloftus@gmail.com. We will include the posting in our next newsletter in March.

Art 25 Research

*We do not consider creativity sacred;
we do not consider it as extraordinary
but rather as likely to emerge from daily experience...
Creativity should not be considered a separate mental faculty
but a characteristic of our way of thinking, knowing and making choices.*

Loris Malaguzzi, The Hundred Languages of Children

The following research project is one of many featured on the Reggio-Inspired Network of MN website. The introduction to the project is included below.

Introduction



The “Our Community” project, supported by a Saint Paul Public Schools Arts 25 grant, was part of a larger community project called “Creativity and the Young Child” hosted by the Minnesota Children’s Museum in 2003-2004. Our work has been inspired by encounters with the schools of Reggio Emilia. This is a synthesis of the research and activities carried out by the children and their teachers in three Community Kindergarten classes when the children ranged in age from 4 years, 5 months to 5 years, 5 months.

The area in which a school is located has its own particular characteristics. We wanted to engage our four-year-old children in thinking about and representing their ideas and feelings about the place they go to school. The teachers asked themselves:

- What ideas do children have about “neighborhood?”
- From the child’s point of view, what constitutes a neighborhood?
- What details of the neighborhood do the children notice?
- How do they go about representing their ideas?
- How do they respond to each other’s interests?

The teaching staff used digital photos, extensive note-taking and frequent revisiting to support and extend the children’s experiences. Despite the major difference between the two sites, one a lake area and the other a business center, interestingly similar “Big Ideas” emerged from the two venues:

- Signs/Maps
- Animals
- People
- Built Environment
- Natural Environment
- Vehicles

Como Community Kindergarten was located near a lake and public park. The children walked to the lake. They drew the lake and its environs through its change over the seasons. They built the dock and pavilion they observed there in several media. They noticed the ducks, geese, squirrels and dogs and rendered their impressions through drawing, painting and clay. They were particularly excited by the reflections of the light on the water and the transformation of water to ice.



A long investigation followed about the 'sparkles' they observed on the lake, as well as tracks they noticed left in the snow.



The Metro 94 Community Kindergarten was located within a business park. Their initial walks were supported by digital photos, which they then used to support their emerging English language observations about their neighborhood. The children commented on water, trees, vehicles, people, the buildings and their surrounds, and signs. The children made drawings, sketches and constructions of the drains, cars and trucks, apartment houses and commercial buildings in their area. They re-created the nearby restaurant and cooked a meal.

They were completely absorbed by signs: signs they encountered in the world, and signs they made to communicate with one another.

The children used their eyes and ears, hands and feet, thoughts and feelings, words and drawings, photos and buildings, to represent their experience.

The images and stories in the project documentation tell about the encounters of the children with the space in which their school is situated.

To learn more about the year-long project, [click on this link: Arts 25 Research](#), which will connect to the section on "Teachers as Researchers." Scroll all the way down to **Additional Resources**, then

click on #4 Arts 25 Research, to download documentation of the entire project. (Note: it is a large PDF, so it may take a little while to load.)

While this collaboration involving the Children's Museum took place 10 years ago, read on and consider how this project 'dialogues' with the invitation below about "Seeing Everyday Places."

Seeing Everyday Places

*By Nichole Polifka, Director of Learning & Impact, Minnesota Children's Museum
Jeanne Vergeront, Vergeront Museum Planning*

What are children's ideas about communities and places that make up communities? What connections do children see between everyday places—like the hardware store, the fire department, or park—in their neighborhoods, towns, and cities? What makes a community?

A Project

Questions like these will guide teachers, parents and children in a collaborative project between the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota and Minnesota Children's Museum. Seeing Everyday Places will kick-off in early 2014, building on the Seeing Children Initiative launched in 2004, carried out over the last 10 years, and building on past collaboration between the Museum and the Network.

Minnesota Children's Museum is currently in the process of an extensive renovation and expansion process that will create more gallery space with new experiences that engage both children and adults. While the expanded Museum will be transformed in many ways, the popular Our World gallery will remain a pivotal place for children and families to explore. The gallery's focus will be on how people, places, work, and play interconnect and support strong neighborhoods, towns, and communities.

To inform planning for the redesigned Our World gallery, the Museum hopes to include children's ideas and insights about community and places such the hardware store, post office, light rail, and park.

The Collaboration

In early fall, the Museum approached the Network's Outreach & Growth Committee with a project proposal that was received positively by the Committee and Board. To guide the project, a set of research questions was developed by a working group of Museum staff and Network educators. Teachers—and hopefully parents—who choose to participate will explore with their children one (or more) of seven settings: a light rail car and platform, fire department, park, farmers' market, hardware store, post office, and food truck that are part of their communities and the Our World gallery.

Teachers, parents, and caregivers will document children's thinking and understandings of these settings and how they connect with one another. Educators can select the setting(s) of their choice to visit with a group

Educators can select the setting(s) of their choice to visit with a group, engage children in discussions, and explore their questions and ideas. Several educators working with children in a range of ages and of diverse ethnicities could select the same setting to explore, bringing multiple perspectives to community. Children's words, images, and ideas will inform development of Our World activities, design, and graphics.

Seeing Everyday Places allows the Museum, teachers, and the Network to collaborate and learn together around a shared interest in children, their ideas and connections to their community. For the Museum, this project is also an opportunity to explore documentation in a museum setting, bring children's voices into the Museum, and highlight their capabilities.

To Participate

Teachers and parents who would like to participate should contact Jamie Brother (jlbrother@gmail.com). Each participant will be asked to make a commitment to participate in three meetings with museum staff: a kick-off meeting on Saturday, January 25th, 1:30-3:30 at the Minnesota Children's Museum, a first round of sharing in late March, and second round of sharing in May.

Three Part Mini Series Environment Study 2014

By Sandy Burwell

A mini-series of environment tours will be on January 25, February 22 and March 29.

Our Goal

Three schools in their first stages of a Reggio-inspired journey are opening their doors to make their learning visible and invite dialogue. Through observation and reflection, we hope to create an exchange among participants that will deepen our understanding about these settings as well as our own environments. Each visit will be a working session designed for us to encounter the unique flavor of that place and context. Between site visits, participants will build knowledge through reflection and exploration of new possibilities in their own environment. Our hope is that we can build a rich dialogue over time and experience creating wisdom together.

Our Guiding Questions

- On what values do you base the design of your environment?
- What do you see in the environment as potential for beauty, integration, fluidity?
- How can infant/toddler environments integrate beauty, experiences, materials and safety?
- How can we make the most of the unique aspects of our context?

- What struggles do you have?
- What issues in your context cannot be changed?
- How do you strategize to deal with them?
- Given the fact that many parents' expectations include environments that look "academic", how do we reach common ground and drive change?

All tours are 9:00 - 12:00

1/25/14 Little Trender's Preschool

20855 Kensington Blvd, Lakeville, MN

A small new center created for the children of the employees of Image Trend, a software company. Completely new design of environment; 3 classrooms – Infants through Pre-K

www.littletrenderspreschool.com

2/22/14 St. David's Center

3395 Plymouth Road, Minnetonka. MN

Part of large complex with rich history; Variety of schedules: half day, not every day, shared classrooms; special rights children - 11 classrooms – toddlers through pre-K

www.stdavidscenter.org

3/29/14 Orchard Park Child Care

11901 Excelsior Blvd. Minnetonka, MN

Commercial kitchen, serving home-made meals, rented space, quick growth from in-home care to center with 6 classrooms – Staff and family cultural differences, Infants through Pre-K

www.orchardparkdaycare.com

How to Register

Come join us for a rich dialogue about 'where we live'. There is no fee, but registration is required.

To register, e-mail Sandy Burwell at smburwell@gmail.com

**Dr. Carolyn Pope Edwards Speaking Event
March 7th and 8th**



The Reggio-inspired Network of Minnesota is pleased to announce details about our 3rd annual "Enter, Encounter, Engage" Spring Event. In collaboration with the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) and the Early Childhood Programs at the University of Minnesota we will bring Dr. Carolyn Pope Edwards to town for a 2-day event on March 7 & 8,

2014. The event will be held at the Hennepin County Central Minneapolis

Library, which is located at 300 Nicollet Mall. Friday afternoon's talk will focus on "Infant & Toddler Care" and Saturday morning's talk will focus on "The Role of the Teacher."

Dr. Edwards is a Willa Cather Professor at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, with joint appointments in the departments of psychology and child, youth, and family studies. Beginning with research in Kenya, she has studied cultural and educational influences on young children's development in several countries, including Italy, China, and Norway. Much of her writing describes the innovative and renowned public early childhood services of Italy. She is especially known for the books, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, 3rd edition: *The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation* (2012); *The Diary of Laura: Perspectives on a Reggio Emilia Diary* (2009); and *Bambini: The Italian Approach to Infant and Toddler Caregiving* (2001). She is author of 11 books and many scholarly articles and chapters and often gives workshops and professional presentations in this country and internationally.

Please mark your calendars and look for registration information coming in January!

Contact us at reggioinspiredmn@gmail.com
<http://www.mnreggio.org>

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Reggio Inspired Network of Minnesota
4431 Colfax Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55419
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