



Inspiring News and Events

from the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

AS we embark on a new school year, this Quarter's Newsletter offers Network participants' reflections on learning and experiences past, and invites you to participate in current and future encounters. These reflections invoke learning as a spiral, where we leave one thought, one idea, one time and place, and discover another thought or concept, which emerges and deepens.

We see this flow as Victoria Snyder writes about the Network **Self-Portrait** Saturday Gathering she participated in last fall. First, she wonders how such a study might unfold in her context, working with toddlers. Then she highlights the children's skills that become apparent though their study. Her work, together with the work of the children, captures unfolding surprise, new connections, and the identity of the strong, curious child in community.

Sandy Burwell, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Network since its beginnings, reflects on the **Leaving Traces** Saturday Gathering and weaves connections to the **Environment Tours** that deepened her understanding of context and its importance. Her reflection on Leaving Traces also leads her to revisit her long experience with the Network as she says goodbye to the Network Board.

In the spirit of leaving traces and of building on inspiration, the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Board has announced a **Saturday Gathering Scholarship** to honor Sandy's contribution to the Network over the past 16 years. We invite you to apply.

The final article in this newsletter announces details of the upcoming year of Saturday Gatherings. This series connects to last year's offerings and aspires to provide opportunities for regular dialogue, camaraderie and mutual support. We hope these gatherings will inspire inspiration, surprise, connection, reflection, and growth.

Sincerely,
Lani Shapiro
Editor, Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota Quarterly Newsletter

A Literal Reflection - A Reflection On Self-Portraits



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

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Upcoming Events

By Victoria Snyder

Last fall, the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota offered a Saturday Gathering hosted at the University of Minnesota Shirley G. Moore Laboratory School and facilitated by Frances Durkin, where the focus was the process of creating self-portraits with children. The workshop was expertly crafted to show educators the value and power of exploring portrait studies with young learners. There were several stations set up with mirrors, markers, loose parts, overhead projectors, and clips from magazines, etc.



Each station beckoned to me and invited me to create while looking at my reflection. This was a hands-on workshop that sent me back to my classroom absolutely thrilled to implement the things I had learned.

Back in my own context as a teacher of toddlers, I began a study by inviting a small group, 3 or 4 children, ages 2-3, to a table in the art area in my classroom. In order to honor the Reggio spirit, I started the project by using natural and recycled materials. I placed a mirror in front of each seat with a tray of dried flowers that we had dissected the previous day. The flowers were various shapes, sizes, textures and colors, which afforded the children a unique and thought provoking experience. The children gazed at their reflections and then would choose a flower piece, while telling me what each piece would represent. Eli said,



“This flower petal is my eye and I need two because I have two eyes and they will go right here at the top because my eyes are way up top.”

Based on Eli's genuine interest and commentary, I could see that the study would indeed, unfold very naturally.

Saturday, September 27
Saturday Gathering -
Seeing Everyday Places:
Connecting Children and
their Communities

9:00 - Noon

The Debra Fish Library

Saturday, October 25
Saturday Gathering -
Exploring the Key
Principles of the Reggio
Approach: Progettazione

9:00-Noon

Little Trender's Preschool

Saturday, November 1
"Seeing Everyday Places"
documentation created by
RINM members on display
at the Minnesota Children's
Museum

9:00 - 12:00 (documentation
on display between these
hours; come and go as you
please).

Minnesota Children's
Museum

Saturday, November 22
Saturday Gathering -
Exploring the Key
Principles of the Reggio
Approach: The Image of the
Child

9:00-Noon

University of Minnesota Child
Care Center (UMCDC)

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

After a couple of days using the dried flowers, I added loose parts such as wooden beads, jar lids, bottle caps, buttons, keys, and other recycled loose parts to the art shelf along with the mirrors. I chose these items as a way to encourage representational work. I also wanted to create a tactile experience for the toddlers so they were engaging many of their senses. As children explored the art area and these materials, I asked thought provoking and open-ended questions in order to strengthen and deepen the study. "What do you notice about your face? Wow, look at all those shapes inside your eye!"



Again, after several days passed with enjoyment, I added facial features snipped from magazines to the art area and again the children went to it, and set themselves up with the mirrors, glue, and paper.



Lastly, the children began using writing and drawing tools to draw themselves. In addition to the various art materials I had incorporated into the art area, I also posted pictures of Picasso and images of faces from other famous artists. I used these as provocations to deepen their thought process and strengthen the study. The children were engaged and genuinely interested in the experience and working with the materials while exploring their reflections.

When I began the study, I wanted to focus on the children's awareness of and knowledge about their bodies and the connection of feelings to facial expressions. There were also skills for the children to develop: representational drawing, new vocabulary and extended conversation, fine motor coordination, compare/contrast, symmetry, etc. But the study revealed all this and so much more! The study ignited children's curiosity and inspired them to explore, collaborate with one another, and engage their senses in a unique way. During the study, the students became

Children. New participants are welcome. Email Patti at pattiroseoftus@gmail.com for more information.

The meetings for this fall are on 9/21 and 10/19.

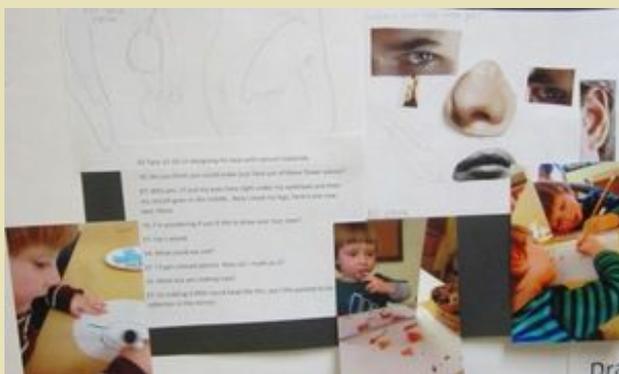
You can also check the calendar at mnreggio.org for dates.

Job Postings

If you have a job that relates to Reggio inspired work, we would like to publish a link to it in this newsletter. Email information to Patti at pattiroseoftus@gmail.com. We will include the posting in our next Quarterly newsletter.

authentically engaged with their reflections, each other, and me as the facilitator in an intimate way that I did not expect. I began this study unsure whether my toddlers would be interested or had the capacity to engage with each other while sitting for an extended amount of time. I wondered, "What can I do to make this exploration an adventure? How can I foster a connection between my students while they are exploring their reflections?" I had guessed they would briefly enjoy this experience, but I didn't anticipate the depth of their engagement. It was beautiful to document the children's conversations as they explored their skin colors, eye shapes, and each other's imaginations. The children went through many emotions as sometimes they were very serious and diligent while working and other times were very silly and giggling together.

Each child's work was displayed in a visually appealing way with photos of them in action, typed up documentation of their conversations, and examples of their work.



The study served as a community builder, as the parents, children, and other students were able to see their work posted in the hallway. Their work also served as a conversation piece and the children were able to reflect on their experience and the work they had done. Looking back, this project brought the classroom together in a profound and authentic way, as any Reggio-inspired teacher would value and appreciate.

Reflection: Leaving Traces and The Environment Tours

By Sandy Burwell



Frequently during our journey, we revisit points of development with the perspective of past insights, struggles and achievements. In that way, we go deeper and deeper into our theory and practice. Seen in the light of studying the Reggio philosophy, the spiral seems a

very appropriate symbol to convey our evolution. This has been my personal experience in the past year relative to the closing event of the Network, "Leaving Traces," and the Environment Tours. I have been studying and inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia for many, many years and yet I am continually amazed at new insights and revelations into concepts I thought I understood and actually did grasp on some level. But, it is now assimilated into my body of knowledge in a more meaningful way.

Giving a linear account of learning never seems to adequately communicate the complex aspects of the journey and depth of knowledge constructed. So many writers, educators, and philosophers have used the spiral as a image to help understand this phenomenon of learning and re-learning, revisiting and reflecting, thinking with new insight into concepts which we have encountered before. They help confirm my belief that a spiral is a very complex and appropriate symbol.

"Progress has not followed a straight ascending line, but a spiral with rhythms of progress and retrogression, of evolution and dissolution."

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"This seems to be the law of progress in everything we do; it moves along a spiral rather than a perpendicular; we seem to be actually going out of the way, and yet it turns out that we were really moving upward all the time."

- Frances E. Willard

I find the spiral particularly pertinent to the insights I gained this year...one in particular. At the closing event and towards the end of the environment tour series, a realization kept appearing and becoming more and more clear. I had intellectually acknowledged the importance of context - our own individual history, setting, characteristics, and location - in our interpretation of the Reggio philosophy. Who we are, our environs, the people in our community, the principles we've formulated over the years - are all the foundation upon which we choose to build and adapt Reggio concepts by which we are inspired. But a new stronger image of that principle was emerging. The interpretation of each person, school, and community is totally unique. Beginning with examining and acknowledging our own context through dialogue, we can discover, more succinctly, who we are and where we are going. Each setting will not look like Italy but neither will it look like others in Minnesota, Arizona or South Dakota. For instance, the crucial importance of relationships may be the most inspiring part of the philosophy for a center with close ties to each other over a period of time. That belief stands out in their practice, more than, perhaps, environment or documentation because **relationship** is one of their defining principles. We might miss that crucial fact if we

are looking for particular materials or spaces with which we have always identified a Reggio-inspired school. That is where they are on their journey.

“Malaguzzi’s pedagogy is complex: ‘it allows itself’ subjective, divergent and independent interpretations of the world in contrast with linear and accumulative progress.”

- Peter Moss

‘Teacher as Researcher’ has always been a complex phrase on which to model one’s self. But, each time we wonder, re-visit, analyze, we are researching our practice by setting it up against our theories and considering how well they blend and reflect each other.

As one of the participants expressed it, *“everyone perceives their space as having negatives, but when people come to visit these spaces they are not aware of those negatives until it is mentioned by the host. I think the environment tour helps us not get stuck on what we perceive as negatives about our own space but helps us problem solve how to correct the negatives by learning how other programs are coping with the same issues”* in unique ways. We can then take these new insights and re-visit them through the lens of our own context.

I doubt if I could have come to these new insights without the dialogue that occurred during the tours and at the event at Blake. The interactions make it a rich spiral. Sharing about traces brings new life to things we re-visit. We see different perspectives and perceptions, which enriches our own insights.

“Reggio is not a blueprint. It is an inspiration to be yourself, to find your own excellence and to perfect it.”

- Jerome Bruner

The importance of saying good-bye and leaving traces came to me in another experience at the end of this school year. After 16 years of being directly involved in the organization and coordination of the Network, I will no longer be a member of the Network Board. This puts me in a reflective and melancholy frame of mind. These years can truly be described as a rich and complex spiral, full of growing relationships, connections, experiences and learning. I was continually humbled and amazed at the collection of ideas, backgrounds, viewpoints, insights and experiences that would be gathered around a table or in an auditorium at every event connected to our efforts. It occurred to me that I could take this opportunity to thank each and every one of the people that have become my colleagues, friends, teachers, mentors, and collaborators. It has truly enriched my life and fed my soul.

2014-2015 Monthly Gatherings Scholarship Application

**Scholarship Application Deadline Has Been Extended To
Tuesday, September 2nd by 5pm**

The Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota is excited to announce a yearlong scholarship which will sponsor an individual to participate in the Saturday gatherings for the 2014-2015 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 is leaving the Board this year and has been particularly devoted to the Saturday Gatherings.

Sandy Burwell



Early Childhood Education has been the focus of my professional career for 45 years. During all that time I was privileged to have had many valuable relationships and experiences with children, parents and colleagues. When I came to what I perceived to be the twilight of my working life, I expected to work out my final years teaching and facilitating programs in the similar ways. Then a form of lightning bolt came and my ideas, talents, experiences were lit up and exposed. The theory and practice of the schools in Reggio-Emilia expanded and deepened my image of everything – my concepts of my own

potential as well as what a collaborative partnership with parents, children and colleagues could mean. This concept of 'inter-relatedness' has had the biggest impact on my thinking. The deep meaningful relationships are the comfort within which we learn and grow and create community. The network has formed that powerful interweaving of people for my professional growth and I am deeply grateful to each person whose path has crossed and criss-crossed mine.

Application

For a copy of the application, click on the below link. Then click on the link under Scholarship Announcement and Application.

[Scholarship Application](#)

To submit the application, you can:

- Copy and paste the text from the PDF into a Word document and email your application answers to Dan Morlock (daniel.morlock@isd623.org)

or

- Print the application, complete it and fax it to 651-646-7183 attention Dan Morlock

Calendar of Events

Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota

By Barbara Murphy on behalf of the Outreach and Growth Committee

This year the Reggio-Inspired Network of Minnesota has planned a series of Saturday Morning Gatherings focusing on some of the specific Key Principles and 100 Languages of Children, with special attention paid to the ways that infant toddler teachers are inspired by the educational project of Reggio Emilia. In September and November, RINM members who participated in "Seeing Everyday Places," a collaboration with the Minnesota Children's Museum, will share their documentation first at the Debra Fish Library and then at the Children's Museum. Our 4th annual Spring Conference on March 7 will feature co-directors of the Boulder Journey School, Alison Maher & Andrea Sisbarro for a full day of inspiring dialogue and participation.

It is the continuing hope of the Outreach & Growth Committee that these events not only create deep connections to the philosophy of the educational project of Reggio Emilia, but also allow participants to connect with each other. We aspire to provide opportunities for regular dialogue, camaraderie and mutual support. These events are one aspect of our multi-tiered plan to offer educational, inspirational and transformational events that focus on professional development for educators and educational information for families and community members. The cumulative benefit of regularly coming together with colleagues to dialogue and support one another can be life-changing. This is our hope for all of you who desire to go deeper with the philosophy and practices of the educational project of Reggio Emilia: that each of us can increasingly bring about positive change in our own schools and communities here in Minnesota by joining together in the supportive community that is RINM.

Unisciti a noi!
(*Come and join us!)

[For an overview of upcoming events, click here and then on the link titled 2014-2015 Monthly Gatherings](#)

Members of the 2014-15 Outreach & Growth Committee:
Barb Murphy, Jamie Brother, Joey Schoen, Dawn Lees, Sandy Burwell,
Blake Ward, Meera Patel

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

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