

Innovations

in early education: the international Reggio exchange

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MUSIC IS A WELL-MADE SOUND: From Listening to Composition

by Elena Giacopini, Emanuela Paglia and Mara Davoli

Mara Davoli has been an atelierista at Pablo Neruda Preschool since 1993. Emanuela Paglia has been a teacher at Bellelli Infant-Toddler Center for 13 years. Elena Giacopini is a member of the pedagogical coordinating team of the Istituzione Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centers - Municipality of Reggio Emilia. This article is based on a presentation during a study tour of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia called "Dialogues on Education" with educators from Georgia, South Carolina and California in May 2006. The development of this article was also supported by the new book, La Musica e un Suono Ben Fatto: Dall'ascolto alla Composizione, which includes text, images, graphic representation and a CD related to this project on sound and music. This project is also featured in "The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit, which opened in Boulder, Colorado in June. The editors of Innovations would like to thank the translator, Jane McCall, for her contribution to this article, and express their appreciation to Reggio Children for its role in this article's publication.

Every three years in the city of Reggio Emilia, there is a prestigious international competition for string quartets called "Premio Paolo Borciani." The Reggio municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools, and Reggio Children were invited to collaborate and participate in a project in conjunction with this competition, which bears witness to how our city's cultural institutions and our educational project are ever more closely intertwined. Other collaborators in this project were the Fondazione I Teatri, an institution that strongly believes in creating links between the theater and schools, and Max Mara, which fully supported this project. In the weeks preceding the competition, the twenty participating string quartets played for the people of Reggio Emilia in the piazzas and courtyards of the city.

This project tells the story of the encounter between the musical language and the two to six year-old children from the Bellelli Infant-Toddler Center and Pablo Neruda

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Innovations
in early education: the international Reggio exchange

Preschool. The intention of the educators from the very beginning of the project was to integrate the ideas of listening and composition. It was difficult to find a title for the project and, as often happens in our work, one of the children helped us with this task. The definition of a four year-old boy, Federico, "music is a well-made sound," seemed like a lovely name for our project because it holds together the idea of the sound of music, and the ways of making sounds and music.

At the beginning of the project, we asked ourselves many questions. Is it possible for children to make music? We weren't referring to the idea of producing or gathering sounds together in a spontaneous way but rather, to children's processes of generating new knowledge and new ways of doing things. We also asked: What do children know about music? What experiences do they have around the culture of music? How do children define music and how do adults define music? To children, music appears to be a sonorous material. It seems to be a universe, in which children and adults are naturally emerged. This universe seems to embrace everything that exists in the world, the visible and the invisible. Music is a material that is present everywhere in the world but, at the same time, it is untouchable. Children tell us that music is composed of sounds and silences. They tell us there is a music made of silence similar to the way waves fly.

Other preliminary questions that we asked include: How do children arrive at the point of making music together? What ideas do children and adults have about listening and re-listening? What distinguishes music from other languages and what does it have in

common with other languages? Specifically, what relationships does music have in common with other languages? And what analogous structures does music have in common with other languages? This question is asked with the idea that children's way of constructing knowledge about the world is to interweave various aspects of their knowledge. Because one of our subjects of research was to be composition, we asked the question: Which elements, what forms of organization, what structures and what kinds of strategies can support musical composition? These questions formed the basis of our research project.

We organized the documentation around four central points that served as a frame of meaning and a way of looking at the project:

- professional growth or educational formation
- listening
- sound and sounds
- composing and composition

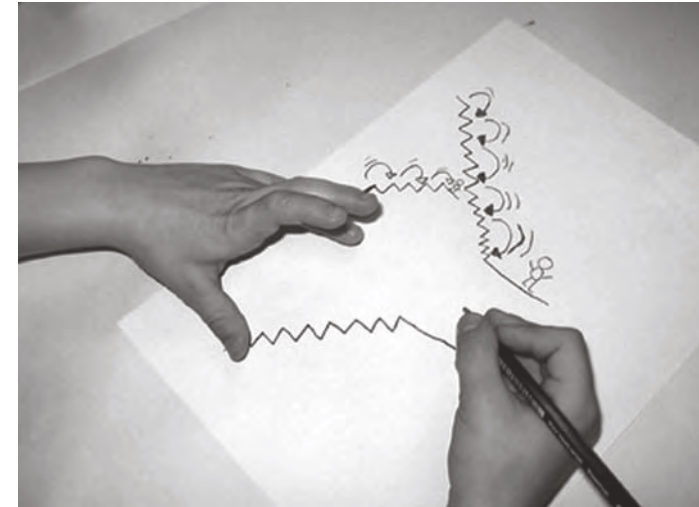
Professional growth or educational formation

In Italian, *formazione* can mean professional development for adults or education in the broadest sense, growing up and being educated. *Progettazione*, the way of working on projects in the Reggio municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools, is a pathway and a journey that is not standardized and not generated from a schematic plan that we use every time. *Progettazione* is a process that tries to anticipate what might happen and is open to possibilities. Through this process, we try to create relationships between elements that, at first sight, may seem distant from the other. One of our tasks as adults working with

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-E. Giacomini, E. Paglia & M. Davoli

children in education is to make it possible for directions and trajectories for proceeding to emerge. Another task that is part of the adults' work is to try to find possible traces within the work of the children, from which we will all work together. The initial hypotheses can be ideas, intuition or instincts. They can be very broad concepts we wish to explore more deeply, which we know can always be re-considered during the process of working together.



It was very useful when Paolo talked about his own processes when he is composing music, as it helped us to have some feeling and understanding of these processes. This, in turn, helped us to read or interpret the children's processes of making sounds and composing from a different point of view. Paolo was also

extremely useful in the choral meetings because he offered a competent and external point of view to our conversation.

We saw this project on music and sound as a marvelous opportunity for growth for all of the adults who would be involved in the project: the teachers, parents, the *pedagogista* and the *atelieristi*. Every project is an opportunity for growth but, in this case, there was a language, the musical language, about which we are all passionate and curious. People enjoy listening to music but often do not feel as competent with music as with other languages. With this in mind, about which elements and which aspects of this language did we choose to try and gather knowledge? We saw growth in reflecting on the composition processes in children and adults. We also saw growth in the analysis of musical language. Every language has its own structure and its own grammar. In addition, we saw considerable growth related to children's direct actions with sonorous sound material. As always, we tried to nourish practice with theory and to inform theory through practice. We also always seek to identify contexts and hypotheses for research within our projects.

There were many different types of encounters for professional growth, including what we called "choral moments," when different people came together to talk about their learning. There were also moments we called "micro-moments" when we took a short amount of time to explore a process more deeply. A composer named Paolo Perezani participated in this project with us. What contribution did collaboration with an expert, in this case, a composer, bring into our work?

One of the challenges that we have never fully resolved in years of work is: What effective ways might there be of documenting something invisible like music? We gathered and collected traces of many different possible trajectories of learning, in this case, traces of soundscapes and the many, many notes of teachers regarding the work done by the children. As the project progressed, the quantity of material grew.

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-E. Giacomini, E. Paglia & M. Davoli

This material is vital for us to understand what we are doing as we are doing it. As the project continued, the environment around us became richer and richer with the documentation emerging from the project. But not only the environment became richer; we also became richer and more varied in the types of tools that we used and made available for documenting.

This structural analysis and investigation of the language of music also included the families in the infant-toddler center and preschool. The many meetings of families and people working in the school were cultural gifts that we gave to ourselves and the community. The parents told us that it was a way of bringing the work that the children were doing closer to home and bringing the parents closer to their children's work. The children were creating sounds and making music at home as well.

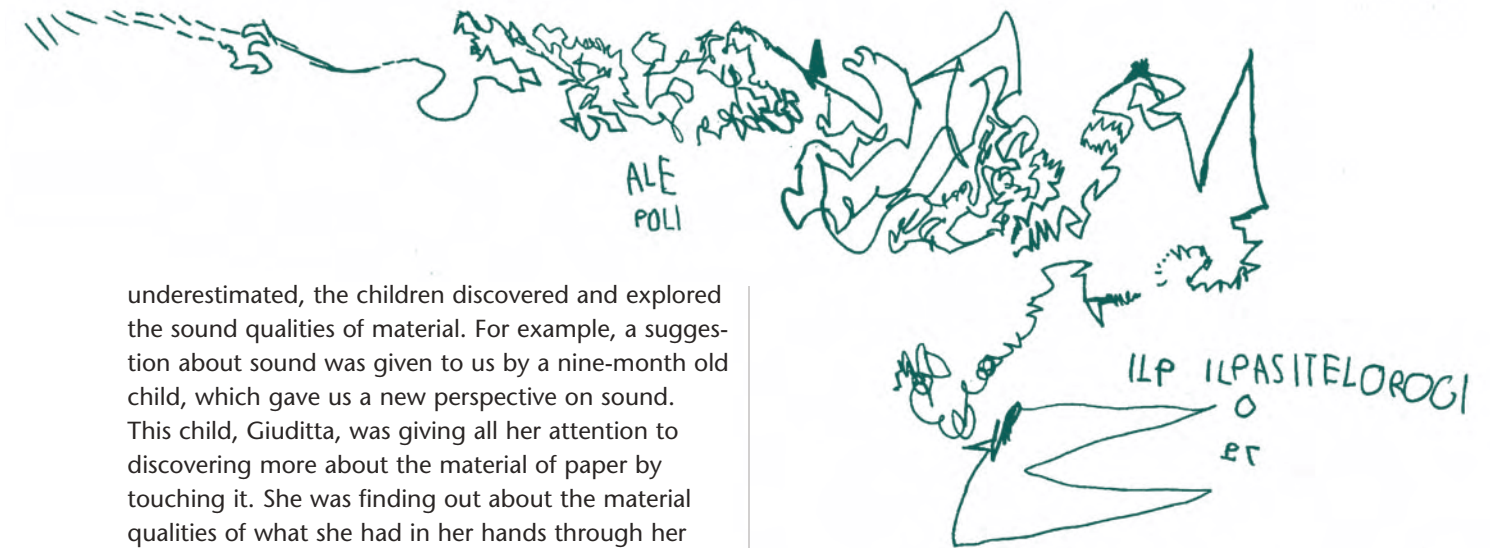
During our work with the children, and during the choral moments and micro-moments, we were able to make certain concepts evident that are part of the structural identity of the language of music. It is very important for us to identify these threads because it made it possible for us to see that we are already familiar with these concepts in children's work in other languages, like multiplication, cause and effect,

variation, repetition, rarefaction, randomness, accumulation, transformation and so on.

Listening

Listening was characterized in a particular way by the very young children's actions at the infant-toddler center. We know that listening is a very active sense from the time that children are born. The human ear is one of the first organs to be developed within the womb. When a child is born, the ear is the only completed organ of sense. That means that as soon as the child is born, the ear immediately begins working to research, to gather knowledge and meaning about the world surrounding the child. Today, we use our eyes to interpret much about the world but in the past, hearing was a very important sense, essential for the survival of the species. How much and how can listening become a research pathway, from which we can generate information and learn? In this project, we were very interested in the *how*, how children approach sound material, how children approach sound production, and how children hear and listen.

In everyday encounters, in every day actions and gestures, often in the very actions that we



underestimated, the children discovered and explored the sound qualities of material. For example, a suggestion about sound was given to us by a nine-month old child, which gave us a new perspective on sound. This child, Giuditta, was giving all her attention to discovering more about the material of paper by touching it. She was finding out about the material qualities of what she had in her hands through her actions of squeezing, pulling and ripping the paper but she also began to discover more about its sound qualities. Giuditta observed her own hands as she made these gestures with paper. As we observed, she lost hold of the paper; it escaped her grasp and she was left with a small fragment of the paper, which seemed like a memory of the sounds that she was able to make with the larger piece of paper. It became obvious through examination of the photographs of Giuditta's exploration, how her entire body participated in this discovery, in making gestures and actions that led to new investigations and seeking new knowledge. Giuditta then decided to take a larger piece of paper and squish it up in the way she had done before. Her whole body was intent on this gesture, and then something unexpected happened. Giuditta began to look in another direction, away from the paper in her hands. We had seen other children do this before and hypothesized that this action of looking elsewhere is not a form of distraction or being inattentive to what they are doing. In Giuditta's case, we believed it was a way of totally concentrating on a sound, of putting the ear in the most important position so it became closer to the sound. This unexpected occurrence caused us to reflect on our role as teachers. As teachers, we often teach music to children and give them notions about music. In this project, our work was based on the idea that the child is competent, ready to listen and hear sounds.

Here are some of the children's comments during their exploration:

"This piece of paper makes the sound of an eagle's wings." Nadia, age 3.0

"Paper sounds just like the skin, because it's smooth." Francesca, age 2.8

Beginning with our knowledge about music as adults and our awareness about how children listen and hear, we wondered: How could we explore the world of listening in a deeper way and further the project? We decided at this point to propose more specialized and more particular encounters between children and sounds. For example, we asked the artistic director of the Premio Paolo Borciani, Guido Borciani, to meet with the children and we had encounters with some of the string quartets in the infant-toddler center and the preschool. Through these experiences and the ones they inspired, we saw how the children gave us ideas of what a sound is or music is, ideas that came from their imagination, their knowledge and from interweaving their different areas of knowledge:

"If I tear the paper, it scares me. if I make small pieces, it makes small sounds." Julia, age 2.5

"I can feel the music here in my ear and then I feel like running away." Simone, age 2.8

"Pebbles play under my feet . . . if I run, it's a fast sound." Giulia, age 2.9

"I can hear the cat . . . silence is a sleeping cat." Giacomo, age 2.10

Children made connections between the subject of sonority and sound effects, and their ideas related to other subjects because children are able to listen and hear, and then to interpret.

Sound and sounds

We decided to entrust the children with the task of finding meaning from their images and words, rather than relying on the interpretation of the educators. We found that four and five year-old children are quite able to live the experience of soundscapes and sonority, and they also are very capable of qualifying them with names, of giving names to sounds. These words that the children used to give music character come from the language of music and from the expressive languages, words like "friend" and "warm." This was a particularly fascinating idea because it helped connect the idea of sound as a microcosm with the sounds of the universe, the immensity and the vastness of the universe, from the micro to the macro. Everything that exists in the world has its own secret voice.

"The sound is around the drop, and when the drop falls, it explodes and goes plaff." Federico, age 5.1

"We must discover the secret of the first drop . . . If we want to discover the secret of the drops, we have to listen to the sky." Alessia, age 4.9

Daily life is a continuous source of sounds and children, as producers of sound, build up their own individual acoustic keyboard that does not separate sounds but relates the sound and music of life to their own production and improvisation.

Composing and composition

We decided to move from listening and improvisation with sound to the subject of musical compositions. But how can we act with a subject that is "made of air and wind?" It required collaboration and discussing together when meanings, images and the suggestions of friends become timbres, tonality and melodies to be developed. We asked the children: What is composition?

"It's the position of music." Ernestia, age 4.5

"It is of sounds and movements . . . it gets ideas while it rehearses." Simone A. age 5.11

"A beginning is important but the end is important, too." Filippo F., age 5.9

"A composition must always have the title, in a composition there must be some background noise." Veronica, age 5.11

"What matters is to agree upon how to make music and where to put the sounds." Francesca, age 5.6



Children listened to music, which they associated with their experience and knowledge, reinterpreting it in different ways. Subjective study was shared and became group study. Discoveries and personal experimentation aroused the interest of others, and the contagious nature of sound daily amplified and enriched rehearsals. The results were compositions by the children that were open to further development and sensitive to new acoustic combinations. New ideas and suggestions were given while listening to the children's compositions. Diverse compositional and interpretative strategies were offered through the use of digital recording and the computer, as ways of remembering, comparing, playing back, and redefining sounds and combinations of sounds. The development of the compositions became more complex, both in the possibilities offered by recording and listening again to the children's live performances, and the possibility of expert advice and amplified listening.

During the week of the competition, there was an exhibition about this project in the Valli Municipal Theater featuring a video, which narrated the story through brief references to the experiences, the emotions and the intelligences of the children in the infant-toddler center and preschool throughout the course of this exploration of sound and music. The exhibition also included children's graphic representations of sound and music, and a place where people could listen to the compilation of the compositions realized by the children. During this week, the parents

and the children went to the theater to listen to the rehearsals, and there also were meetings inside the school and the theater with all the protagonists of this project: children, educators, parents, musicians and community members.

On the evening of July 19, 2005, the final ceremony of the string quartet competition was held, and all the children from the Bellelli Infant-Toddler Center and the Neruda Preschool were there as honorary guests. Before the official ceremony, the music created by the children was broadcast to all those in the theater. Generally, it is true that the people who frequent classical music concerts like to have their peace and quiet, in order to concentrate on the music. When the crowd saw this sea of children invading the theater, the expressions on many faces were concerned, worried and even annoyed. But at the end of the recording of the musical compositions of the children, there was enormous applause, and great surprise and amazement on the faces of the adults. This turned out to be an opportunity for creating dialogue between the world of children and the world of adults. The culture of children encountered the culture of adults during the course of this project and it was an enormous opportunity for everyone to know more.



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REFERENCE

Giacomini, B.E., Maccaferri, E. & Zini, F., Eds. 2008. *La Musica e un Suono Ben Fatto: Dall'ascolto alla Composizione. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Edizioni del Teatro Municipale Valli.*

IN SEARCH OF MUSIC AS A LANGUAGE

By Pam Oken-Wright

Pam Oken-Wright is a teacher-researcher working with five year-old children at St. Catherine's School in Richmond, Virginia. She participated in the 1998 Reggio Children Winter Institute in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Pam is also a member of the editorial board of Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange. This article is an excerpt from a book Pam is writing about many such journeys with children.

I have a history and a close relationship with music. My undergraduate degree is in music, and making music has always been a part of my life. Before the investigation in this article took place, I was certain that music is a language but my understanding beyond that was limited. I wanted to know: What is music to the mind? What is it to the body? What is it to the heart? What is it to a child? How is it that music becomes a language? I was pretty sure that what happens with music in classrooms could only rarely be considered symbolic representation. Yet when I asked myself - "What does music as a language look and sound like?" - I found myself with more questions than answers...the perfect place from which to jump into investigation. In this way, my assistants (a different one each year) and I began an exploration of music as a language over three years with three different groups of five year-old children.

What is Music as a Language?

For the purpose of this investigation, my teaching assistants and I kept as a foundation our image of "language" as we know it for discourse and for graphic media, with the uses of language as a reference point. A medium becomes a language when it is used in order to express, communicate and/or figure things out. It was apparent to me that when children sing songs they know or dance to music, they can be expressing emotions or ideas and if they have an audience or collaborator, they can be communicating through the music.

It was the third use of language that was not so apparent. How would children use music to investigate non-musical ideas? How would they represent non-musical ideas through music? The questions... from which any investigation springs... were emerging.

As I began to shift my lens toward these questions, I did some informal interviews with friends and colleagues who were musicians, explaining the term "language" and asking if and how music was a language for them. Most had never really considered

*How would children use music to investigate non-musical ideas?
How would they represent non-musical ideas through music?
-Pam Oken-Wright*

*Had we seen children use music for the same purposes as they used graphic media... toward a deeper understanding of ideas through drawing, painting and sculpting?
Had music been a language for the children and we'd missed it?
Or had we not supported their exploration of the medium well enough for them to have discovered its power as a language?
-Pam Oken-Wright*

music as a language for learning beyond how to make better music. Most recognized a creative emotional response in their music making, but did not think that they were representing their own ideas when they played. In the course of the interviews, it occurred to me that the musicians who most seem to own music as a language are the composers and the improvisers, such as jazz musicians. Like the painter commits the idea or feeling to canvas, making it visible, composers translate the non-musical idea into music and create a "permanent" product; improvisers create a more temporal, ephemeral representation. With this hypothesis framing the questions, my teaching assistant and I began to study children's use of music in the classroom, and to generate more questions.

We'd always had instruments in the classroom, had always sung, had always had recorded music for children to listen to, just as we'd filled our classroom with paint and pens and clay and wire and blocks...many media for many languages. Had we seen children use music for the same purposes as they

used graphic media...toward a deeper understanding of ideas through drawing, painting and sculpting? Had music been a language for the children and we'd missed it? Or had we not supported their exploration of the medium well enough for them to have discovered its power as a language? It seemed that the children's engagement with musical ideas did not even approximate the depth of their engagement with any of the other media. And so we set out to provoke and study children's musical exploration.

One of the greatest changes to be made was our focus and intent in observation and documentation of the children's encounters with music and musical ideas. We observed as the children moved to music, played instruments and formed orchestras, sang the songs we learned together for relationship, ritual, emotional expression and for fun; we innovated on songs together, making up new words to old tunes and new tunes to familiar words; and the children listened to music as they worked.

In the process of observing, documenting and supporting the children's work in the musical environment, I came to recognize one distinction that seemed to clear the waters of defining music as a language. I began to distinguish between 1) exploring/learning the medium, 2) representing music, and 3) representing through music. Just as children explore other media in order to learn them, just as any medium is not a language until children use it to express, communicate and figure things out, I recognized that children can be explorers of music and consumers of music without it becoming a language.

Learning the Medium

As an invitation to the children to explore and "learn the medium," we enriched the musical environment. We offered instruments as a ready resource at all times.



The children combined elements to make new instruments as well. They taught each other what they knew. Sometimes a child played music on her own but most often the children sought collaborators. Soon we observed the children chose to make music in one way or another virtually every day. The explorations became more and more specific and intentional.

Constructing Theory About Music

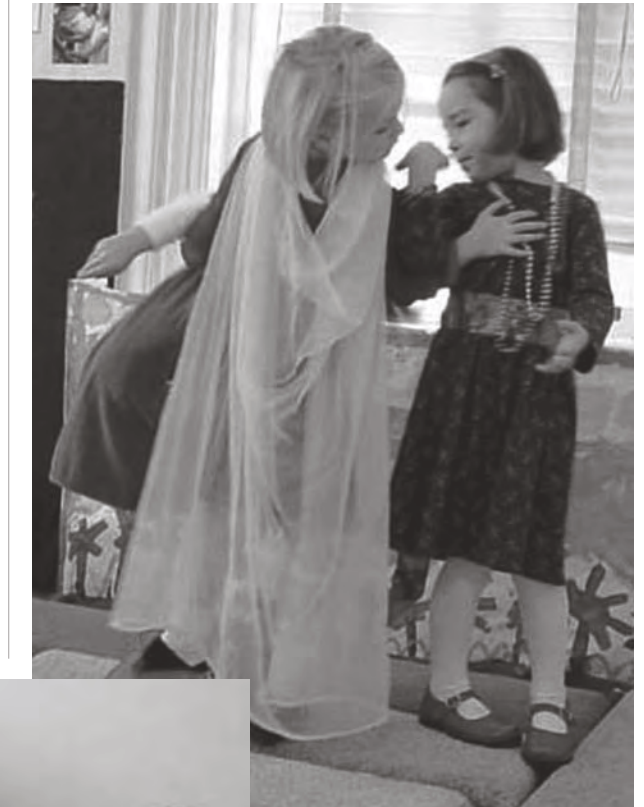
One day, after we'd visited the State Fair, the children were revisiting a favorite moment with a photograph of them riding the merry-go-round, projected onto the shadow screen. The children on one side of the screen had been juxtaposing their shadows upon the merry-go-round horses. Suddenly Elizabeth left the play, only to return a few seconds



later with the working parts of a music box. She returned to the shadow screen and played it, close to the screen. We wondered: Was she adding a musical memory of the merry-go-round to the visual one? Or was she wondering whether music had a shadow, too?

Thus we continued for that whole year, observing and documenting children's relationship with music and musical ideas. In the next school year, our observations deepened. We noticed that sometimes the instruments themselves provoked cognitive conflict about how music works. One day in that second year of the investigation, Austin and Essie put resonator bells (individual blocks of graduated size, with metal bars stamped with the letter of the note

they play when struck) in alphabetical order, starting with A. Apparently they expected that when they played the bells from left to right they would hear an ascending scale. And so they would have, had the bells been a set of A-major bells which, when put in order starting with "A," would have formed a stair-step shape and would have played an A-major scale. However, this was a C-major set. In order to play an ascending scale, one would have had to begin with the largest bell, marked "C." When Austin and Essie placed the bells in "abc" order...in their thinking, the most logical order...the result did not make musical sense to them. They struggled. When it seemed they might be ready to abandon the investigation, I showed them that these bells start with C. When they arranged them beginning with C, the scale sounded as they expected. But then it read "C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C." It did not look right to them, according to their assumptions.



in a closed shape and either march or dance on top of them to whatever music is playing at the time, or they ask for music with a particular feel, or they make their own music to accompany movement.

In time, the children tended to ask for specific qualities in the music to which they moved. They asked for music that was lyrical or that had no words or that had a strong beat. They also began to costume themselves according to the character of

the music, and their dance represented the tempo of the music and the emotion it invoked.

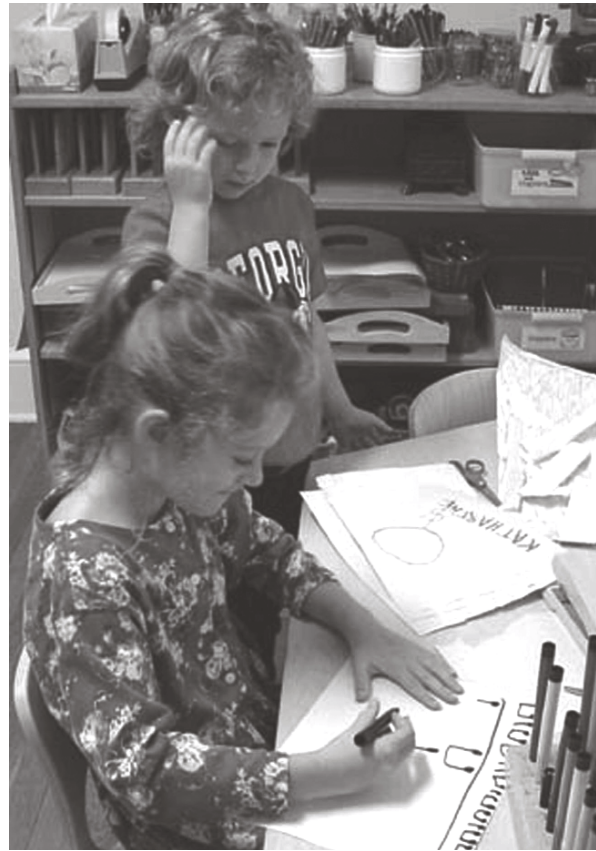
Beyond representing music at the body level, we observed that the children represented it graphically and symbolically.

Representing Music

We found that, after a while, the children began to represent music in both universal and unique ways. Our "bear blocks," carpet-covered hollow blocks on which the children sit during our meetings together, have inspired every group of children who have encountered them to figure out how to arrange them

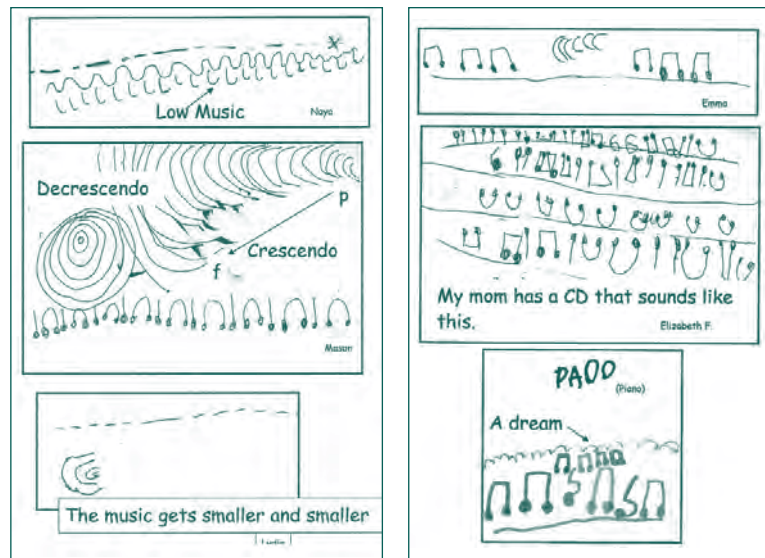


In her "cat and dog radio," Lily shows increasing volume with an ascending spiral-like form (right). The paw prints are buttons to push, one for each available song.



Katharine writes the music to the song "Baby Beluga," while Katie looks on.

Picking up on the children's provocation to represent music graphically and wondering about their image of music at this point, I asked, "If you could see music, what would it look like?" It was interesting to note how much convention the children brought to this idea. We had been singing our simple hello and goodbye songs as a ritual every morning and afternoon in many different languages. Lately, we'd added musical descriptors. A child would volunteer, "Let's sing hello in Italian, *piano* and *staccato*," which means softly and in short, crisp notes. Many of the children responded to my challenge to make music visible by associating a graphic image with a conventional musical term. They also used what they knew, having seen conventional notation.



Mozart's "The Magic Flute"

One spring during this investigation, the children, who had been writing and producing plays for many months, declared their intention to produce an opera. I offered to act as scribe for their story as usual but the children said, "Oh no. There are no words. It's going to be music." I was curious about how they would communicate the story with each other and with their audience without words. As they did with all their plays, the children constructed a set and made costumes. They found recorded music and danced their story.

However, they had unusual difficulty constructing a shared understanding of plot and action. Thinking that perhaps the children would benefit from seeing how opera works, my assistant and I decided to introduce them to "Mozart's Magic Fantasy," a children's version of the opera, "The Magic Flute." The opera truly captured the imaginations of the children. After we listened to it in sections over many days as a group, the children continued to listen in small groups, asked for it to be played while they worked and engaged in the story through spontaneous drawing. Many children drew the Magic Flute over and over, engaging with the characters and the story in deeper and deeper ways. After a few weeks of revisiting and drawing, a small group of children decided to produce the opera, "Magic Flute." They planned to use the recording, adding their own voices to those on the CD.

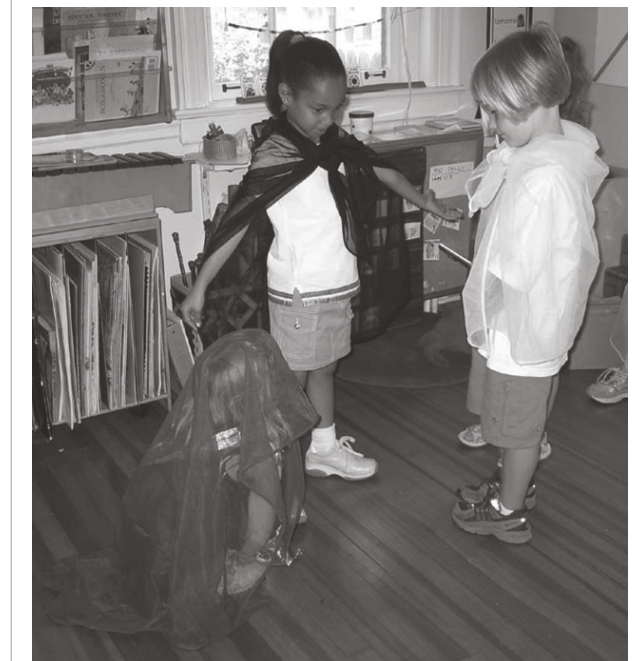
Casting The Magic Flute

The children made scenery and constructed costumes, and over two days, performed the opera for the class with a far greater degree of satisfaction than with their first "opera."

The "bird man" Papageno with his magic bells



Papageno and the dragon find the missing princess.



The Queen of the Night shows the prince a vision of the "monster" Sarastro.

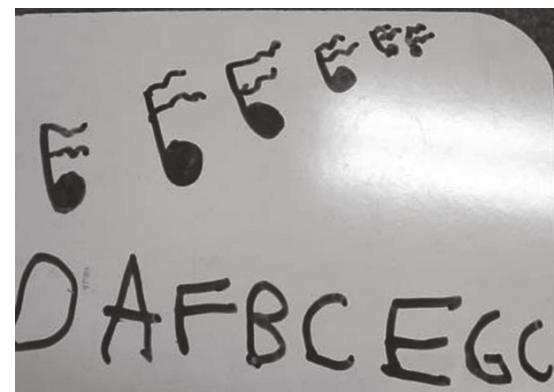
**Representing Through the Medium:
Using Music as a Language**

As the children became more and more facile with music as a medium, they began to use it to represent non-musical ideas. They began to improvise collaboratively for shared purposes. Through their

improvisation, the children represented a shared idea through music. Though the children's first improvisations seemed more about collaboration, relationship and exploring the possibilities of music in that context, after a time they began to propose to each other ideas to represent.



Mariah and Stephanie made a collaborative improvisation they called "Christmas Song."



Essie and Caroline went beyond improvisation. They set out to compose a song that could be replicated. Rather than play a tune on the bells arranged in conventional ascending order, they set up the bells so that when played left to right, they produced the intended tune. After they negotiated the tune, Essie wrote two forms of notation: the letters stamped on the bells and the notes.

Though the children seemed to find the resonator bells most conducive to improvisation and composition, they also used other instruments and combinations of instruments.

As their collaborative improvisation groups became more sophisticated, the children began to think about the "negative space" in music: starting, stopping and rests. They worked out systems for knowing when to stop. During one orchestral experience, Elizabeth offered prizes for "whoever stops the most."

**The Passion and Ability of One Child
Shapes the Group Experience**

Connor had the remarkable ability to conceive of a composition (music or dance) as a whole, including form. She had a strong desire to direct the other children to make her musical idea audible. Though she found it difficult to engage in play with other children at the beginning of the year, she had such a strong desire to direct her classmates in making the music she had in mind, she learned the ways of suggesting so others wanted to comply, a skill she used to sustain play later on. Early in her life as a conductor, Connor would lead small groups to play her compositions with one instrument...bells, perhaps...including form, pitch and dynamics. As the year progressed, Connor continued to compose and direct with more musicians, a wider range of instruments and a spontaneous audience. I believe that the children's experience with Connor's music pointed them in the direction of their most collaborative and intentional use of music as a language: "The Birthday Song."



Haley, Addie and Mason write their own music for the lap harp.



A group of three works to make the musical accompaniment and the dance fit each other. Satisfied, they performed it many times, not for an audience but for the experience itself.



Collaborative Composition: The Birthday Song

In January, I asked the children what present they would like to make for the children with birthdays that month. After a few days of conversation and negotiation, they came to consensus: they would write a birthday song. When the idea first emerged, one of the children, recognizing the temporal nature of music, posed the question, "But how could we give a song?" - meaning, I suppose, "How could we wrap and present something so ephemeral?" After some discussion, the children agreed that it is possible "if you write it down," allowing them to decide that a song could, indeed, be a gift. Music had apparently joined drawing, weaving, painting and clay in the children's eyes as a first-string choice for representation...in this case, representing a wish for friends celebrating birthdays.

A small group formed to write the song. They met to brainstorm through improvisation, playing or singing bits of song as proposals. The children's first ideas were tunes and words of familiar songs with small innovations. Each day, from the tape recording of the children's improvisations, I transcribed the passages they'd chosen to be in the song. Just as we would take children's drawings or photographs of the process of their work back to them for the purpose of revisitation and expansion, I documented the children's musical process through tape recording, thus serving as memory proxy for the group. This allowed us to keep pieces of it still enough and present enough to work with.

When they listened to the recordings of their improvisations, the children began to revise those ideas. A first reference to form came when one of the children suggested that they put all the "songs" they had generated together and make one song. In this way, the small group composed several drafts of their birthday song.

Once the children were satisfied with the song, they met to consider what else it might need. They declared, "It needs music!" I asked the children to tell me more about their intent and their clarification helped me to understand that they wanted instrumental accompaniment and an introduction for their song. They brainstormed, experimented, and decided on instrumentation and form for the introduction and ending. They decided to have only one chime play during the song as accompaniment when they realized that more than that made it difficult to hear the song.

When they felt the song was finished, the small group taught "The Birthday Song" to the whole class, with a plan to record the song and present it on CD to the birthday girls. We asked a friend from the community

The Birthday Song
for January & December 1/2 birthdays
by Katie, Katharine, Connor, Mason, Nauya, & Abby
Jan. 24, 2003

Refrain

Hap- py birt- day Hap- py birt- day To you, to you. Hap- py
birt- day Hap- py birt- day to you to you.
I love you. I love you I love you. I love you.

Verse

There are hearts & things all o- ver the ta- ble. There are
pre-sents & things all o- ver the ta- ble. Stuff are o- ver the
table that we like. I hope you had a hap- py birt- day. I hope you had a
hap- py birt- day. And joys in the light, And ev- ery single pre-sent that
you like in your life

Refrain

to bring his recording equipment and record the song to CD.

The children had one more item on their agenda. All CDs need covers to represent visually what the listener would hear on the disk, they declared. After some negotiation, they decided to create the CD cover by laying real objects on a scanner bed in a

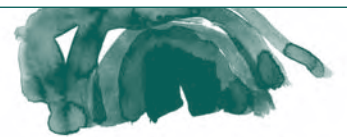
design that pleased them, scanning the image into the computer and printing the CD label. Then the CD, copied for each of the composers and for the birthday children, was ready to give.

This was our first formal foray into composition. Some real stretches of mind were apparent: the effort to represent an idea through music, the



*At times, the temporal nature of music
can be confounding...
but it also stretches the mind to have to hold
the musical idea without benefit of
graphic reminder or referent.
Using music as a language required the children
to learn new ways of articulating their ideas
and new ways of working together.*

-Pam Oken-Wright




The Birthday Song
For the December, January, and February half-birthday girls:
Emma, Nayo, Katie, Connor, Haley, Katharine, Fiddie, and
Elizabeth girls

By
Katie, Katharine, Connor, Mason, Nayo, and Abby
January 24, 2005

Refrain:
Happy Birthday, Happy Birthday
To you, to you
Happy Birthday, Happy Birthday
To you, to you.
I love you.
I love you.

There are hearts and things all over the table.
There are presents and things all over the table.
Stuff are over the table that we like.
I hope you had a happy birthday.
I hope you had a happy birthday.
Find joys in the light,
Find every single present
That you like in your life.

Refrain



struggle to build on but not fall into known songs for the sake of improvisation and encountering the temporal nature of music - the pieces were gone as soon as someone sang them. This last aspect of composition made it difficult to build one musical idea on another, in order to collaborate. Throughout the process, we tape-recorded the children's ideas and explorations, playing them back so that the children could "hold" that which had already evaporated.

As the year progressed, we saw a clear progression in the children's musical development. This group of children could sustain a steady beat; they became facile at improvisation; the orchestras they formed played more and more intentional music; and at the end-of-the-year assembly, they sang for the parents a South African song in Zulu, with beautiful fidelity to the syncopated beat. But we saw more than growth in learning the medium. We also saw that music supported the children's learning in the same way that representation in any language can. At times, the temporal nature of music can be confounding ("How can we wrap a song?"), but it also stretches the mind to have to hold the musical idea without benefit of graphic reminder or referent. Using music

as a language required the children to learn new ways of articulating their ideas and new ways of working together. I also noticed that music seemed to support the development of relationships among the children. In the third year of the investigation, particularly, music seemed to be a place for collaboration among a group of children who, in many ways, found working together difficult.

We had filled the classroom with music, but until we had the particular passion of a few children, which led to contagion of ideas and to the growth of a culture of the community that included a relationship with music, we never knew the depth of engagement with music this group of children showed us. I think I have never engaged in a meaningful long-term investigation without having my image of the topic of that investigation changed forever. So now, when children engage in exploration of music as a medium and then as a language, my observations are colored by this investigation, and though I imagine I respond primarily to the experience of the children in front of me, I think that I also respond partly to that of the children of this investigation...their legacy for us all.

REFERENCE

"Mozart's Magic Fantasy: A Journey Through 'The Magic Flute'." Walter Babiak, conductor. Classical Kids, 1990.

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classroom with music,
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North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

Newly Re-Organized and Expanded NAREEA Website

In June, NAREEA unveiled a newly re-organized and expanded website, in a continuing effort for this website to serve as an effective tool for professional development and communication. The public part of the website now includes the following sections: NAREEA; Membership; Make a Donation; Contact Us; Reggio Emilia, Italy; International Network and FAQ. Within the NAREEA section are the following pages, most of them new to the website: What's New, Logo Story, Map of Contexts, Annual Conference, Fundamental Workshops, Study Groups, Exhibit and Resources. The new Map of Contexts page will create a visual representation of schools, centers and programs in North America whose work is inspired by the experiences and philosophies of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Inclusion in the map is a self-nominating process and, therefore, the map will represent a diverse range of work in terms of experience, depth, interpretation and quality. Those NAREEA members interested in having their school, center or program included will be able to do so electronically once this feature of the NAREEA website is operational. The Annual Conference, Fundamental Workshops, Study Groups and Exhibit pages of the website offer current and historical information on these professional development initiatives. The Resources pages include the already existing Conferences and Initiatives, General Bibliography and Related Links pages as well as the soon-to-be-developed Articles (featuring downloadable articles related to the Reggio philosophy) and Buy Now! pages (where it will be possible to purchase resources on-line).

Within the Membership section, you will find the following pages: Membership (types and benefits), Join NAREEA, Renew Membership (new page for renewing membership on-line), *Innovations* periodical, Membership Coordinators and Members Only Area (featuring information about newest content). In the Members Only Area (accessible with username and password), you will find the PDF file of the latest *Innovations* issue posted, along with a new Experience from Fishback Center for Early Childhood Education, a new back issue article by Sergio Spaggiari and new content on the Reflection page (presentations and panel discussion honoring Jerome Bruner at 2007 NAREEA Annual Meeting/Reception in Chicago in November and Fall 2007 NAREEA Board Meeting Minutes).

In the sections on Reggio Emilia, Italy, you will find information on the experience, philosophy, history, community and initiatives of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools. The International Network section includes information on the membership and work of the Reggio Children International Network. The FAQ page includes frequently-asked questions and responses about the Reggio philosophy, North American Reggio-inspired schools, *Innovations* and NAREEA. The Make a Donation pages offer opportunities to contribute to NAREEA monetarily or through volunteer work on behalf of the organization. The Contact Us pages include information on how to contact the NAREEA office personnel, board members and consultants.

The NAREEA board is very interested in the thoughts of NAREEA members about how the website can continue to evolve to support their work in early childhood education. Please send your suggestions to Judith Allen Kaminsky, NAREEA Website/Data Base Consultant, j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

see www.reggioalliance.org for regularly updated conferences and initiatives calendar

The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in the United States about our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of presentations concerning Reggio at national, state and local conferences across the U.S. focused specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some workshops purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge organizers of workshops, seminars and conferences concerning the Reggio Emilia approach, whether non-profit or for-profit, to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Bligny 1/a, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, 39-0522-513752, fax 39-0522-920414, reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it, www.reggiochildren.it

The listing of conferences and workshops is presented by the editors of Innovations to assist readers who are interested in descriptions and interpretations of the Reggio program. All those listed below are regarded by Reggio Children, s.r.l., as consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the Reggio schools.

Panel Presentation & International Dialogue

Featuring Denver CO Opening of "The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" Exhibit from Reggio Emilia, Italy
Boulder/Denver CO

October 25-28, 2008

Speakers: Harold Gothson, Mary Catherine Bateson, Representatives from Municipality of Reggio Emilia, City of Denver, Reggio Children International Network & NAREEA
*10% discount for NAREEA members
Contact: Andrea Sisbarro andrea.sisbarro@boulderjourneyschool.com or Angela Ferrario aferrario@comcast.net

New Jersey Educators Exploring the Practices of Reggio Emilia, Inc. (NJEEPPE, Inc.)
2008-2009 Roundtable:
The Role of Materials, Mini-Studio, Atelier and Atelierista

October 4, 2008

Union Congregational Nursery School, Montclair NJ
Contact: Director, 973-744-9096 infoucc@unioncong.org

December 6, 2008

Englewood Public School at Bergen Family Center, Englewood NJ.

Contact: Barbara Berger 201-568-8017x32 bberger@bergenfamilycenter.org

January 10, 2009

Wellspring Community Cooperative, Gladstone NJ
Contact: Loring Nagle 973-296-7064 loring@thewellspringschool.org

February 21, 2009

Kean University, Dept. of EC & Family Studies, Union NJ;
Contact: Polly Ashelman 908-737-3785 pashelma@kean.edu; Sonja de Groot Kim, 908-737-3832 skim@kean.edu

March 21, 2009

A Childs Place School, Lincroft NJ
Contact: Barbara Meinber 732-747-0141 barbara@achildsplaceschool.com

April 4, 2009

Creative Learning Preschool Linwood NJ
Contact: Ellie Hull, 609-927-4715 ellieclp@aol.com

May 2, 2009

William Patterson University, Wayne NJ
Contact: Cindy Gennerelli 973-720-2529 gennerellic@wpunj.edu

Learning with Passion and Purpose: Connecting the Reggio Approach to Sustainability Education
University Lake WI

November 15, 2008

Speakers: Louise Boyd Cadwell & Chuck Schwall
*10% discount for NAREEA members
Contact: Marge Egenhoefer 262-786-6814 megenhoefer@universitylake.org

Innovations in Early Education: A Seminar Series for Early Childhood Educators

Wayne State University, Detroit MI

Series Focus: "Reggio-Inspired Perspectives on Inclusion"

December 6, 2008

Karen Haigh, "Valuing Children's Diverse Cultures and Contexts"

February 7, 2009

Jeanne Goldhaber, "Valuing Children as Citizens of their Community and Stewards of the Natural World"

April 25, 2009

Barbara Acton, "Valuing Children with Special Rights"

*10% discount for NAREEA members

Contact:

Judith Allen Kaminsky 313-577-4380 j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu
<http://ted.coe.wayne.edu/reggio>

* for information about the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREEA), see web site: www.reggioalliance.org

RESOURCES RELATED TO THE REGGIO EMILIA PHILOSOPHY

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF REGGIO CHILDREN, s.r.l.

The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of resources published, which focus specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some print and video resources purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach do not accurately reflect our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure respectful representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge authors, publishers and producers of resources concerning the Reggio Emilia approach to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Bligny 1/a, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, 39-0522-513752, fax 39-0522-920414, reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it, www.reggiochildren.it

For a comprehensive listing of print and video resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, contact these organizations:

Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting
College of Education, University of Illinois
<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/reggio.html>

North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA)
www.reggioalliance.org

Reggio Children
www.reggiochildren.it

CONTACTS FOR REGGIO CHILDREN

Angela Ferrario
Reggio Children Liaison for U.S. study tours
508-473-8001, aferrario@comcast.net

Amelia Gambetti
Reggio Children Project Promotion and Development for International Center Loris Malaguzzi, International Network Coordinator, International Liaison and Consultant
c/o Reggio Children
via Bligny 1/a, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy
39-0522-513752, fax 39-0522-920414
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www.reggiochildren.it

Lella Gandini
Reggio Children Liaison in the U.S. for Dissemination of the Reggio Emilia Approach
33 Washington Ave., Northampton, MA 01060
413-584-3682, lellagandini@gmail.com

NAREA
North American Reggio Emilia Alliance
www.reggioalliance.org

RESOURCES PUBLISHED BY REGGIO CHILDREN

Available from:
Learning Materials Workshop
274 Winooski Ave.,
Burlington, VT 05401
800-693-7164,
mail@learningmaterialswork.com
www.learningmaterialswork.com/shop/reggio.html

REGGIO-L

REGGIO-L is a discussion list owned by the Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative in the College of Education at the University of Illinois. To subscribe, log onto the REGGIO-L Discussion List website:
<http://ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/listserv/reggio-l.html>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AT THE LORIS MALAGUZZI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

Documentation: Action of Listening/International Study Group
November 10-14, 2008
Contact: sannigoni@reggiochildren.it

The Atelier and Languages of Materials Study Group
April 5-9, 2009
Contact: Angela Ferrario, U.S. Liaison for Study Groups to Reggio Emilia, 508-473-8001
aferrario@comcast.net

North American Study Group
May 3-8, 2009
Contact: Angela Ferrario, U.S. Liaison for Study Groups to Reggio Emilia, 508-473-8001
aferrario@comcast.net

NEW RESOURCES!

Edwards, C. & Rinaldi, C., Eds. 2008. *The Diary of Laura: Perspectives on the Reggio Educational Diary*. St. Paul MN: Red Leaf Press.

Gandini, L., Etheredge, S. & Hill, L., Eds. 2008. *Insights and Inspirations: Stories of Teachers and Children from North America*. Worcester MA: Davis Publications.

"THE WONDER OF LEARNING - THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN" A NEW EXHIBIT FROM REGGIO EMILIA, ITALY - NORTH AMERICAN VERSION

"The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" is the newest North American version of "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit that has been touring the United States, Canada and Mexico since 1987. The Municipality of Reggio Emilia has entrusted the management of this exhibit to Reggio Children. NAREA has agreed to manage the organization and coordination of the exhibit in collaboration with Reggio Children and representatives of hosting communities throughout North America.

"The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit opened in June 2008 in Boulder, Colorado in conjunction with the 2008 NAREA Summer Conference and will move to Denver in mid-October. For more information about location and schedule, log onto Boulder Journey School website: www.boulderjourneyschool.com

The exhibit will move to Tulsa, Oklahoma in January 2009. If you are interested in hosting "The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit in your community, please contact: **Judith Allen Kaminsky**, NAREA Exhibit Project Coordinator, j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu

INNOVATIONS IN EARLY EDUCATION: THE INTERNATIONAL REGGIO EXCHANGE BACK ISSUE CDs NOW AVAILABLE!

Log onto the Wayne State University College of Education website [ted.coe.wayne.edu/reggio] or the NAREA web site [www.reggioalliance.org] for Innovations back issue CD flyer.

Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange SUBSCRIPTION/RENEWAL FORM

Subscription rates for the 2008 calendar year (check appropriate box):

U.S. \$40 U.S. Student \$35 Outside U.S. \$45

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Fax (313-577-5058) or mail the completed form including credit card information or mail with check payable to **Wayne State University** to:
Innovations • WSU College of Education • 5425 Gullen Mall, 211 Education • Detroit, MI 48202