

The Image of a Child and the Reggio Emilia Philosophy

by

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Bachelor of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, 2010

Bachelor of Education, University of Calgary, 2012

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ABSTRACT

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education exemplifies how children can be respected by educators and adults through its founding principle, the image of a child. In Reggio Emilia, the image of a child views children as strong, capable, competent, and full of potential. As many educational settings in Canada move toward a more holistic way of education, educators can learn a lot from Reggio Emilia. This project shares current research and literature about the Reggio Emilia philosophy and focuses specifically on identifying its founding principles based on the literature review. It also provides suggestions and strategies for educators to adopt the founding principles of the Reggio Emilia approach into their schools and classrooms, as well as guide a group of educators to develop an image of the child for their educational setting, through a professional development workshop.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One of the most revered early childhood education systems in the world, Reggio Emilia, named after the small town in Northern Italy, has captivated an audience of educational onlookers. Early childhood educators hoping to adapt their current educational spaces with the underlying principles and methods of the Reggio Emilia approach can be found worldwide (Hewett, 2001). Known for its progressive and postmodern views of children and their way of constructing knowledge, the Reggio Emilia approach to education has been at the forefront of early childhood education for over forty years (Rinaldi, 2006).

This project aims to explore the underlying philosophies and principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. The underlying principles provide a starting point to delve into the complex and intricate philosophy of Reggio Emilia pedagogy. This project aims to break down such complexities into the discerning features that guide the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Relevant literature will be examined to address the following questions: How do the guiding principles of the Reggio Emilia approach impact early childhood classrooms?; What do Reggio Emilia inspired classrooms and educational centers actually look like from the inside?; and, How can educators who are working within a pre-determined curriculum framework meaningfully adopt such principles?

By examining the literature on the Reggio Emilia approach to education, my intent is that this project will provide insight on how such principles could potentially be transferred to more traditional classroom settings. This project will draw on the work of Loris Malaguzzi (1993a), the founding educational leader of the Reggio Emilia educational approach as well as Carla Rinaldi, the successor to Loris Malaguzzi and pedagogical director of the municipal early childhood services in Reggio Emilia.

Rationale

I have always been passionate about working with young children and felt an incredible sense of purpose in doing so; however it hasn't been until recently, during my graduate studies in early childhood education, that I have developed a keen interest and deeper understanding of what it actually means to engage with children and specifically reflect on the image of a child. This notion first came to me in a school I worked at, as the

early childhood educators collaborated on their shared understanding of the image of a child. From then on it has been a prevailing and underlying topic throughout my graduate studies, strongly influencing my teaching practice. This developing idea, paired with my pre-existing beliefs, experiences, and passion for inquiry-based teaching and learning, has led me to discover the Reggio Emilia approach. It is an approach that amalgamates the ideas I so strongly believe in, harmoniously intertwined into one teaching philosophy. The Reggio Emilia approach is acknowledged as one of the best early childhood educational networks in the world (Clyde, Miller, Sauer, Liebert, Parker, & Runyon, 2006; Finegan, 2001) and a “shining testament to human possibilities” (Gardner, 2004, p. 17). According to Rinaldi (2006), Reggio Emilia offers an alternative educational approach to young children, advocating for a child-centered and respected educational environment. While many schools are moving toward more student-centered and inquiry based teaching methods, most are still bound by a set curriculum, which must be adhered to, or a list of learning objectives that must be met. This type of pedagogy, where everything is predetermined and can be prescribed or predicted before taking place, was considered by Malaguzzi to be humiliating for both the teacher’s and children’s ingenuity (Malaguzzi & Cagliari, 2016). It is my strong belief that there is much more to education and learning than simply the transmission of knowledge which appears to parallel the Reggio Emilia approach.

As an early childhood educator teaching in an international school with a strong inquiry focus and a Reggio Emilia inspired early years program, this topic is highly applicable to my practice as a teacher working in such a school. With a deeper understanding of the theories underlying the Reggio Emilia approach I will be better equipped to delve into this style of teaching, authentically. In addition, my exploration of this topic will provide insight into how to incorporate this approach into a more traditional setting.

Theoretical Frameworks

Several theories have influenced Reggio Emilia schools and will frame this project. These theories include: constructivism (Piaget, 1976); sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978); and Dewey’s experiential education (1938). Beginning practices of the Reggio Emilia schools were heavily influenced by Jean Piaget’s constructivist theory

(Hewett, 2001). This theory proposes that the child constructs his or her own version of reality from his or her own unique experiences or interactions with the environment (Harlow, Cummings, & Aberasturi, 2006; Sutherland, 1992). The establishment of cognitive development occurs not solely by way of a copy of the external world, nor by a set of structures performed within the individual, but by continuous interaction between the external world and the individual (Piaget, 1976). The child first learns by exploring an object or idea followed by either assimilating this new information into an existing schema or mentally accommodating the new experience by creating a new schema (Harlow, Cummings, & Aberasturi, 2006). This view promotes the construction of knowledge as an active process whereby the child forms relationships between new information and the ideas he already has, allowing the child to decide for himself what he learns (Sutherland, 1992). To be able to come to know objects, Piaget (1976) suggested the young child must act upon them and transform them, thus suggesting the active construction of knowledge.

While the Reggio Emilia schools embodied Piaget's constructivist theory for some time, Malaguzzi began to look critically at parts of the theory, suggesting that the theory decontextualized and isolated the child, paid marginal attention to social interaction among children, and that learning occurred in a linear way (Rinaldi, 2006). Malaguzzi began to focus on the idea that children's learning is situated in a sociocultural context and thus aligned with the sociocultural perspective presented by Lev Vygotsky (Edwards, 2005). Sociocultural theory suggests that knowledge is constructed by a process of meaning making in continuous interactions with others and the world, thereby placing the child and teacher as co-constructors of knowledge and culture (Edwards, 2005). Sociocultural theory promotes that all knowledge exists within a sociohistorical context (Edwards, 2005) and that as learners participate in a wide range of activities together with other learners, they acquire new knowledge of the world and culture of which they live (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). Vygotsky argued (Edwards, 2005) that this occurred via an interaction between two planes of psychological development, the intrapersonal (within the individual) plane and interpersonal (with others) plane. This differs from the constructivist view held by Piaget whereby development occurs on only

one intrapersonal plane, thus heavily concerned with only the individual (Scott & Palincsar, 2013).

Another facet of sociocultural theory which has influenced the Reggio Emilia approach, has been the work done by Vygotsky (1978) on the Zone of Proximal Development. The Zone of Proximal Development, as described by Vygotsky (1978) is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86), whereby adults provide scaffolding to promote children’s learning and development. This places the role of the teacher in Reggio Emilia schools as a facilitator and guide, where the teacher loans the child their knowledge and judgment, allowing them to see what the adult can already see (Hewett, 2001). From this perspective, sociocultural theory represents a view where interactions between the child and adult are crucial to the learning process (Edwards, 2005), a view that is held strongly in Reggio Emilia schools.

The work of John Dewey has also inspired the Reggio Emilia approach (Lindsay, 2015; Rinaldi, 2006). Dewey has been credited with educational concepts such as learning through play-based, hands-on activity, as well as project-based approaches known as experiential education (Dewey, 1938), which are well known educational methods used in Reggio Emilia schools. Dewey believed that learners must actively engage in meaningful learning experiences beyond mere knowledge intake, in order to develop their own conceptual understanding (Dewey, 1938). Dewey’s beliefs also paid particular attention to the social and community contexts of children (Lindsay, 2015), echoing Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. Dewey believed that true education came through the interaction of the social situations in which the child found themselves along with the stimulation of the child’s abilities (Dewey, 1929). Dewey also promoted the view of children as active agents in their social construction of knowledge, advocating for curriculum to be based on children’s interests, another pillar of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Lastly, Dewey promoted the importance of aesthetic learning environments, which is apparent in Reggio Emilia thinking where the environment is seen as the ‘third teacher’ (Rinaldi, 2006).

Significance

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has gained global prominence due to the understanding that the early years of a child's life lay the foundation for a healthy future by instilling important foundational values in children (Enciso, Katz, Kiefer, Price-Dennis, & Wilson, 2010). It is well known that one of the best investments parents can make in a child's life is investing in high-quality early childhood education (Anon, 2014; Enciso, Katz, Kiefer, Price-Dennis, & Wilson, 2010). The Reggio Emilia approach has been held in high esteem for over forty years as offering such high-quality, early childhood education (Rinaldi, 2006), making it a significant learning topic for the field of early childhood education. While many schools in Canada and the international setting are making their way toward a more progressive, inquiry based teaching and learning approach, many are still guided by stringent curriculums and lists of prescribed learning objectives.

In the Reggio Emilia approach, children are held in high regard, respected and included in their education, and act as researchers alongside their teachers who function as collaborators and co-learners, as well as guides and facilitators (McNally & Slutsky, 2016). Malaguzzi (1993a) refuted traditional school curriculum, suggesting that by doing so would be creating a place that valued teaching without learning. This project's aim is to provide inspiration, as well as examples and ways of representing such fundamental values in a variety of early childhood settings.

Summary

In chapter one, I introduced my topic, which examines the underlying principles and philosophies of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. I provided a rationale for why I chose this topic and explained my personal interest in the topic, as well as the connections it has to my educational context. I also briefly discussed the theoretical frameworks that will guide the remainder of my project. Lastly, I described why my topic is significant to the greater field of early childhood education.

In chapter two, I elaborate on the theoretical frameworks supporting this project and explain in depth how they relate to the Reggio Emilia approach to education. I also provide a literature review focusing on complementary influences and ideas of the

Reggio Emilia approach. Chapter three addresses how the literature reviewed in chapter two can be applied to more traditional early childhood environments, along with the importance and implications of this for children, teachers and families. In Chapter four I share my personal reflections and conclusions from the literature, along with potential challenges for practitioners and areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As outlined in chapter one, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and experiential education (Dewey, 1938) provide the conceptual framework for this graduating project. In this chapter I examine existing literature on the Reggio Emilia approach and identify and discuss the key guiding principles of this philosophy, which include the image of a child, the hundred languages of children, documentation, and the environment as a third teacher.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the culturally situated and socially communicated nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition, views young children as active participants within their learning communities (Edwards, 2005). Sociocultural theory promotes the idea that all knowledge and knowledge creating tools, such as language and symbolism, reside within a sociohistorical context (Vygotsky, 1978). The knowledge practices and beliefs defining how any given community operates which have developed over generations collectively represent the community's history. The knowledge practices and beliefs carried down through history are a result of the social customs and discourses of the community (Edwards, 2005).

Young children are seen as gradually appropriating the psychological tools and knowledge of the people within their given communities as they interact with others (Edwards, 2003). Therefore the development of a young child's intellectual abilities, or cognition is considered a function of the social interaction within the particular context or cultural setting in which it occurred (Edwards, 2003). Vygotsky (1986) suggested that young children's development appears on two planes, the social plane and the psychological plane. Development first occurs between the interaction of two or more people, known as the interpsychological category, followed by the intrapsychological category, occurring within the child (Vygotsky, 1986).

Rogoff (1998) has since proposed a third plane in the intellectual development of the young child. Along with the interpersonal plane (social interaction) and the intrapersonal (individual child), Rogoff has identified a third plane of development, the community or institutional (contextual) plane of development. Rogoff (1984, 1990, 1998) suggested that all cognitive development is relative to the context in which it occurs,

requiring the young child to participate or interact within the context itself. Therefore the child is no longer seen as an independent constructor of knowledge, but rather the child comes to acquire knowledge by participating within the community, along with the interaction of the three planes of development (Rogoff, 1998).

In a community, many children's interactions occur with more capable peers or adults (Edwards, 2005). This notion is critical with regards to the Reggio Emilia approach, as more capable peers, such as teachers and adults, are seen to play a vital role in the development of young children (Hewett, 2001). These interactions are referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) which describes how cognitive growth occurs in children and acknowledges the range of skills that can be developed with peer collaboration or adult guidance (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). By interacting or collaborating with more capable others, the Zone of Proximal Development allows children to solve problems that are beyond the limits of their current mental age (Zaretskii, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) wrote "what the child can do today in collaboration, tomorrow he will be able to do independently" (p. 211).

Experiential Education

Experiential education puts learners directly in touch with the realities being studied and invites them to come into contact with these realities as part of the learning process (Kolb, 2014). Experiential education refers to a particular form of learning which comes from life experience (Kolb, 2014). This type of learning style is evident in the Reggio Emilia approach to learning as learners are consistently given real world materials to engage with and real world tasks to complete (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011). One of the most influential theorists and philosophers contributing to the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education is Dewey (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Lindsay, 2015). Dewey (1938) advocated that experience is necessary within the educational context and advocated for holistic and purposeful learning experiences, emphasizing quality and continuity.

In experiential education, Dewey proposed that the child is viewed as a creator before they are seen as an imitator, and an inventor prior to being a consumer (Berding, 1997). He believed that children can exhibit an extraordinary curiosity about the world (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011). Dewey (1971) stated that "I believe that education... is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (p. 87).

Image of a child

The image of a child is one of the key underlying principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to education (Fyfe, 2011; Malaguzzi, 1993). As defined by Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia schools network, the image of the child sees the child as 'rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all connected to adults and other children' (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10).

A thirteen month research project by Haigh (2007) explored educators' image of a child by examining the educators' active listening and observations of children's learning and interests. Two groups of seventeen children and one group of twenty children aged three to five in a Head Start classroom in Chicago were involved in the study. Seven early childhood educators (five classroom staff members and two administrators) from the program were also involved. The majority of the child participants in the study were from low-income families of mixed racial backgrounds living within the inner city of Chicago's south or west sides. The study was grounded in the core elements of the Reggio Emilia approach which included: i) the image of a child as capable, ready to learn, and eager to socialize (Haigh, 2007); and, ii) listening and observing to develop emergent curriculum experiences (Haigh, 2007).

Children were given their portfolios to view which contained selections of their work. Staff members then posed questions to individual students and small groups of children about what they had learned, what they were able to do better, what they could do now that they couldn't do before, and what they would tell their parents they had learned. Data were collected through notes, photographs, copies of children's work, videos, and audio recordings. Staff members' thoughts and reflections were also documented throughout the research period, and students were also questioned about their perceptions of learning, the relationship between play and learning, and what they wanted to learn.

The results identified that the older children were better able to articulate what they had learned and provide more logical reasoning for their answers. Over the course of the study, all the children were better able to verbally articulate what they had learned, as well as interact collaboratively within a group setting. The teachers acquired a deeper understanding on how the children learn as well as the children's interests, skills and

strengths. As a result, teachers vowed to deepen their questioning of children, attend to their listening of children (as opposed to intervening), and pursue more experiences related to their learning interests. Teachers gained a much deeper understanding of the children involved including their skills, interests, problem solving, and relations with other children. Teachers also demonstrated critical thinking skills about how the children were learning along with uncovering multiple layers of each child allowing them to better appreciate the image of a child as capable, curious and full of potential (Haigh, 2007).

Hughes (2007) investigated how educators constructed their image of children at an Alaskan Head Start Program in Chevak, a Cup'ik Eskimo village located in remote Alaska. Hughes began her investigation by introducing the fundamental aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach to the Head Start administrators and teachers. Data were collected from audio recordings of the group's discussions preceding the initial introduction to the Reggio Emilia approach. After posing important questions such as 'Who is the child?', 'What is childhood?' and 'How does the child learn?', Hughes led a professional development workshop allowing the educators to construct their own image of a child. Hughes invited all educators to create a painting of their own childhood and share their experiences. Several strong cultural values and beliefs came to the forefront, echoing the sentiments of Rinaldi (2001) who stressed the importance of understanding the historical and sociocultural context of a community which can influence the ways teachers view and interact with children. Prevailing beliefs included the idea that children should be keepers of history, should have connections with the environment and people, the belief that children should experience nature, and the belief that children should know about the importance of their own ideas (Hughes, 2007). Moving on from their own beliefs, educators were asked to act as researchers and reflect on how their beliefs were evident in their teaching practice.

The next step of their journey afforded teachers the opportunity to take photos of their students during different learning engagements using digital cameras provided. Teachers asked their students to reflect on the activities depicted in the photographs, asking questions such as 'what do you like about your village?' during a walk in the tundra on frozen ice. Following their experience, children were given the time to recreate images of the ice and share their ideas in small groups. Teachers later met to examine the

students' interpretations of their experience on the frozen lake, often noting things that went unnoticed during their time on the ice. This experience of studying students' responses and observational drawings gave teachers a starting place to become observers and researchers of their students, as well as deepen their understanding of their students' ideas and interests. It also allowed teachers the chance to reflect on their newly redefined image of a child and how it is upheld in their teaching practice. This study is just one example of the need for different programs to prioritize different beliefs as they examine their understanding of the image of a child that will guide their unique practices (Hughes, 2007).

A case study by Gilman (2007), explored how the image of a child relates to inclusive practices in a Canadian early childhood center. Observations and firsthand accounts served as data for the study. Her work with one four year-old child with special rights in a preschool classroom identified how viewing all children as competent and capable created a supportive and inclusive classroom community. The Reggio Emilia foundation uses the term special rights, instead of special needs, because they believe children are not needy, but that all children are capable and full of potential (Thompson, 2006). The child with special rights had been diagnosed with several cognitive and motor challenges, and found it difficult to interact socially with peers. During an inquiry into paint and the various tools used for painting, this child experienced particular distress when interacting with the paint. As a result, he disengaged from the experience of painting and using different tools to paint with, until his teacher offered him an alternative solution to paint by clipping a clothespin to the end of the painting tool, avoiding the need to touch the paint. Through this demonstration by the teacher, the child was able to participate in the painting in a way that was comfortable for him. Not only did the child experience joy in being able to participate, his peers quickly noticed and tried out the new technique. This experience enabled him to take more risks in the classroom, and interact with his classmates, which in turn, created an inclusive classroom community. This one important choice made by the teacher enabled the rest of class to view the child as capable and deserving of their respect. By thinking about and respecting the image of a child, the teacher was able to create an inclusive environment in the

classroom, and celebrate and respect the unique and capable qualities of her child with special rights.

Hundred Languages

Another guiding principle of the Reggio Emilia approach is the hundred languages of children (Gandini, 1998). The hundred languages refer not only to the spoken mode of communication, but also to the myriad of different mediums that children use to explore and express themselves.

Swann (2008) studied a group of preschool children as they individually explored an assortment of collage papers, to examine how children's construction of relationships in exploring materials contributes to their artistic development. The participants consisted of 12 3 and 4-year olds from an American university laboratory school that drew on a Reggio-inspired philosophy. Over 90% of the children were from low-income families and they demonstrated age-appropriate drawings and fine motor skills. The researchers presented a variety of collage papers to the children that were in varying colours, textures, and sizes in a large clear plastic container. The children were instructed to play with as many papers as they wished. The children were given thirty minutes for their exploration. Data were collected through field notes, video recordings, photographs, and from observation of the children's actions. The actions of the children were then coded according to their directly observable responses.

From the data, researchers determined three types of responses from the children when interacting with the collage papers. Physical knowledge responses were observed, such as touching, tearing, and looking through the papers. Mental relationship responses were also observed including combining, covering, and folding the materials. Finally, symbolic representation responses such as writing, pretend play, and creating images with the media were observed. Many of the younger children were seen experimenting with the materials first, to get a sense of their properties, while the older children began playing with the materials and creating products much more quickly. As a result of their exploration, many relationships and representations occurred by the children such as pretend play, the formation of numbers and letters, verbal play scripts and stories. This study revealed how the intimate exploration of media by students led to the high quality artwork seen at the school. Researchers observed a wide variation of explorations and

modes of expression when children were given varied materials, little instruction, and ample time for free exploration. The modes of expression they observed included role-play, writing, drawing, storytelling and physical body movements.

Souto-Manning and James (2008) investigated the use of a multi-arts approach to early literacy and learning that was linked to the Reggio Emilia hundred languages approach. An art teacher from an American inner city elementary school prepared two different five-set lessons to teach grade one students about the artwork of Henri Matisse and had the students create their own original artwork inspired by his techniques. She taught the lessons to two different grade one classes (at the same school), each with twenty students. Class A was taught using visual arts pedagogy, with a limited amount of language arts integration (one read-aloud and discussion time), and little emphasis on using multiple modes of expression. The majority of their class time was spent on painting their own artworks. Class B was taught using a multi-arts approach with the integration of language arts pedagogy including read-alouds, shared readings, discussions, sing-alongs, dress-up activities, skits, and poetry. At the end of each set of lessons, the students in both classes participated in a criterion-referenced test, in the form of a written quiz. This test was used to measure the understanding and knowledge retention of Matisse style paintings. The students' paintings were also evaluated for quality and application of techniques using an analytical rubric. The art quality raters were graduate students from a local university art department.

The researchers concluded that by teaching with a multi-arts approach, similar to the approach used in Reggio Emilia schools (Class B) students were better able to understand and retain information about Matisse style paintings, as indicated by their test scores. They were also better able to apply their techniques learned to their own artwork and create higher quality paintings, as indicated by the results of the analytical rubric to rate art quality.

Wood, Thall, and Parnell (2015) investigated how children in a Reggio Emilia inspired setting in a Northern Ontario classroom had opportunities to express themselves multimodally. The one year study involved one kindergarten class and their teacher, along with an arts specialist and researcher. Data were collected using teacher and researcher observations along with documentation panels to collect evidence of student

engagement, understanding, and learning. The teacher of the class had five years of previous Reggio Emilia inspired teaching experience at a school that focused on Reggio-inspired professional development. The teacher's professional development goal for the year was to capitalize on student interest and provide an emergent curriculum experience for her students based on their interests and curiosities.

At the start of the year, Wood, Thall, and Parnell (2015) quickly uncovered that her students had a keen interest in dance, movement, and musical performances. To address their interests in performing, the class created a stage where they could perform, and collected instruments to play. As the weeks progressed, the children brought their created movements into other parts of the classroom routines, including meeting times. The children began to create their own moves that they would share with their peers. These moves began to serve as a way for the class to communicate and became a language that was easily understood and readily used by the classroom community (Wood, Thall, & Parnell, 2015). As the year progressed, movement became a natural and confident way for the students of the class to express themselves, reflecting the hundred languages approach.

As a way to extend their interest in movement, Wood, Thall, and Parnell thought about ways to connect other modes to their movement by introducing new materials to the children. By introducing new media such as metal wires, clay, paper, and writing tools, the researchers were able to watch as students created new representations of their bodily movements. Researchers noted that this experience deepened the children's understanding of their bodily movements, enabling students to better be able to express themselves (Wood, Thall, & Parnell, 2015). This investigation demonstrated that students who are given ample time to explore using multiple medias and modes of expression can improve their ability to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways. Additionally, the study demonstrated that by providing educational experiences based on student interest and using multiple modes of artistic expression, it offers educators a deeper understanding of their own students and their teaching practice (Wood, Thall, & Parnell, 2015).

Documentation

Documenting children's experiences is an integral component of the Reggio Emilia approach and has become a part of classroom practice in many early childhood classrooms worldwide (Katz & Chard, 1996; Turner & Wilson, 2009; 2010).

Documentation, which is much more than a collection of teacher or student produced artifacts adorning the walls, includes the conversations and reflections that such artifacts evoke (Given et al., 2009, 2010).

A qualitative three-year study by Lyon and Donahue (2009) examined the impact of professional development sessions focused on documentation for early childhood educators. Researchers followed two educators from a childcare center in San Francisco as they engaged in a three year professional development project to better understand and implement Reggio Emilia's documentation practices in their own teaching. The childcare center housed 223 children ranging from infancy to school age, with mixed ethnicities. Many of the children also came from low socio-economic homes. The professional development sessions focused on the following question: 'How do we make learning visible and how do we communicate the daily life of the school?' Consultants from Italy and the United States worked in partnership with the childcare center to provide professional development sessions for the educators. Teachers met two hours a week with the consultants while also participating in conferences, visiting other schools with a Reggio Emilia approach and sharing their own work from their classrooms. In the first year of the study, the teachers read about and questioned the approach, and began documenting their own work with children using cameras and notebooks. In the second and third year of the study, the teachers shared their newly learned documentation methods with their colleagues and reflected on their own work as well as student work at round-table discussions.

Each teacher was interviewed three times throughout the project. The first interview enabled researchers to better understand the teachers' background knowledge of Reggio Emilia approach to education. The second included a video interview where teachers reflected on an hour-long videotape of their own work with children in the classroom. Teachers were asked to reflect on their own and the children's actions and decipher what practices aligned with the Reggio approach. The final interview allowed

teachers to reflect on their experiences and develop new understandings of the Reggio Emilia approach as a result of the three-year project. Throughout the three years, teachers were regularly observed by researchers once a week in their classrooms. Researchers also sat in on collaborative meetings of the teachers once a week. Two classroom observations from the final year were used to document how teachers employed Reggio practice in their classroom. Teacher's journals, notebooks, meeting minutes and classroom documentation were also used to provide data for the study.

The two teachers observed experienced strong shifts in their understanding of documentation. Both teachers came to understand documentation as a process, allowing them to focus on listening, observing, and collaborating with their students. The teachers made changes to their practice including how they used their time, allowing children to undergo projects that occurred over longer periods of time, revisiting past projects, conversations, and experiences with students, and always having a documenting notebook and camera available. This resulted in a deeper understanding of each student and their learning.

A case study by Wien, Guyevskey, and Berdoussis (2011) followed an early childhood educator on their journey of learning about, and applying Reggio Emilia style documentation to their work with children. The first preschool teacher led a class of preschool children aged three to five in a Reggio Emilia inspired early childhood center. She began her personal inquiry into documentation for her master's thesis by studying her children's inquiry into African animals. Her students demonstrated a keen interest in these animals and underwent a several months long inquiry project into the topic. After inquiring into African animals in a variety of ways and through different mediums, one child offered up the theory that monkeys must be stronger than lions. After numerous class conversations, watching videos of African animals in the wild, and visiting the zoo to see them firsthand, it was during a group role play session that caused this particular child to change their thinking and develop a new theory. After being surrounded by a group of lions during role play in the classroom, the child, who was playing a monkey, quickly decided that it was better to be a lion. The teacher used this episode to create a documentation panel that displayed this child's change in thinking. A panel of sixteen photographs along with transcripts from student conversations were fastened to a large

sheet of orange poster paper with the four corners detached, and decorated with African animal magnets. The huge brightly coloured title read 'Wild Rumpus' in the middle of the poster. After discussing the initial documentation panel with her supervisor, the teacher came to realize that while her intentions to display a powerful learning engagement and consequent change of thinking were evident, the message was lost in translation as the brightly colored paper, bulky title and large number of photographs deterred the reader from understanding the intended message.

A second attempt by the teacher resulted in the following changes: the reduction of photographs from 16 to six, along with plain white paper as the backdrop and a more thoughtful title. The new documentation panel still included transcripts from student conversations along with the teacher's own thinking and hypothesis about her student's thinking. With the streamlined visual appearance and reduction in clutter, the student's initial theory and re-hypothesis become much more evident to the onlooker.

This study suggests that strong pedagogical documentation requires two things: data that presents what children have been thinking, feeling, and valuing; and, data that presents the teacher's own hypotheses about the children's ideas and what they have been experiencing.

Environment

The Reggio Emilia approach to learning often highlights the idea of three educators in the educational setting: the child, the teacher, and the environment (Ellis & Strong-Wilson, 2007). While not a physical being, and therefore not often thought of as a teacher, the environment plays a vital role in the education of young children in Reggio Emilia schools. Torquati and Ernst (2013) examined ten University of Minnesota early childhood education students' perceptions on outdoor environments and intentions to use outdoor environments in future teaching practices. The participants were first to fourth year university students. Data were collected from a survey containing sixteen photographs of natural environments intending to assess participants' perceptions, knowledge of the educational benefits of using natural spaces in early childhood education, and their intentions to use outdoor learning environments in their future teaching practice. The photographs included four different types of natural settings located around the university (water, woods, open grassy area, and park) with four

photographs displayed for each setting. Each category of photographs featured natural spaces that were both maintained by humans and unmaintained. Participants chose their top three preferred areas for personal and educational use, the top three areas they intended to use in their teaching, and indicated their knowledge of the nature benefits of each area. They also completed a twenty-one item nature relatedness scale which is a self-rating scale used to determine an individual's comfort level interacting with nature, and how connected they are to nature. The results from this study indicated that students chose the more maintained natural areas most conducive to educational outcomes, and the less maintained areas seemed less conducive to educational outcomes, suggesting that the preservice teachers may be missing out on many educational benefits of outdoor unmaintained natural environments (Torquati & Ernst, 2013). The results also demonstrated that participants rated their intentions to use outdoor spaces as quite high. Data from the nature relatedness scale showed the average level of nature relatedness near the midpoint of the scale, leaving room for participants to increase their connection and comfort with nature. Ratings from the scale significantly predicted their intention to use natural environments in their future teaching, suggesting that teacher preparation programs should investigate ways to enhance preservice teachers' connections with nature and to collaborate with the natural environment as a third teacher (Torquati & Ernst, 2013).

A study by Tarr (2004) examined the environment of a first grade classroom in a Canadian public school. Tarr, a university professor in a teacher preparation program observed a pre-service teacher leading a science lesson to a group of 25-grade one students. Data were collected from observations and notes. Tarr reflects on the grade one classroom environment by examining the walls using the four perspectives recommended by the Reggio Emilia approach: reading the environment, walls that silence, the purpose of display, and aesthetics.

When reflecting on reading the environment, Tarr observed that the classroom had many commercially produced posters displaying very specific information, such as a list of shapes and their names. She concluded from this observation that there was a great deal of information shared through a transmission model of learning, and wondered how relevant this displayed information was to the children. The classroom walls also

displayed many stereotyped images such as cartoon figures that suggest a dumbing down of the environment based on adults' perceptions of what children like. When thinking about walls that silence, Tarr noticed many brightly colourful borders surrounding the bulletin boards, thinking the extra visuals detracted from the students' work that was displayed on the boards and added to the visual busyness of the space, that may lessen children's ability to focus. When reflecting on the purpose of display, Tarr questioned who the displays were for and how they were used. For example, after noticing an alphabet displayed in a high area of the room, she reflected that it may be more useful to offer letters of the alphabet displayed on desks, where children are able to see them easily as they write. Lastly, when thinking about the classroom environment with regard to aesthetics, Tarr noticed that the light, colour, and physical space of the room did not follow the design elements suggested by Reggio environments. The brightly painted walls, clutter or lack of open space, and fluorescent lighting detracted from the student work that was displayed, and didn't provide a feeling of calm in the classroom. Tarr encourages educators to reflect on their own educational environments and critically examine their use of commercially produced displays, and use of space.

Summary

In this chapter, I first expanded on the guiding theories framing the Reggio Emilia approach to education. Additionally, I identified and discussed the key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to education. Several key principles have emerged including the image of a child, the hundred languages of children, the power of documentation, and the environment as the third teacher. In chapter three, I connect research findings to classroom practices and I develop strategies, based on the research, on how to adapt more traditional classroom environments to include the fundamental elements of the Reggio Emilia approach.

CHAPTER THREE: CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICE

Following a review of the literature on the Reggio Emilia philosophy in early childhood education, this chapter provides suggestions for fellow educators (e.g., teachers, administrators, early childhood educators) regarding how to adopt the Reggio Emilia philosophy in their current educational environment.

Key aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach that will be discussed in this chapter include the relevance of co-creating a shared image of a child with early childhood educators, and how this can impact their interactions and involvement with children. Based on the literature, ideas will also be shared on how educators' can encourage students to express their ideas, understandings, and theories through a 'hundred languages' approach (Gandini, 1998), and how meaningful documentation in the classroom can occur.

This chapter concludes with a description of a professional development workshop aimed to explore the current thinking of a group of like-minded educators on their images of children. The workshop will also help educators co-create an image of the child which they can then implement in their educational experiences with children.

Adopting the Reggio Emilia Approach

The literature review revealed that there are several key concepts which guide the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, such as a strong image of a child, an environment that stimulates learning, the hundred languages of children, and creating meaningful documentation panels that enable educators, parents, and students to reflect on the process of children's learning.

Co-creating an Image of a Child

The image of a child is one of the key underlying principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to education (Fyfe, 2011; Malaguzzi, 1994). As defined by Malaguzzi (1994), the image of a child sees the child as rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and connected to adults and other children. It is based on the idea that the child has rights rather than simply needs (Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2003) and that the child's rights are recognized, respected, and embedded in their early childhood educational experiences (Fyfe, 2011).

Creating a co-constructed image of a child with a group of like-minded educators working in a similar context, such as Hughes (2007) demonstrated, is one way to adopt this philosophy into an early childhood educational setting. As Hughes (2007) suggested, teachers should first be exposed to the Reggio Emilia philosophy and key concepts prior to engaging in the creation of an image of a child. Following this introduction, educators can explore important questions such as ‘Who is the child?’, ‘What is childhood?’, and ‘How does the child learn?’. Educators can then begin to create their own image of a child by reflecting on their own childhood experiences and sharing them with others. Educators could write, paint, or draw images of their own childhood experiences and use those to highlight important recurring themes or ideas that arose during childhood. Once completed, educators can reflect on the key themes and beliefs, and think about how they are evident in their teaching practice.

This next step involves teachers acting as researchers in their own context by reflecting on their practice. This can be done by providing teachers with cameras or video recorders to document an educational experience that they engage in with their students, such as exploring the frozen lake as documented in Hughes’ research study (2007). Educators can take photos and video recordings of their students throughout their engagement to keep for later reflection. Upon completion of the learning experience, educators can come together with colleagues to share and reflect on their own collected data (e.g., photos, video recordings, notes). Educators may notice certain happenings that went unnoticed during the engagement that will enable them to better appreciate their image of a child.

Both Hughes (2007) and Haigh (2007) revealed that the image of a child can be better understood and appreciated when taking the time to listen deeply and reflect on the experiences, thoughts, and ideas of children (Haigh, 2007). As suggested by Haigh (2007), teachers are encouraged to ask their students important questions such as ‘What are you learning?’ or ‘What do you like?’ about a particular engagement. They are then suggested to come together to study and analyze their students’ responses to be able to better appreciate their students’ understanding, learning, and interest about a particular topic. When educators act in this way they are becoming not only observers but participants and co-researchers in their students’ learning (Haigh, 2007).

Multiple Modes of Expression

Children in Reggio Emilia programs are encouraged to express themselves and demonstrate their understanding in a myriad of different ways. Understood as multiple modes of expression or the ‘hundred languages’ of children (Gandini, 1998), this understanding is another guiding principle of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Children are given a variety of materials and mediums to explore with and are encouraged to experiment, evaluate, and express such mediums in hundreds of different ways.

The research by Swann (2008) provided an example of how educators can use such mediums, and the importance of providing children with ample time and space to explore with different materials. Educators should introduce new materials or mediums slowly which will enable children time to explore the functionality and purpose of each new material. Providing children with blocks of uninterrupted exploration time to discover new mediums will also enhance their understanding on how to use each medium (Swann, 2008).

An example of how educators can share new materials with students could include an invitation for students to explore a variety of different twigs and branches gathered from outside and placed in clear bins presented to students. Providing time for students to explore different ways to interact with and use the materials will lead them to use the materials more purposefully, creatively, and meaningfully, adding to their hundred languages (Swann, 2008).

Documenting Children’s Inquiries

Documentation is another key component of the Reggio Emilia approach. Documentation focuses on uncovering the process behind the learning that is occurring and making that process visible. It occurs through means such as photographs, transcribed conversations with children, collaboration with other educators, the graphic arts, and video recordings (Schroeder-Yu, 2008).

As suggested by Lyon and Donahue (2009) one way to increase Reggio-inspired documentation in the classroom is to provide schools or groups of educators with long-term, in-depth professional development on documentation. While this is not feasible for all settings, some key aspects of their three-year long professional development on documentation can guide educators on how to introduce a new way to document student

learning in the classroom. Educators can make documentation more powerful and meaningful by having a notebook or note-taking device along with a camera or video recorder at the ready. Educators can also provide students with long periods of uninterrupted time to engage in exploration of a new topic or provocation, while they step back and carefully observe and document the interactions between the students and their environment. Educators can also take photos of each child engaged in their discovery for more focused inspection at a later time. In addition, educators can also take note of what each child prefers to interact with and how much time he or she spends engaging with the materials.

Once the educators collect this initial data, they can be encouraged to come together with students to share, discuss, and interpret their findings. This collaboration between educators and their students' data is a key component of meaningful documentation in Reggio Emilia programs. By having conversations with colleagues about what they notice from the many interactions and discoveries of each child, deeper understandings of each child and his or her learning styles, preferences, understandings and interests will emerge (Turner & Wilson, 2009, 2010). This collaborative analysis of the children's play also affords educators the opportunity to develop future meaningful learning experiences or potential projects.

Once the data have been thoroughly discussed they become the first part of the documentation panel. Documentation panels can also include comments or notes made by teachers during their collaborative meetings. Once the initial documentation process has begun, the data should always be brought back to the children so they can share their interpretations of their learning. Revisiting prior photos, videos, and conversations with children provides opportunities for new questions, ideas, and connections to emerge, along with deepening their understanding of the current topic. Documentation panels should also include comments and explanations by the children about their work and their experiences. Reggio programs also encourage parents to take part in the documentation process by encouraging them to comment on their child's work and include comments on the documentation panel (Schroeder-Yu, 2008).

Professional Development Workshop

“Creating an Image of the Child”

The purpose of this capstone project was to gain deeper insight into the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, and to provide educators with practical and useful ways to implement aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach in their own classroom teaching or school. To share this information with colleagues in an effective and meaningful way, I have designed a professional development workshop (Appendix A) aimed at providing an overview of the key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach along with a guided and interactive session to allow like-minded educators to develop a co-constructed image of the child in their educational setting.

In the first part of the workshop, I will introduce the Reggio Emilia approach to colleagues and explain the purpose of my capstone project and the workshop. In the second part of the workshop, I will provide educators with an opportunity to first reflect on and then share their personal experiences of their own childhood through a variety of mediums. Next, as a group we will identify and highlight common themes and beliefs about childhood that we shared. Then, we will create a list of the most important statements we believe about the child. Lastly, we will reflect on our own teaching practice and how we uphold these beliefs by providing examples and evidence from our experiences that demonstrate our beliefs in action in our teaching practice. At the conclusion of the workshop I will provide time for educators to share their thoughts and discuss how they might use the image of a child in their own school or classroom.

Summary

In this chapter, I connected the reviewed literature to suggestions and ideas on how educators can adopt certain aspects of the Reggio Emilia approach in their own educational environment. I provided some examples of how educators can think about and create an image of the child, enable students to express themselves by using multiple modes of expression, and how educators can begin to document their students' learning in a more meaningful and engaging way through the process of documentation. This

chapter also included a description of a professional development workshop aimed at introducing educators to the key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach and co-constructing an image of the child. In the following chapter, I reflect on what I have learned through this project and suggest areas for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

From the literature it is clear that the Reggio Emilia schools in Northern Italy continue to lead the way in early childhood education. Learning more from the literature on the Reggio Emilia approach has offered me a deeper understanding of its guiding beliefs and values, as well as practical ways to incorporate these beliefs into my own teaching practice.

My reason for choosing this topic was the strong feeling of agreement I had when the early years' department at my school undertook a project to create an image of the child. It was by being included in this experience, along with my readings and research on the Reggio Emilia approach in the Master's program that caused me to really understand and appreciate the work that we do every day with children. The ideas embedded in the Reggio philosophy, in particular the image of a child, spoke to me on a deeper level than any other topic studied throughout the program. The purpose of this project was to examine the philosophy in a way that would allow me to identify key concepts and ideas embedded in the approach, incorporate them into my own teaching practice, and share those ideas with fellow educators.

Reflections

Throughout my master's program, I have had several key realizations and learning opportunities. One of the most important realizations I have had from working on this graduate project has been an idea that stems from sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which aligns with the Reggio Emilia approach. The idea that the philosophies of the Reggio Emilia schools reside within a sociohistorical context, and therefore cannot be duplicated or re-created exactly the same in another setting is at the heart of understanding the Reggio Emilia approach. The values and beliefs of a community come from the sociohistorical context of that community; therefore, in any given school the way the values and beliefs are incorporated or demonstrated will look different. Reggio Emilia is not a program that can be emulated by another school or district, it is a living, breathing way of life found in schools in the city of Reggio Emilia that share common principles based on the social and historical context of the area. By studying the philosophy and several examples from the literature, it is clear that the approach looks and feels different in different environments. While differences occur, the philosophy

remains, that being the image of a child. This project has allowed me to deepen my own understanding of the image of a child, as well as share those ideas with colleagues and teachers from the wider community.

Sharing my ideas with others on the image of a child through my professional development workshop project has allowed me to reflect on the challenges that many educators face when asked to bring these ideas back to their own educational spaces. While the ideas explored in the workshop resonated strongly with many of the participants, they also shared hesitations about the strict guidelines, schedules, assessment practices, and curriculum standards that are so often outside of the educator's control. While several participants expressed interest in providing their children more choice, more ways to express themselves, and more space, they were conflicted with how they are able to do that given the limited resources they may have, the regimented curriculum and structures at their school, and the tightly scheduled days of primary years programs.

My advice to them was perhaps my most profound reflection point and take away from this project. Do what you can everyday with the children who are in your care to honour them and their ideas. Focus on your day-to-day interactions with your children and stop to notice and think about how they are guided by your beliefs about children. What you say to children matters and how you respond to them provides insight into what you think of children and their capabilities. Be present, and enjoy the wonderful, humorous, creative, curious, and active nature of children. As an educator you have the ability each and every day to empower, inspire, and promote joy in children, regardless of a rigid schedule or the many curriculum objectives. Every time you interact with a child you have a special moment with them to demonstrate your care, belief, and understanding about them. When a child asks a question, do not simply respond with an answer, but inquire into what they think and why. This shows them that you believe in what they have to say and in their ideas. It demonstrates that they are capable of not only asking such questions, but also thinking about them and answering them. They are capable of contemplating and theorizing. It is important for children to realize that we respect them enough to believe in them and their ideas. So I urged the educators to listen carefully to their children's theories, their stories and their questions.

While I still face many of the same restrictions and challenges my participants' face about incorporating the guiding principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy into my classroom, I can continue to honour my strong and unwavering image of the child each day in the classroom. It has been the single greatest outcome that has guided and transformed my teaching practice and it is my hope that I can continue to share this belief with educators throughout the region as I continue to lead professional development workshops at my school and beyond.

Areas for Future Research

While there is plenty of reading and information available on the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, more primary research studies and articles are needed to accurately demonstrate the effects this philosophy has on student learning. Areas for future research include more studies about the image of a child, the environment as a third teacher, the transition between a Reggio Emilia style kindergarten to a more structured grade one setting and how the ideas and principles might look or be adopted with older children in higher grades.

From my perspective, more studies are needed to focus on the image of a child, as it is the underlying principle of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Studies could explore specific examples of how the image of a child is upheld in different Reggio Emilia-inspired schools and how the image of a child affects the children's learning, along with how it impacts the children, educators, families, and the community. Studies could also explore how schools have changed, and what kinds of changes have occurred following a professional development workshop based on the image of a child, such as the one led in this project.

Studies focused on the environment as a third teacher could also be explored. The environment as a third teacher is a common phrase used in Reggio Emilia terminology; however few research based studies explore this topic. Studies that explore the meaning of the environment as a third teacher, along with research that demonstrates the ways that a school has created changes to their environment and the impact on student learning could also be addressed.

Furthermore, the majority of the research on Reggio Emilia settings has occurred in early years' programs, focusing on children aged two to five years of age. Studies that

investigate the transition between a Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool and grade school could potentially highlight benefits and suggestions for educators and parents, as children transition to a new educational setting. Studies that explore how the image of a child, or Reggio Emilia philosophies could be practiced with older children in higher grades could also be of value.

Conclusion

This project has allowed me to investigate the literature on the Reggio Emilia approach, and identify several key underlying features and attributes of the philosophy. These underlying features include the image of a child as strong, capable and competent, the multiple modes of expression of children, the documentation process that enables educators, children, and families to re-visit children's ideas and discoveries, and the importance of the environment in children's learning.

By presenting a professional development workshop to colleagues on the importance of establishing a strong image of a child, it is my hope to challenge and inspire educators to look beyond what is outside of their control and focus on what matters most in the classroom, the children and their beliefs about the child. It is my hope that children are respected, listened to, and thought of as capable and competent in as many educational spaces as possible.

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Appendix A
Professional Development Workshop



Materials: Scrap paper for CSI, paper for word, markers, pencils, pencil crayons, sticky tack, white board markers, sticky notes

Begin with welcome, introduction, invitation to share a bit about yourselves and feel comfortable in the group. (5 min)



Click on link to show video



Photo courtesy of: <http://www.notonthehighstreet.com>

“When you teach a child something you take away forever their chance of discovering it for themselves.”

- Jean Piaget

Pillars of Reggio Emilia

The image of a child

Collaboration

Environment

Projects

Hundred languages

Documentation



Photo courtesy of: <http://www.teachreggio.org>

History

There are several pillars on which the foundation of the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education stand. The image of a child being the most prevailing feature and which everything else connects to.

Collaboration

- Children
- Teachers
- Parents
- Community

Image courtesy of: <http://www.gpbbridges.com>

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education promotes the idea of collaboration among all parties involved. Collaboration among children, children and teachers acting as co-partners or co-investigators in their learning, collaboration among teachers, collaboration between teachers, parents and children, and collaboration with the school and the community are all essential to the development of the child. Two minds are always better than one.



Image courtesy of: <http://www.tingit.info/>

Environment

Environment as a third teacher

Reggio Emilia schools strongly value the environment and see it as a third teacher in a child's learning. Aesthetically pleasing, uncluttered spaces with many natural elements are commonly seen in Reggio inspired schools. An environment that invites curiosity and leaves room for imagination, without the use of commercially produced decoratives give children the space they need to explore, think and create.



Photo courtesy of: <https://jenniegrover.com>

Projects

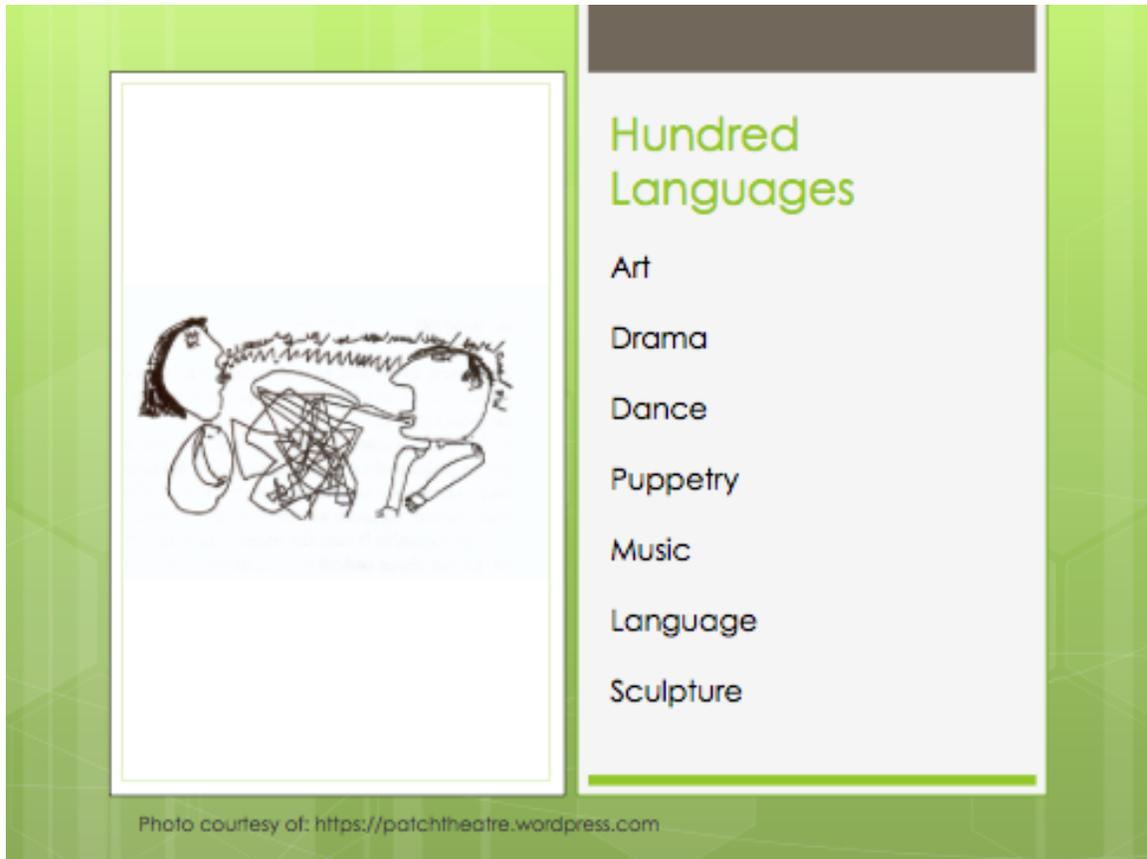
Based on students' interests

Long lasting

Collaborative

Interdisciplinary

Based on the experiential education of John Dewey (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Lindsay, 2015), education in Reggio Emilia schools is project based. Using an emergent curriculum where the projects are derived from the children's interests, learning unfolds as the children explore, causing educators to meet often to collaborate on where to go next in their learning. Projects often last weeks, if not months in Reggio schools and end up providing children with a huge amount of interdisciplinary learning (literacy, maths, social, science, arts, etc.)



The slide features a green background with a white central area. On the left, a black and white line drawing shows two children's profiles facing each other. Between them is a complex, multi-layered geometric structure resembling a cube or a series of overlapping planes. The child on the left has a speech bubble containing scribbled lines, and the child on the right has a speech bubble containing a single line. The title 'Hundred Languages' is written in green at the top right. Below it, a list of seven mediums is presented in black text. At the bottom left, a small caption reads 'Photo courtesy of: <https://patchtheatre.wordpress.com>'.

Hundred Languages

- Art
- Drama
- Dance
- Puppetry
- Music
- Language
- Sculpture

Photo courtesy of: <https://patchtheatre.wordpress.com>

Perhaps Reggio's most famous term, the hundred languages of a child refers to the myriad of ways that children express themselves. Through a variety of different mediums including art, drama, dance, puppetry, music, sculptures, role play, etc., children are able to demonstrate their thinking, theories and understanding.



Documentation

- A process
- Children's thinking
- Children's work
- Teacher's thinking
- Photographs

Photo courtesy of: <http://playbasedinquiry.blogspot.sg>

Documentation in Reggio Emilia schools serves as much more than children's artwork hung on the walls. Documentation refers to a lengthy and deep study of children's learning, observing them from the beginning stages of their interests all the way to their final project's work. Documentation is the main driver for collaboration among teachers, as they bring their documentation to the table to discuss where the children could go next in their learning. It is a process, not a product. It involves transcripts and recordings of children's conversations, photographs of children engaged in their work, children's own work displayed and the educator's perspective of what they believe the child to be theorizing or learning in that particular moment. It is meant to be presented simply with a bold title, to allow for the main idea of the piece to be made apparent without superfluous information.



Image of a child

The founding principal, and what all other principals are derived from in Reggio Emilia schools is the image of a child (Fyfe, 2011; Malaguzzi, 1993). The deep respect and appreciation given to children is at the heart of Reggio Emilia. The image of the child sees the child as 'rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all connected to adults and other children' (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10).

CSI

Colour



Symbol




Image

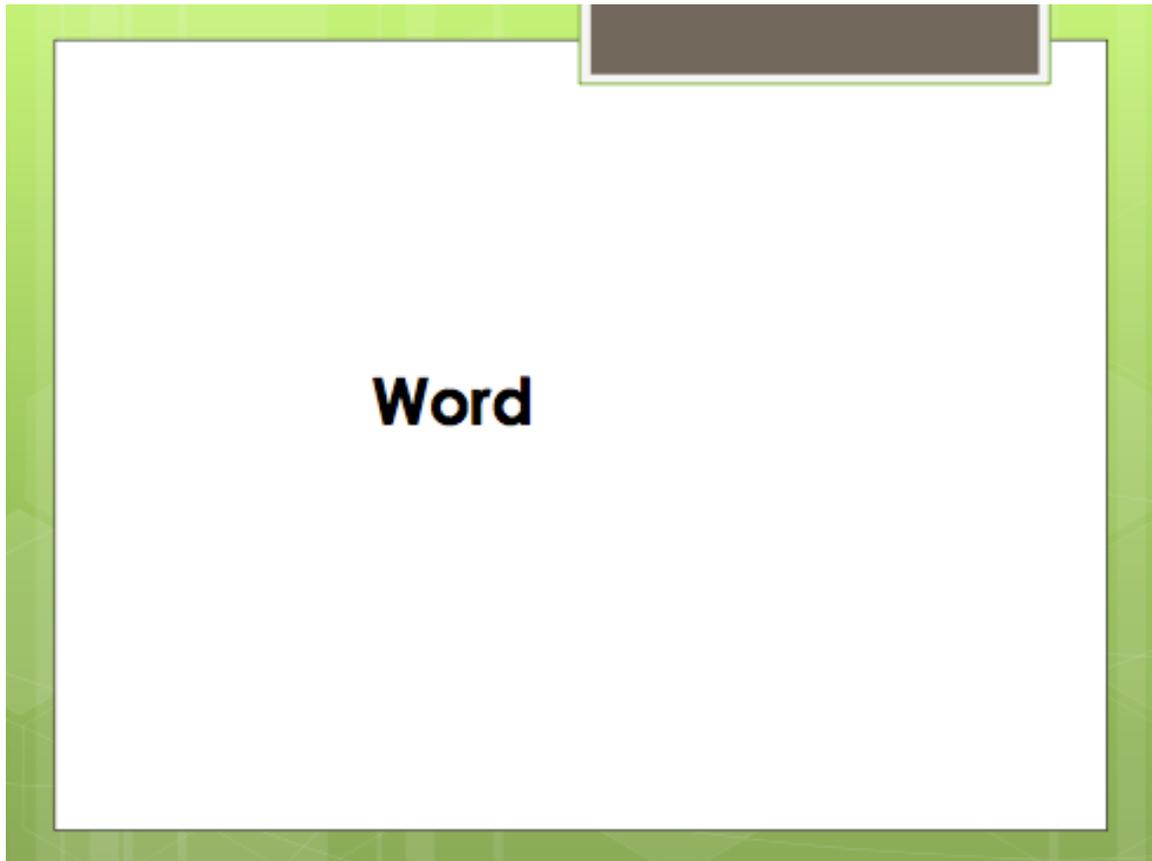
Photos courtesy of: <https://blog.hubspot.com> , <https://www.mama.org>, <http://www.wynnbullockphotography.com>

CSI – Before we begin discovering what we believe about our children now, let’s look back on when we were children and reflect on what it meant for us to experience childhood. Thinking back to your childhood, perhaps a particularly fond memory or just maybe your childhood as a whole, we are going to use the Project Harvard thinking routine CSI. Think of one **color** that represents your experiences of childhood, create one **symbol**, draw or paint one **image** that reflects your own childhood experiences. Please explain your thinking for each part either by writing it or being able to explain it verbally to someone else. You will have about 10 min and will be asked to share with someone else at the end. – 10 min.

Use chime, please share with someone around you your CSI and explain your thinking. (5 min)

Would anyone like to share their ideas with the group?

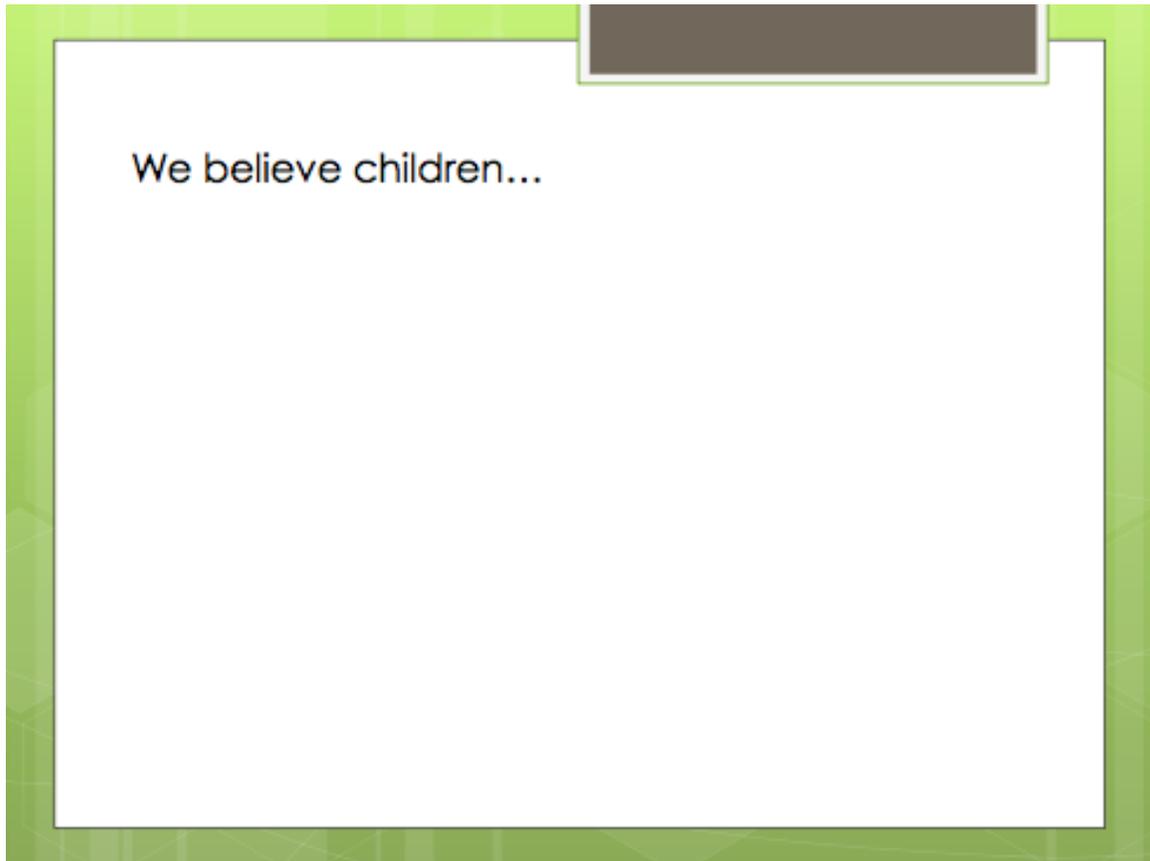
Please post your images up on the wall.



Thank you for reflecting on your own childhood. This will help guide our values and beliefs of our current thinking about childhood. Now with the same fond memories in mind, I ask you to think of one word that reflects your own childhood experiences. Please write it down on the paper. We will then go around the room and share our word, please say only your one word.

Post your word on the wall. If it is the same as someone else's please put them beside each other. Have a look. What do you notice? What patterns do you detect? What stands out?

(5 min)



Now we will shift our thinking to think about our own children. Perhaps your own children or the children in your class or school. In small groups of three or four (create four groups), please come up with a list of the most important words or phrases that you believe young children to be. We believe children...

(scrap paper) (10 min)

Now please join with another group and share your list. Combine your list into one, pairing up similar words or synonyms. (5 – 10 min)

Each group please write your words on the board. (5 min)

From board, I will type words onto slide.

(depending on how many words) Now back in your small groups of three, please choose the top 5 most significant words from the slide. (3 min)

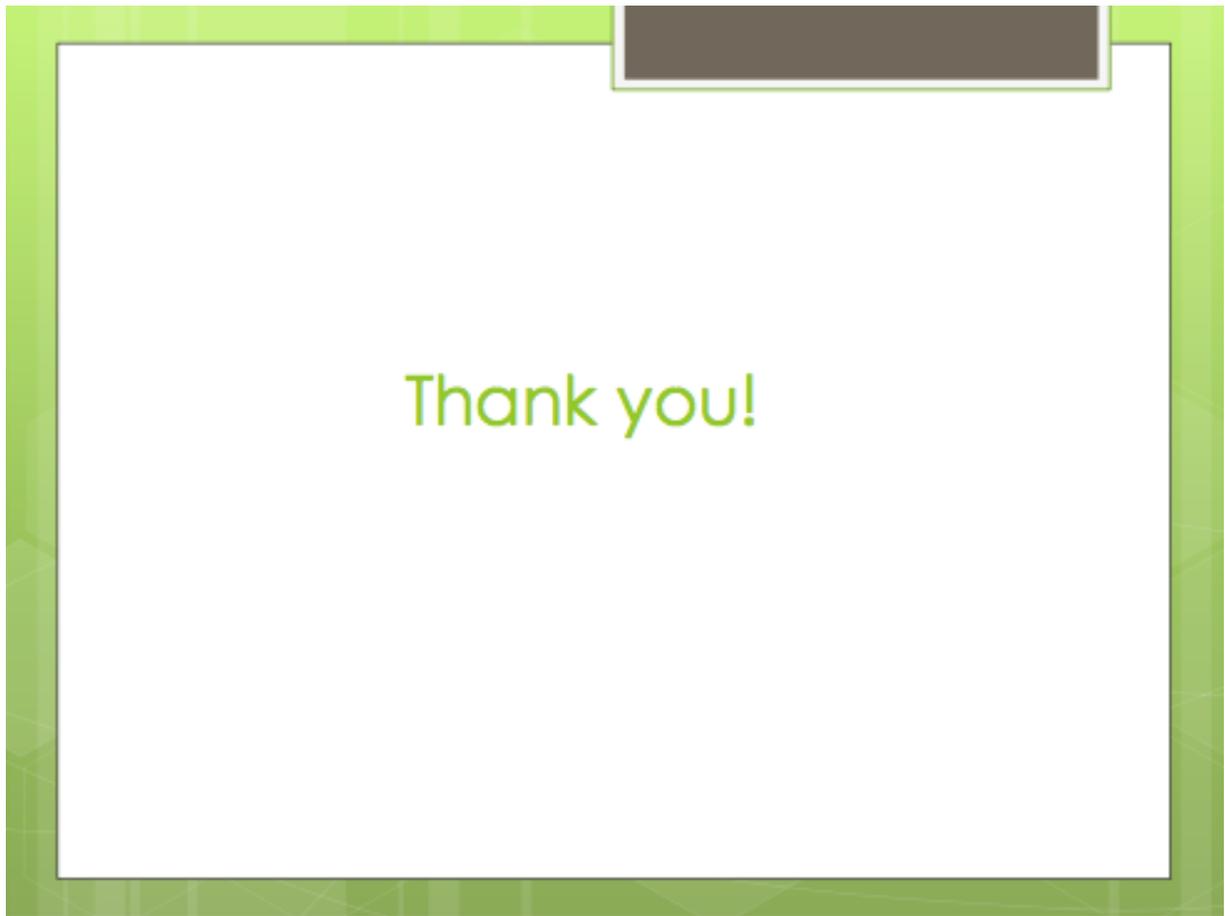
Please share with the group. Highlight on slide. As you can see, we believe children to be...

Now individually thinking about the statements we just created as a group about children, think of an example from your teaching practice or your home where you truly demonstrate this belief. For example, I believe children's ideas matter. I demonstrate this

in my classroom by listening to their ideas about routines and their environment, allowing them to discuss their ideas as a class and implement their ideas in class (if appropriate, of course). For example, my students wanted to move around the classroom and put all the tables together so they could all sit together. After discussing it and agreeing on it as a class, the children got to work re-arranging the desks and furniture so they could all sit together. This demonstrates to them that their ideas matter in the classroom. It is, after all, **their** classroom.

You can write or draw your example on the paper. (5 min)

Please share with someone next to you. (5 min) Would anyone like to share with the whole group? (allow time for discussion, 5 min)



I encourage you to think about the image of a child as you move back into your day-to-day lives. It is so easy to get caught up in everything we have to do as teachers, but at the heart of it all we are here for the children. By honoring them, respecting them and truly listening to them, I believe we can create a better place to learn. If in doubt, ask yourself ‘does this reflect my image of a child?’

Thank you so much for your participation in our workshop. I value your feedback and if you don't mind leaving a compliment, suggestion or takeaway on the sticky note as you leave I would appreciate your feedback. (sticky notes, stick on board)

Thank you!