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An introduction to Reggio Emilia-inspired pedagogy

U3A presentation, 7 June 2019

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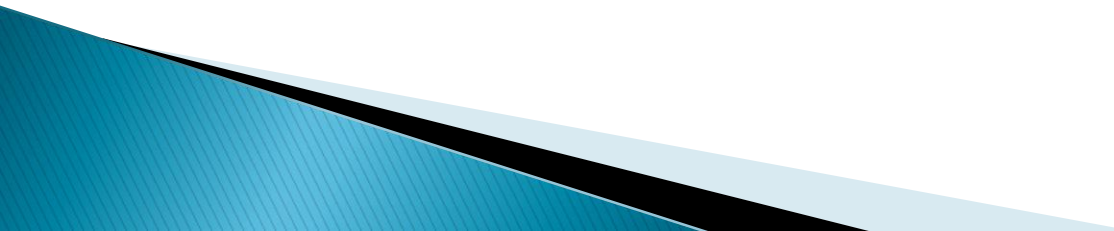


Piazza Prampolini



Reggio Emilia

Everyday people,
from a range of ethnicities
living in an ordinary town,
living their everyday lives,
doing extraordinary things ...
for children's education.



Reggio Emilia old city



The theatre piazza



A piazza for children too

Once upon a time ... 'Brick by brick'

After WWII Liberation Loris Malaguzzi (teacher-philosopher) learnt that the women of Villa Cella wanted to build a pre-school for young children.

Why? Education for democracy.

The women had taken bricks from bombed houses to build the school, and sold an old tanker.

Originally 'The People's Nursery School' of Villa Cella, it was renamed "XXV Aprile" or "April 25th" when it was opened.

[Video excerpt 1]



Reggio Emilia – the context

- ▶ Over a period of 60 years, the **Municipality of Reggio Emilia in Italy** has developed a network of remarkable preschools and infant-toddler centres
- ▶ A nearby farm hamlet was a centre of Italian resistance – against Hitler and Mussolini's Fascism. The “brick-by-brick” and resistance history shapes the Preschool and Infant-toddler Centres' educational purposes
- ▶ The purposes that matter most to Reggio Emilia teachers and parents are:
 - building understanding and meaning, and
 - strengthening democracy.

How in ECE? Investigating/ researching pedagogy in infant-toddler centres and pre-schools.




Reggio Emilia Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres



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By 2016, under Reggio Children auspices ...

- ▶ 47 ECE services managed by the municipality (33 managed directly, 14 by community cooperatives)
 - ▶ 21 managed by the Catholic Church
 - ▶ 14 managed by State of Italy
 - ▶ 4 by private owners.
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- ▶ 1600 children aged 0–3 years
 - ▶ 3745 children aged 3–6 years
 - ▶ Percentage of children enrolled: 68% (40% of infant–toddlers, 89% of young children)
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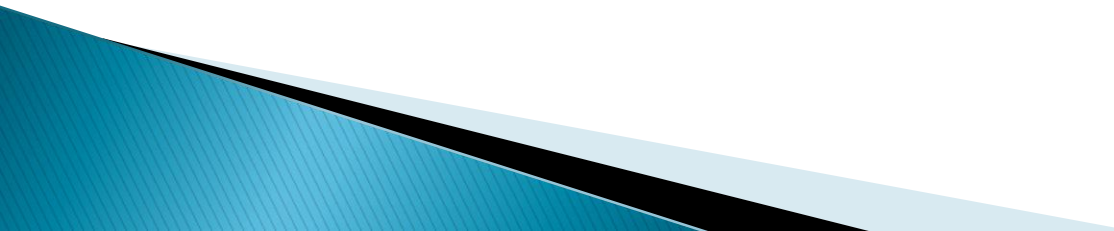


The Reggio Emilia approach is **unique** to Reggio Emilia. It is *not a method*.

Outside the city of Reggio Emilia, *ECE services* need to develop their own approach demonstrating what matters most in their community.

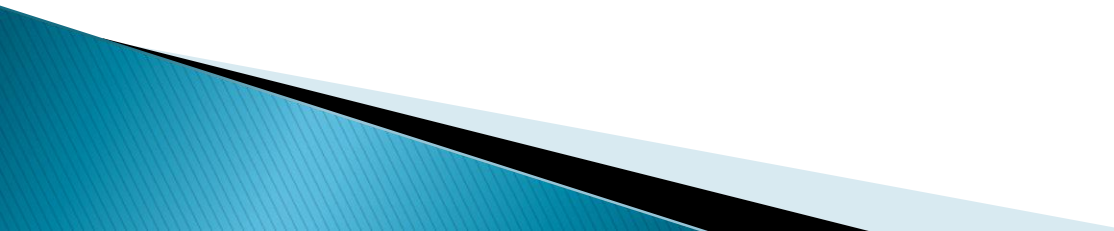
Documentation of learning, of children's thinking

One example of their public documentation of results from a research-based project to foster and expand children's learning and capabilities is *Peace*, authored by 3, 4 and 5 year olds at Ernesto Balducci Pre-school.



Peace (2004)

Authors:

- ▶ Three to five year old children, Scuola dell'infanzia Ernesto Balducci
 - ▶ Parents belonging to the Community Early Childhood Council
- 

Tomorrow people will either
be people of peace or they
will not be people at all

ERNESTO BALDUCCI

The Community Early Childhood Council discussions about the Peace project, excerpts

“Balducci’s philosophy covers many contemporary issues, like PEACE and LISTENING...

Listening is the biggest challenge that we face as parents and teachers in everyday life...

Sometimes, we are afraid of listening to others, we are afraid of exchange ...we need to be open-minded listeners, much as children are...

it is an attitude, similar to the one adopted by these schools, where everybody in a community is constantly asked to contribute his or her ideas...”

EXCERPTS FROM CONVERSATIONS HELD DURING MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY-EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL

3 year olds

*Peace, peace...I don't know...
it means peace...I don't know
where it is.*

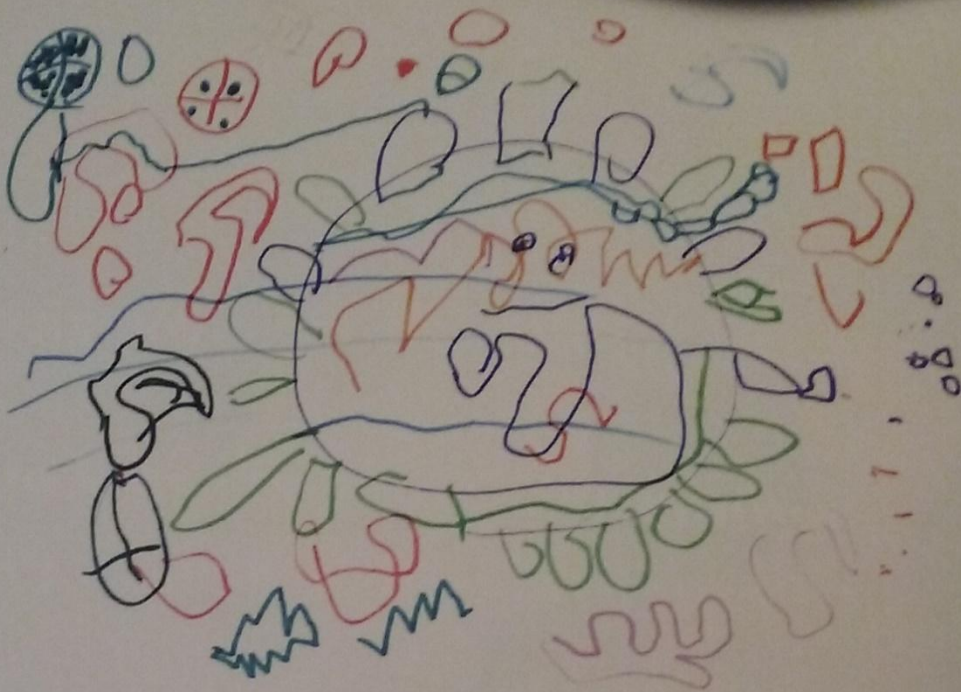


my mum tells me the word "peace" ... she says it in Italian, when we don't have to be naughty...

peace is with friends

I make peace with Carlo, we play together...

3 and 4 year olds



in my heart there is peace

*Peace is also in town inside the people
everybody has peace in their heart,
because the heart beats*

I feel it

but it can't be seen!

The peace goes to everyone's home...

I never saw it.

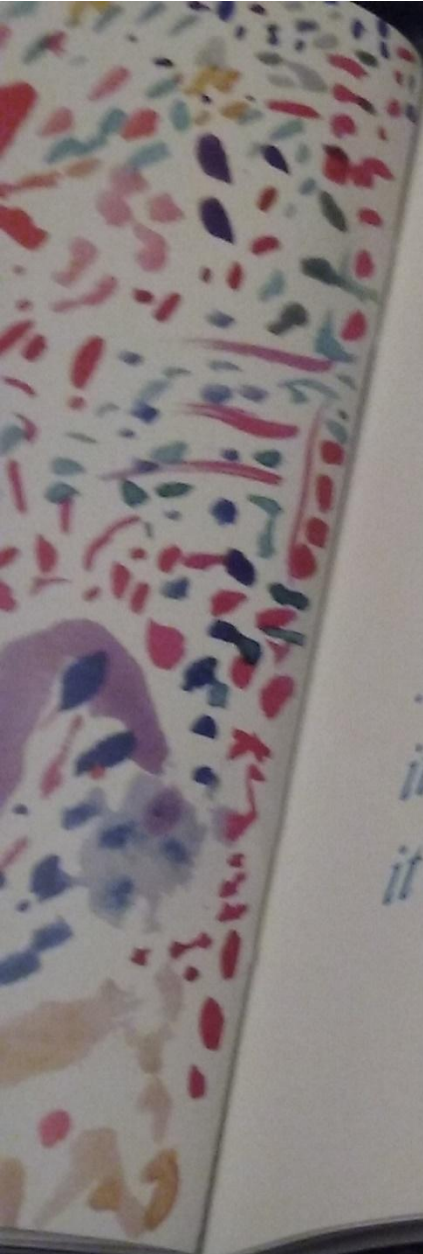
Every morning, when I wake up, I find it under the blankets.

No, I can't find it, I look carefully...

It stays under my bed and I let it sleep with me, I want to sleep with peace.

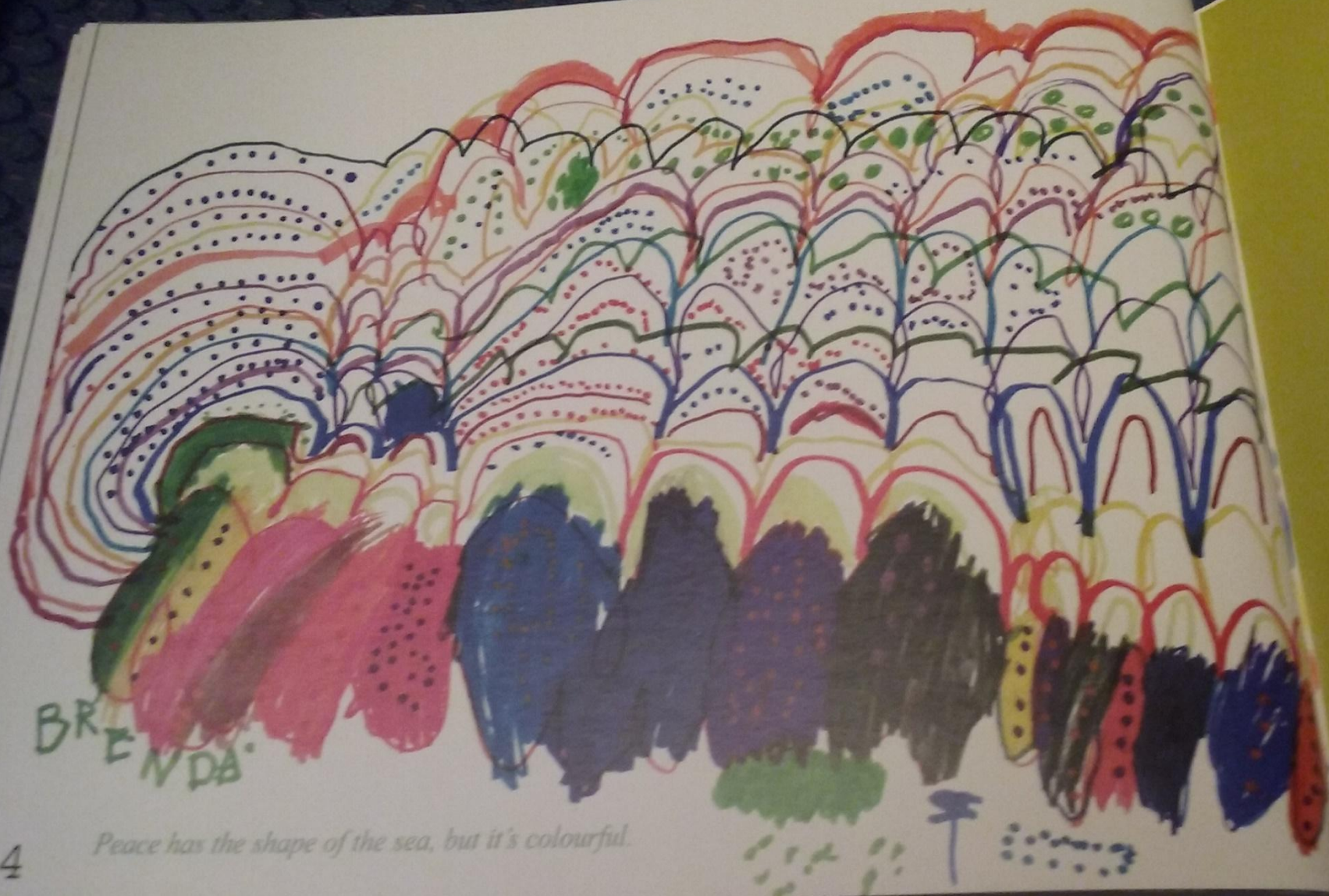
That's your problem because I never see it.

4 year olds

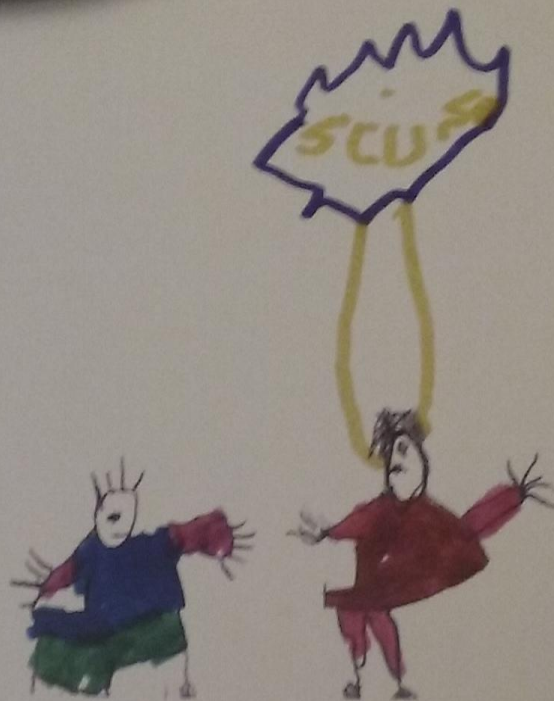


peace is like butterflies...

*...you'll find it in a flower,
it's a special flower that puts peace inside
it's a magical flower...*

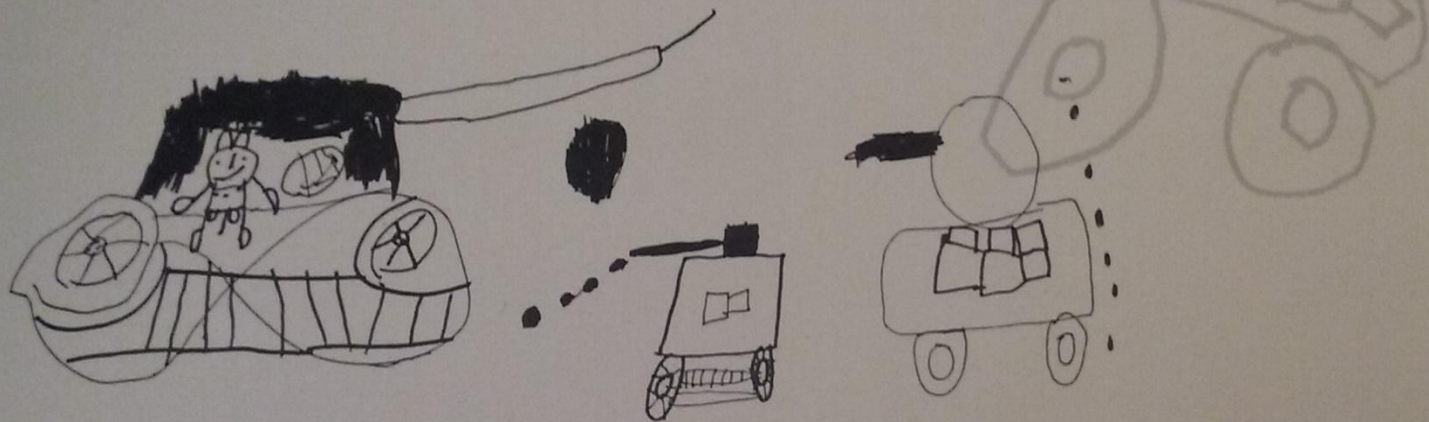


Peace has the shape of the sea, but it's colourful.



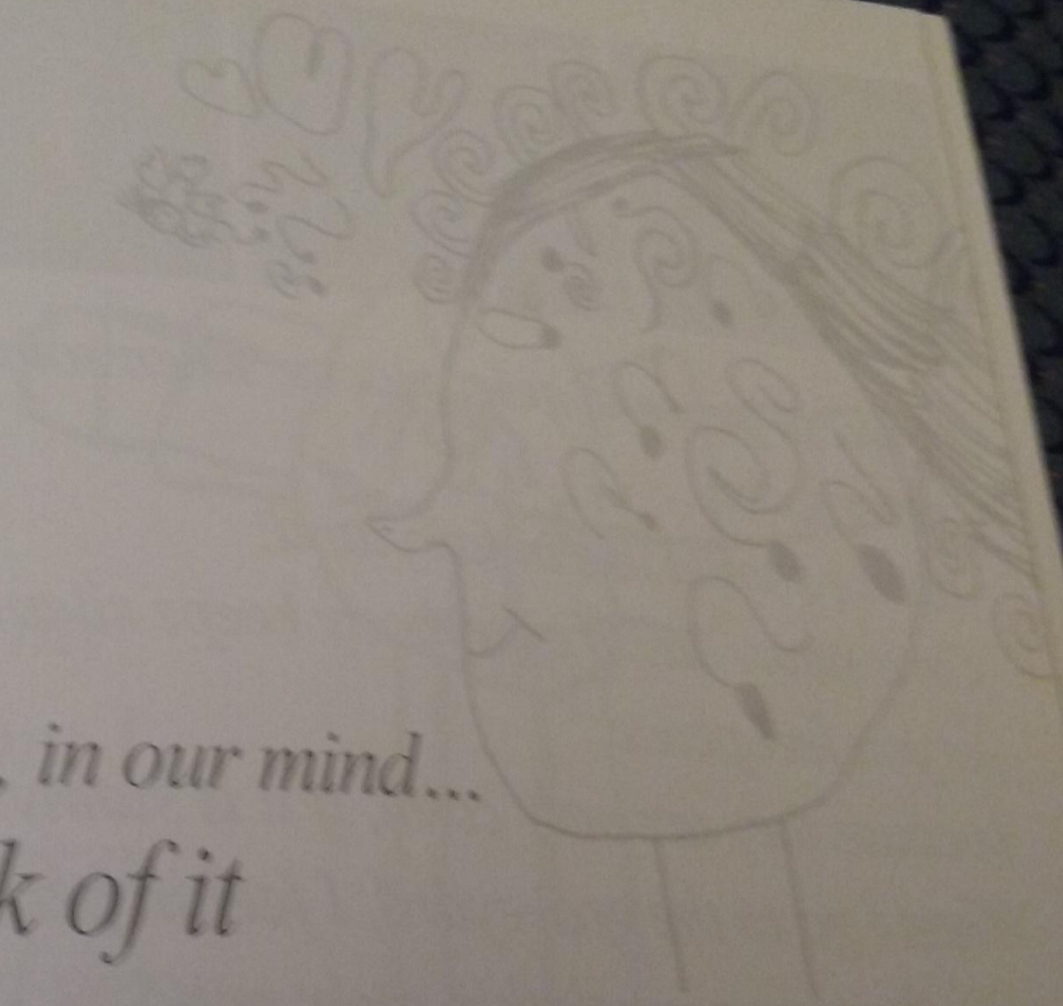
our school fights are little, they are not wars

*On the news I really saw Mr. Berlusconi, and tanks too.
real tanks or models?
real tanks walking, very real!
could you run away?*



*Do you know that once my grandfather had a job in the
Second World War?*

peace
is inside of us
it's in our thoughts, in our mind...
because I think of it



Extended time group



... We can send messages to the children living in countries at war; we can make many messages, so they'll understand we want peace; think that there is

Back cover

Peace?
It takes time...

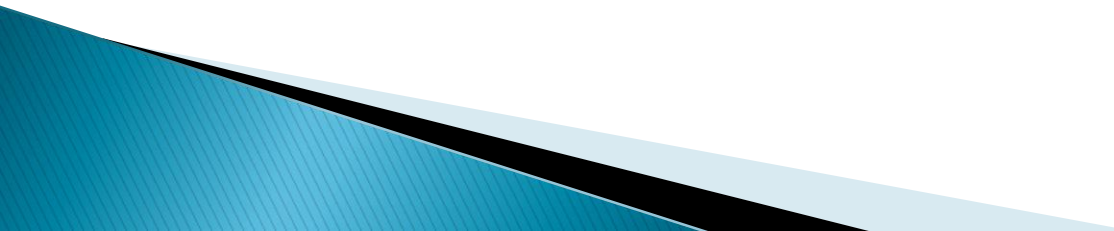


scuola dell'infanzia ernesto balducci

Reactions?

What is your reaction about the capabilities of young children to think about, discuss and illustrate life-worthy topics?

How does this example of Reggio educators' documentation of children's , and the teaching and learning it illustrates, differ from ours?



The documentation of Reggio ECE pedagogy 'sells' it – locally and internationally



Loris Malaguzzi International Centre

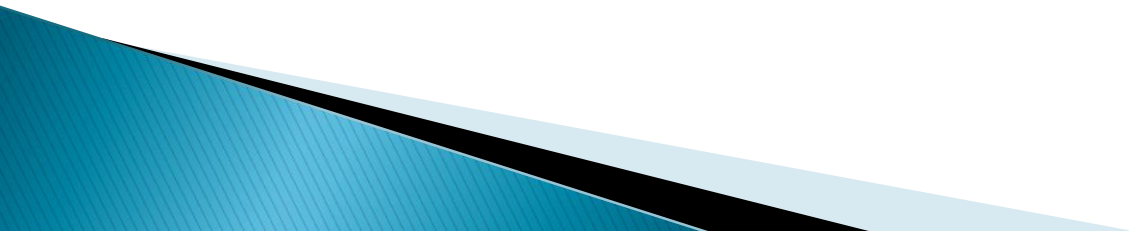


A place to connect with educators from around the world; a place to learn through dialogue

- ▶ Video excerpt, *Not just any place*

One city, many children, memories of a present history.

... In Reggio I have been struck by the fact that these are not just Reggio schools, but they are the expression of a kind of Reggio spirit. Every place has its own spirit, its own past its own aspirations". (Jerome Bruner)

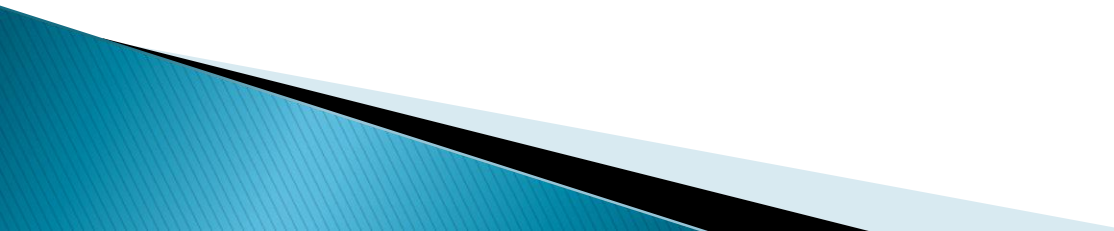


Reggio spirit, a culture



- ▶ Carlina Rinaldi says, dialogue amongst the educators develops trust and interdependency which in turn supports change [and improvement].
- ▶ Rinaldi talks about Reggio educators creating a culture of inquiry, of uncertainty, unexpectedness. It's OK to take risks, to have doubts, to question.
- ▶ She talks about creating a culture wherein it's acceptable for teachers to not know and even feel lost at times, to make mistakes, to ask others, to be open.

Principles for Reggio Emilia education

- ▶ Active attitude of **Listening** between adults, children and the environment
 - ▶ **Image of children**; they possess extraordinary potentials; each child is the subject of rights; each child is capable of giving meaning to experiences
 - ▶ **Children possess 100 languages**, 100 ways of thinking and connecting experiences
 - ▶ **Participation** – children, educators and parents are stakeholders in the education project
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Participation: Citizens view Reggio ECE services as a collective responsibility – places where they connect with others in the community



A sense of
belonging
to the
community

Participation generates and nurtures a culture of responsibility and inclusion.

Principles

- ▶ **Educational research** is knowledge building for children *and* adults.
- ▶ **Educational documentation** is a structuring part of teaching practices, making learning visible. Democratic.
- ▶ **Progettazione** – wherein educators plan/design teaching and learning and the environment.
- ▶ **Environment, spaces and relations** are designed to foster interaction, autonomy, exploration, curiosity and communication.
- ▶ Ref: Instituzione of Municipality of Reggio Emilia (2010). *Indications Preschools and Infant–Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia*, pp.10–14.

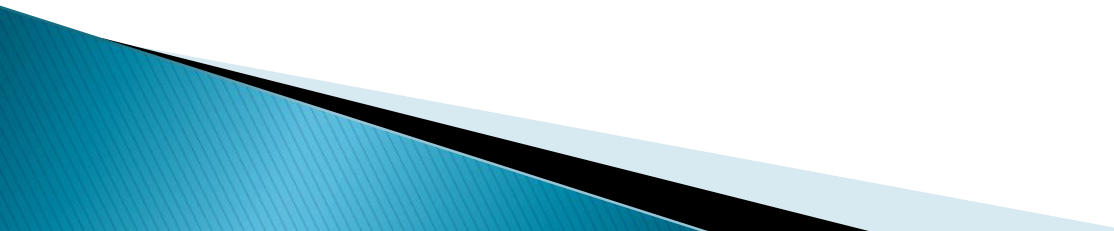


Image of the child = capable



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Loris Malaguzzi

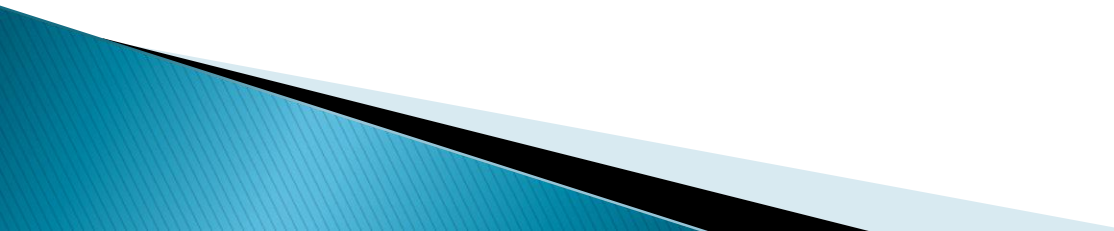
- ▶ “... learning is essentially about **constructing more** and **new connections** between ideas, ... **making knowledge** richer, deeper, broader and more reflective of the complexities in the **worlds of reality *and* imagination** available to children.”
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Connections: reality and imagination



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Start with the image of the child

- ▶ Malaguzzi began with an image of the **capable and intelligent infant/ child**. A rich child, a child of infinite capabilities
 - ▶ Children are born with “100 languages”.
 - ▶ Children are born with deep curiosity, and this innate curiosity drives their interest to understand their world and their place in it.
- 

What is the core? Research, i.e., doing research



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Educational research

- ▶ “**Research** represents one of the essential dimensions of life of children and adults ...

“The **research is made visible by** means of the **documentation**, builds learning, reformulates knowledge, and underlies professional quality.”

- ▶ In NZ, *Te Whāriki* talks about learning about the complexity of people, places and things.

Children research the world – people, places and things



Adults research their own pedagogy, as children research their world

- ▶ “With each project we learn more, and thereby work better with children. ... We have found that shadows offer extraordinary educational possibilities. [Studying these] ... involved an integration of visual representation with scientific hypothesis testing.”
 - ▶ *The role of the atelierista* (Via Vecchi, 1998)

Light and shadows



Listening

Reggio teachers **listen** to children's interests; then they ***problematise*** child theories.

They get children into an unknown space, to notice it. Then they bring back something from it to their known space and **build complexity** around it.

“If we stay in the unknown we won't progress ideas.”



To learn, we need to move backwards and forwards between these spaces

Documentation

- ▶ *“The [ECE services] have the responsibility to foster and make visible the processes of learning by means of **pedagogical documentation**.”*

The pleasure of learning

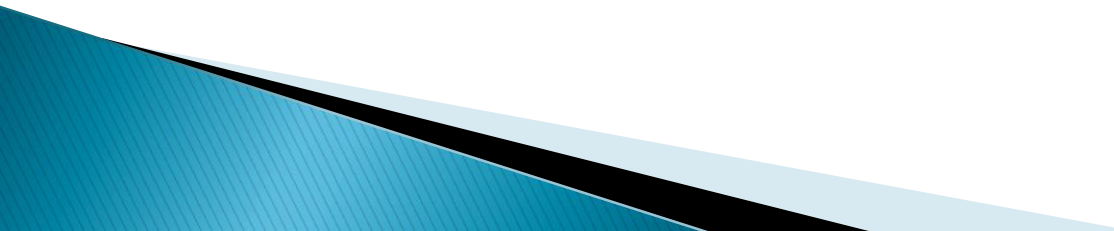
- ▶ “The pleasure of learning and knowing, and of understanding, is one of the most important, basic feelings that every child expects from the experiences he confronts.
- ▶ Pleasure is a crucial feeling which must be reinforced so that the pleasure survives even when learning involves difficulty and effort.”
- ▶ *Loris Malaguzzi*

The pleasure of learning



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Aotearoa New Zealand

- ▶ REANZ is an charitable trust that shares knowledge of Reggio Emilia philosophy and pedagogy through:
 - Organising study tours to Reggio Emilia, annually,
 - Bringing Reggio Emilia experts to NZ to facilitate professional learning for Kiwi teachers,
 - Supporting local networks to share knowledge and resources to grow Kiwi early childhood teachers' understanding of the way Reggio educators expand children's capabilities
- 

REANZ resources – panels

The eyes have it!

Children and teachers as reSearchers

We were on an exciting journey painting our own portraits using images projected by the data projector. But when we got to painting our eyes...we got stuck, they seemed so complex. And so our research story began!

Thinking about eyes - what are they for?

Percy: You need eyes so you can see something.

Leo: They're for looking at stuff.

Laith: If you have them closed you bump into something, like if you're asleep.

Charlie: I need my eyes for looking at pictures.

Taylor: Mum needs her eyes to look in her handbag for her phone and keys!

Owen: Dad puts on that screen (in the car) and he looks at it and drives backwards. That's what he needs his eyes for.



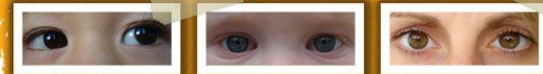
How do we paint eyes?

Paul, a local art lecturer, pointed out that eyes can be portrayed by doing a heavier line on the top eyelid and a lighter line underneath. We thought this was something we could manage.

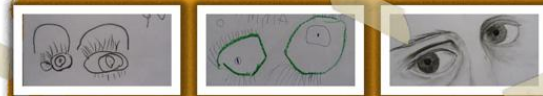
We looked at the eyes in the portraits by New Zealand artists that we had on display



We studied photos of our own eyes



We looked in the mirror and drew what we saw



Toyah: By looking closely in the mirror I noticed more details and facets that I hadn't noticed before.

Lorraine: It was a challenge to encourage the children to look carefully at their eyes, to notice the shape wasn't circular but oval. I found that using the mirror was a really important step. That actually showed the children the shape and the colour - some children didn't know what colour their eyes were.

Charlie (5/7): I learnt that your eyes get pointy at the corners.

Sasha (4/2): I learnt that you could do your eyes as a circle but half of a circle.

My sticks tell stories

Children use 'mere marks' on paper to unravel their thinking

These sticks are often connected to a journey or a time of significance to Sam. They may be gathered on a walk to Tots Corner or from his own backyard. They have meaning and share memories and times of importance.

Sam uses drawing to communicate his thoughts and ideas, using 'mere marks' to express his thinking. Using his favourite sticks as a provocation, Sam's stories emerge through his drawings.



"Look at mine. That sticks got a road through it. That's how long, this one is!" said Sam

As he explained this he compared the stick with the one he had drawn and was clearly pleased when measuring them. He realised they were the same size.

"AT SOME POINT, CHILDREN MAKE A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY: MERE MARKS ON A PIECE OF PAPER CAN STAND FOR THINGS NOT ACTUALLY PRESENT. ALTHOUGH THE EARLY NAMED DRAWINGS DON'T SEEM TO RESEMBLE ANYTHING, THE ACHIEVEMENT IS SIGNIFICANT. WHY? BY LABELLING MARKS AND SHAPES, CHILDREN SHOW THEY UNDERSTAND THAT MARKS CAN COMMUNICATE. THEY ARE AT THE THRESHOLD OF LEARNING TO MAKE IMAGES, LETTERS AND NUMBERS."

URSULA WOLBE (2001) PUPUNELLS SUPERMARKET



"This is a boat. This is a man, he's fishing. That is another man. They're going on the sea and this is the line they need to pull another boat and another line!" said Sam

Sam then held up his drawing to show me. Placing his paper back on the table Sam began to draw with ever increasing speed and intensity. "Storm", he explained.

"The men got rain all over them. This is the cloud with the rain dropping all over them. They got sick from the wet!" said Sam

When his drawing was finished Sam asked that both his pictures be put in his portfolio so his mum could see them.

"That's a storm. It blew the sticks off the tree. That's clouds and a big rain is coming down!" said Sam



"The versatility, creativity and comedy of Sam's magic sticks never ceases to amaze us!" replied Sam's dad. Sam is one of the many learning children that had been enrolled here.

