

Inspired by Reggio Emilia

An overview of the foundations of - and inspirations from - Reggio Emilia
Susan Stacey 2025



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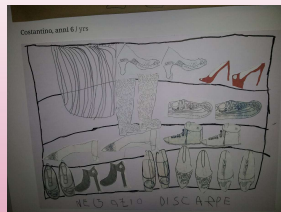
What inspirations do you take from Reggio Emilia?
What are you curious about?



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Perhaps...

- Enticing environments
 - Interesting and provocative materials
 - Responsive and reflective practices
 - Pedagogical Documentation
 - The Image of the Child
- ...and so much more...



But...we cannot simply transpose their practices to
our settings

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Placing Reggio Schools
into context....it begins
with relationships

Between children themselves, children
and adults, children and the community,
children and materials.

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Markets & Gatherings

5



The Role of Culture

6



Frequent Gatherings
for cultural purposes

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Modernity along with
valuing the historical

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The Role of
Architecture & Colour

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The history of the schools led to their values and perspectives

After WW2 (1945) this area was in ruins

Parents in the village of Villa Cella, a few miles from Reggio, started to build a school for children, using the bricks from bombed-out buildings

At first, no money, no technical assistance, authorization or committees, inspectors – just ordinary people working side by side

Driven by their wartime experiences, to say 'never again,' and by the idea of democratic schools

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Loris Malaguzzi:

- 'It turned logic and prejudice, the old rules of pedagogy and culture upside down....and opened up completely new horizons'
- 'I perceived that this was a formidable human and cultural lesson from which extraordinary things would spring.'



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Malaguzzi's role: A Vision

- Took a central role in the development of the schools, providing inspiration and leadership
- Were at first (until 1963) parent-run, and then the municipality took over
- The schools are based on democracy; no hierarchy of staff, children with as many rights as adults
- Each school has a pedagogista, an atelier, and an atelierista



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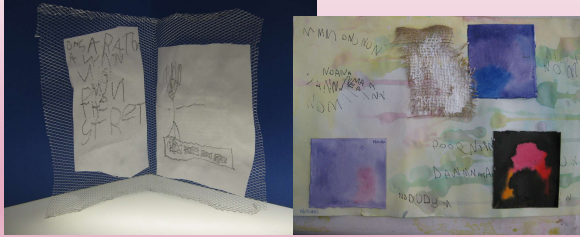
A young child with dark hair is looking into a mirror. They are holding a white card with the word 'leather' written on it. The card is positioned so that the child can see their reflection holding the card. The background is a blue surface, possibly a table or a wall.

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wise
watchful mindful competent fearless
confident curious bold open
Responsive lively capable quick
energetic strong inquiring
observant helpful caring social
surprising adventurous
empathetic independent optimistic
thoughtful intelligent

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2. The hundred languages of children



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Reggio Emilia

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3. Relationships

- With each other, the teachers, the city, materials, the world at large



Halifax, Canada

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4. The educational space as a **place of beauty and trust**

- The role of aesthetics, natural materials, light and shadow



Reggio Emilia

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How do we know we are in Reggio Emilia?
Complexity & Simplicity go hand in hand...



Reggio Emilia

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5. **Collaboration** between protagonists

- Projects and emergent work seen as a conversation between **all** the people in the school....**Progettazione!**

The Chocolate Factory; an inquiry that involved children, teachers, the community at large



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6. Time to be engaged

- Respect for the engaged child, uninterrupted play



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7. Progettazione:

Inquiry stemming from play

Project Work

Values

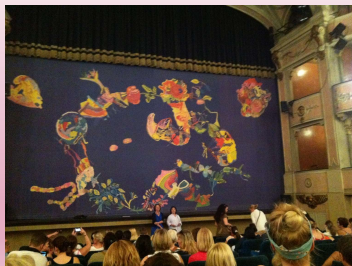
Image of the Child, their culture, their community, all intertwined

- Some long term, some short term inquiries
- Sometimes a big question that the whole school addresses at different levels throughout the year
- Often emerging from a question that arises out of observation of children's play (Teacher as Researcher)

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The role of invitations, provocations, and proposals

Theatre Curtain in
Reggio Emilia



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The difference in terminology

- **Invitation:** simply that. It may be taken up, or ignored. Sometimes used in an unexpected way
- **Provocation:** something very thought provoking, perhaps challenging or puzzling, to draw the child in – still in response to observation/listening
- **Proposal:** negotiated with the children – Shall we? Could you?

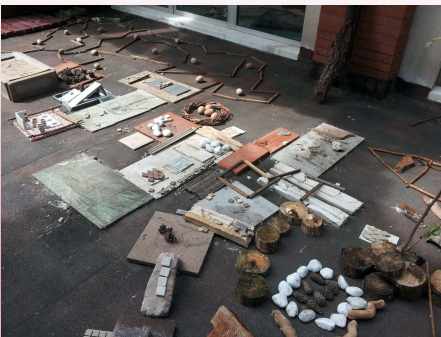
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8. The stimulation of **materials** - materials have **agency!!**

- Rich and plentiful materials
- Few, if any, toys (instead....loose parts, natural materials, blocks, etc)



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Children in
relationship with
materials and life itself

Acknowledging all stages of life

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Escola Villetta

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9.The Role of Documentation

In your setting, what are the roles of
documentation? What do you use it for?



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Poll!!

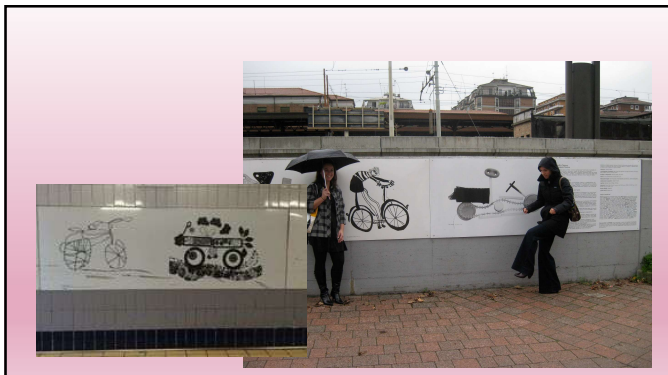
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Documentation in Reggio Emilia

- A form of **relationship** – between teachers, between children and teachers, between families and school
- A form of **dialogue** between children, educators, families, and the community
- Makes **visible**: ideas, thinking, processes of all the protagonists
- A tool for **decision-making**



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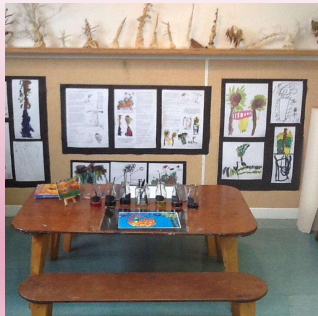


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Environments that look forward
as well as back...



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The Atelier (a 'vibration') and Atelierista



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Escola Villetta

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Mini-atelier



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The arts as a form of dialogue and collaboration



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Escola Pablo Neruda.

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Escola Diana

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How curriculum unfolds....



Escola Pablo Neruda

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- Through a Cycle of Inquiry
- In response to and in dialogue with children; the Pedagogy of Listening – Carlina Rinaldi
- Through deep reflection with other educators; TIME is needed for this!

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What is the Role of the Teacher in Reggio Emilia? Begins from the stance of wondering...**Teacher as Researcher**

- Keen observers of children – but not just watching/noticing....always looking for deeper meaning
- Giving voice to the individual and the group
- Seeking documentation tools, for both children and adults
- Re-reading of contexts, bringing things into new focus ('re-launching' is part of everyday life)
- Not improvising, but everything carefully considered
- Adults elaborate and re-formulate – what new things and ways of thinking can they propose to children? What are **our** questions?

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What's next for you? Provocations to consider....

- How is my Image of the Child made visible in the classroom?
- How do routines support this image of the child?
- How are children really using the environment? What opportunities are there for
 - inventing,
 - the joy of discovery,
 - re-visiting to think again?
- What role does dialogue play in your setting – between children, between adults, and between children and adults?
- How is documentation used?
- How responsive are we to children's ideas? Do we take them seriously?

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See my website: suestacey.ca
and go to **"In Conversation"** for informal conversations with Debi Keyte-Hartland and Carol Anne Wien

All publications available through Redleaf Press
