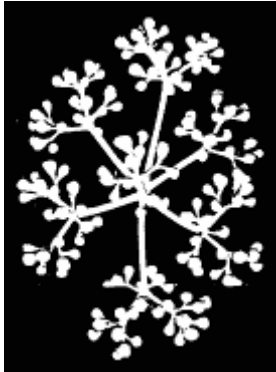




UK Reflections

Reggio Study Week 2012
15th to 20th April
Reggio Emilia



Dear all,

Thank you for your feedback, responses and thoughts following your recent visit to Reggio Emilia. We have tried here to offer back some traces of your experience. We hope that this will serve as a reminder of your visit and as an inspiration in your work. We know that for many of you this was an important moment in your professional lives and provided an opportunity to be revitalised in your work. We also know it is an intense experience and that it takes time to process all you have heard, seen and felt. Many of you commented that it was not only the lectures and visits to schools that were an important but also the time and space it gave to talk and to think away from all the pressures of home, and of course in the beautiful city of Reggio Emilia.

We hope to hear more about your developments and explore ways we can work together to further support daily work and professional development.

Best wishes

Sightlines Initiative



About Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia is a small city in northern Italy. After the second world war citizens of Reggio began to construct their own schools and educational approach for young children. The schools were built on the premise to teach children to think for themselves and with an image of the child as rich in potential, strong, powerful and competent. The schools embraced creativity, listening to children, community involvement, democratic citizenship, professional dialogue and documentation of the learning processes. There are now 78 preschools and infant toddler centre's using this approach in Reggio Emilia, and their approach is an inspiration to educators around the world.

The experience of the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia has a long history, rich in significant moments and encounters. Despite many difficulties, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia established its network of educational services in 1963 with the opening of the first preschools (for children aged 3 to 6). The most substantial development of the municipal preschools took place in the late 1960s, followed in 1971 by the opening of the first municipal infant-toddler centres.

Guaranteeing high quality services became a priority commitment for all those (teachers, parents, the community at large, administrators) who worked to ensure that this was recognized as a fundamental right of children and families.

Reggio Children organizes study visits on education and the Reggio Emilia Approach, an opportunity for in-depth study of the concepts, contents, and values that are part of the educational project of the experience of the Municipal Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools of Reggio Emilia.

Reggio Children 2012



“If a school is not an indifferent or sheltered place but lives in the community that expresses it, then the dialogue established between school and city, though sometimes it may be conflictual, always helps the community to grow”

Sandra Piccinini—Comissioner for culture and education. Reggio Emilia. ‘A City, Its Theater, the Children: An Ongoing Dialogue’ 2002 Theater Curtain



"It is true that we do not have planning and curricula. It is not true that we rely on improvisation, which is an enviable skill. We do not rely on chance either, because we are convinced that what we do not know yet can to some extent be anticipated. What we do know is that to be with children is to work with one third certainty and two-thirds uncertainty and the new. The one third that is certain makes us understand and try to understand. ... We can be sure that the children are ready to help us. They can help by offering us ideas, suggestions, problems, questions, clues, and paths to follow; and the more they trust us and see us as a resource, the more they give us help. All these offerings, merged with what we ourselves bring to the situation, make a handsome capital of resources."

Loris Malaguzzi (1993) "The Hundred Languages of Children"



people have always built cities because without cities everybody would have to stand up all the time and just walk around

REGGIO

A place of possibilities...

REGGIO

Reggio offers us an opportunity to 'think for ourselves', to re evaluate and understand our values.

REGGIO

REGGIO

Our hopes, intents and questions from the beginning of the week collated at the group meeting

Hopes

Experience first hand the spirit of Reggio
Cascade ideas/experience to others
Explore real parental involvement
Find out what happens for younger children
Sharing a vision
Time to think

Intents

Soak it all up
Sustain change
Challenge our thinking
Understand creativity as an approach not a subject
Develop roles as pedagogical leaders
Be inspired and re energised
Make new friends/colleagues
Interpret the Reggio experience into our own context
Time to reflect
Encounter new perspectives

Questions

How do you engage 'hard to reach' families?
What sort of formal assessment is required by their system?
How Reggio Approach is followed on after age 6?
What is the role of the educator?



Thoughts and reflections

“More than anything I remembered myself, my values and principles. I re-encountered myself and through this re-encountering, felt joy, passion and a renewed energy for research and early years pedagogy. Reggio is an opportunity to re-charge batteries and delight in the 'wonder of learning' in conversation with others.

The notion that dialogue is transformational and that meanings never belong to one person provoked an interesting discussion, as did the idea that dialogues can be with places, materials and light. This idea of a connecting mind that constructs the idea of a dialogue between things is a fascinating thought.”

Carrie Ansell, Lecturer, Bath



“This view of the child as a strong, capable child promotes his/her learning rather than the weak, deficient model of the child where adults do everything for him/her even putting newspaper on the table before s/he can paint. Viewing the child as a citizen who has ‘rights’ not ‘needs’-a very important message for all.”

Angela Rees, Lecturer, Carmarthen

“In many situations, especially when one sets up challenges for them, children show us they know how to walk along the path of understanding. Once children are helped to perceive themselves as authors or inventors, once they are helped to discover the pleasure of inquiry, their motivation and interest explode.” Loris Malaguzzi, *The Hundred Languages of Children* 1993



Thoughts and reflections

“What I find particularly liberating in Reggio is that there are no expectations of outcomes, and no formal or national curriculum requirements. There are no externally imposed inspections and quality measures however, the quality of the education and respect and care of young children is clear. Documentation of children’s learning, exhibits at the international centre the study tours enabling thousands of visitors to experience the centres first hand and the travelling exhibitions are evidence of the commitment to a high quality child-centred approach, a truly bottom-up approach as opposed to imposed regimes that many of us experience.



There is no doubt that almost every person who participates in the Reggio study tours comes away feeling inspired by the approach and in awe of the beauty of the preschools and the International Centre.



The point is, there is a lot of pressure to do the things that are externally imposed in order to prove ourselves leaving less time and energy to work on the things that really matter. How do we balance this with the things we want to do – creative learning opportunities, time to be with children, time to do with children, time to listen to children, time to reflect and learn from others, just time to be?”

Baljit Gill. Educator. Coventry.

Thoughts and reflections

“My thoughts at the last visit to the Malaguzzi Centre. I can't even begin to describe how I'm feeling right now. The wonder, the environment and the value that is placed on children. The rich experiences children receive or rather have the opportunity to explore and discover. The use of space to create aesthetically pleasing and pleasurable experiences. The freedom for the mind of the child. The voice of the child is facilitated to discover. I am truly inspired to be the best leader and advocate of early education and childhood that I can be. I am refuelled, re-vitalised. I hope I can inspire the team to want to share in this experience with me and share my journey. “

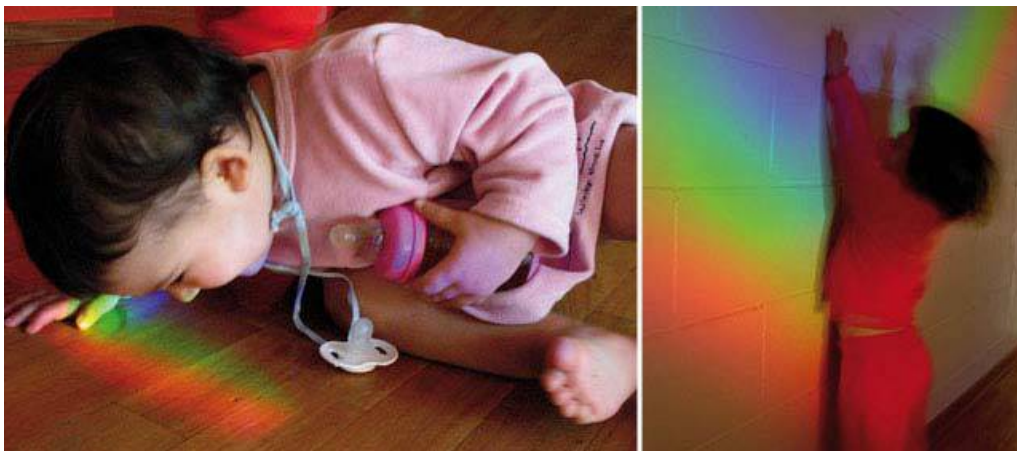
Alison Moore. Children's Centre Manager. Birmingham



“Before my visit to Reggio, I did not recognise the importance of children's expressive communication. The emphasis placed on the 'graphica' the language of drawing, that children have instinctively has really stuck with me. I also did not fully consider that children are capable of making choices about experiences, constructing their own views and opinions. The approach values the concept of listening that is not constricted to the spoken word, emphasising that children's ideas can be transmitted in many creative ways.”

Corinna Marvin. Nursery Manager. Exeter.





Thoughts and reflections

“I found the experience very much an inspiring one! To visit the Infant toddler centre and Pre School was one of many highlights of my week, being given the opportunity to observe how the educators work with the children and how their environments are so inviting, full of endless opportunities for children to explore and further extend their investigations.

Being able to listen to the many educators we had the chance to hear from about their work was outstanding. They are so passionate about their work and how children can creatively express themselves in many forms. This gave opportunity for the participants to grasp a more in-depth concept of how they work with children in Reggio, which they enabled us to take these concepts away with us to translate into our practice in the settings we work in.

A massive thank you has to go out to all the people that made this study tour possible!”

Becca Sperry, Senior Early Years Practitioner, Worthing

Thoughts and reflections

“As this was my second visit my expectations were different to my first visit which was in 2007. In 2007 I was so excited and overwhelmed to be in Reggio Emilia, to see the actual marble lions, to visit the Diana School, and meet Carla Rinaldi who had worked with Malaguzzi that I could not take everything in.

I found the visits to settings very useful. It reaffirmed the view that expensive, plastic toys are unnecessary for children's play and development. Rooms were de-cluttered, airy and spacious. The children had a wealth of recycled materials to work with; to enable them have time to think, be creative, problem solve, be independent but also co-operate as a social group. So all areas of learning were being developed holistically.

It did give you the strength and the conviction that, yes I am right, that children do have a right to be listened to, to be respected and valued and yes they are equal to me, an adult and that no adult is there to control them but to support and guide them.

Great opportunity to meet and talk to people from all over the world.

Would love to go again with even more questions.”

Angela Rees, Lecturer, Carmarthen

An experience that has enriched my understanding and knowledge of 'child led education'.

The opportunity to converse with practitioners from all over the world was as enlightening as the Reggio experience itself - perhaps more group discussion could be included in the week in future?

I will attempt to implement the ideas and 'reminders' for good quality early years education, throughout my career

Scott Shepherd, Adviser, Bradford

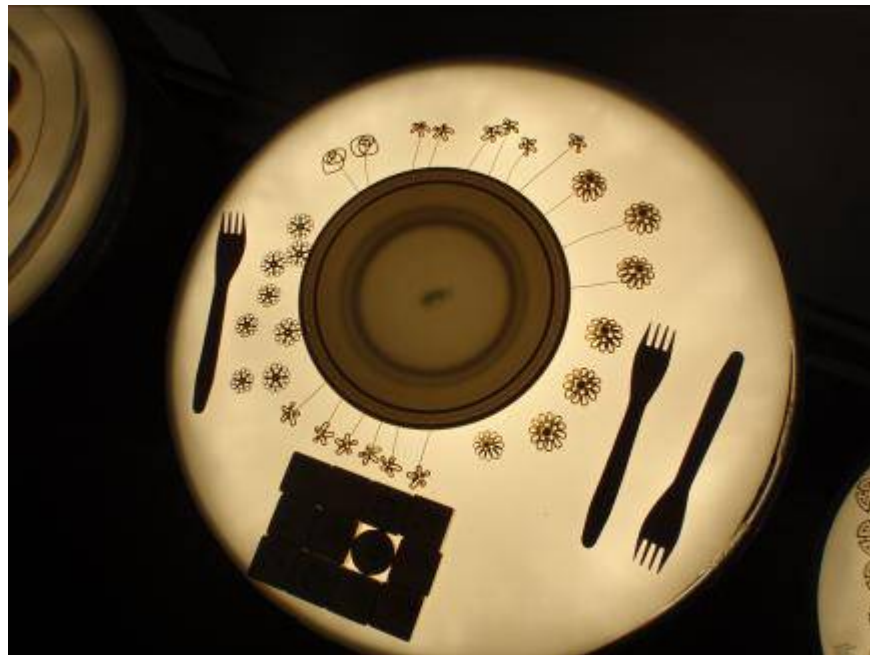


Thoughts and reflections

“From start to finish, the programme of speakers and visits came together to paint an amazing, coherent and comprehensive picture of how education is approached in Reggio Emilia. The Mayor’s inspirational words on Monday morning were a highlight and we could happily have listened to Madalena (Tedeschi) explaining the pedagogista’s perspective for hours, day after day. Visits to the infant-toddler centres and pre-schools underlined how open all practitioners are not only to sharing with each other but also with the rest of the world!! Just when we thought it couldn’t get any better, Carla Rinaldi enthused us on Thursday and to finish with Via Vecchi on Friday afternoon was a real privilege.

The only thing that would have made it even better would be the opportunity to have tea in a pre-school with the children. “

Sam Kerr & Alison Marshall, Educators, South Tyneside



How ‘everyday life’ is used as an inspiration when offering resources.

Thoughts and reflections

It was an amazing week full of emotions, learning experiences and inspiration. The week was incredibly well organised and we feel we were given enough time to listen, reflect and share thoughts and ideas with the other participants. We particularly enjoyed the lectures about projects and the visits to the schools were most revealing, certainly the highlight of the week! We were amazed by the concept of space in schools and the use of recycled materials. The Reggio approach to educating children and working with parents and the community has been incredibly inspiring.

We came back with a suitcase full of ideas and inspiration for our school. Our challenge now is to communicate this experience to our colleagues and to try to incorporate the Reggio approach to child education in a way that best fits our school and community structure.

Marta Abad and Laura Lacritz, Educators, Spain



Thoughts and reflections

My learning experience was very empowering and it was an honour to share this experience with so many like-minded people from all over the world. The respect and image of the child, the simplicity of the philosophy and the devotion to time and space as a 'respected tool' (i.e. less is more, and no limits on time) aid the simplicity and calmness of the learning experiences. I am very aware of dialogues, and seeing the wonder since attending this study programme. I love the fact that adults act as co-researchers and an important part of that is examining resources before presenting them to the children, this and constant reflection on the process of learning and free professional development resources which I intend to translate into my setting to empower and build a collaborative team.

Juliette Schott, Educator, London



DATA

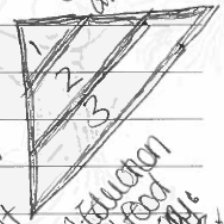
So Gates
are making them
is that it's a
'know nothing'

Grassroots
Major of Reggio Emilia
Italian flag
3 colours
'you can be an
even if you're
all different'

Monday
16th April

'If you don't take
care of the children
there is no future
for the city'
'The school has the ability
to make it its own
situation, sense of community
& crossing boundaries.'

Foundation means: community, research
beginning approach is
based on a foundation
Life, liberty, the pursuit
of happiness - all men are created
equal that they are endowed
by their creator with certain
unalienable rights: Thomas
Jefferson 1776



When you are in contact
with people who love you
you are more than happy
than the blue oceans
Not a vessel that filled
children are supported
to be be moved to
whatever they want
to be

- ① The school Education
- ② Agricultural food
- ③ The school energy
- ④ The school energy
- ⑤ The school energy
- ⑥ The school energy
- ⑦ The school energy
- ⑧ The school energy
- ⑨ The school energy
- ⑩ The school energy

In strategic planning for city where is education?



Thoughts and reflections

"The trip to Reggio was the inspiration I needed to take our Nursery School and Children's Centre forwards with regard to developing a more richly creative curriculum. I came back with many ideas. I found the support from the community at parental, school, community and political level to be an underpinning feature of the success of this approach and wished deeply that our politicians and councillors valued us in this way. Travelling as part of a group with my head teacher colleagues was so valuable in that we had shared encounters and dialogue. The Prosecco was fabulous as was the city itself. It gave me the space to think and reflect - crucial for leaders in Early Years who wish to implement the highest quality possible for the benefit of all children and families."

Amanda King, Headteacher, Warwickshire



Thoughts and reflections

“We came to Reggio for inspiration about how we overhaul the curriculum in our school. Specifically, we work in the Junior Department and one of the concerns we have as a whole school is how we develop independence, resilience and creativity in learners to ensure they don’t just do well in exams, but also are equipped to take on the challenges of 21st Century life. Reggio reminded us not only of the rightness of the cause, but also that **education is not a preparation for life, it is life**. So now we also want to ensure that learning in our school is captivating, motivating and extraordinary for today as well as tomorrow!

We were inspired by many things we saw in Reggio. Our challenge is to see how we can adapt those inspirations to fit our context and the aspirations of teachers, children and parents. We are looking hard at developing a greater sense of the power of community - both within and across classrooms as well as within the wider community. We are planning for the opening of a new school in September 2013 and have the amazing opportunity of incorporating some ideas about design and layout that we saw in Reggio into our new school.”

Nick Packard and Marissa Davis, Educator and Headteacher, Bath



Farewell speech

This is my three minute 'thankyou' from the end of the conference, and some extra images from the week. For me a visual image and all that it can carry is a way of continuing questioning and thinking back here in the day-to-day. The other observation that I keep recalling is from Vea Vecchi's 'Theatre Curtain' presentation about children's capacity for meeting complexity: "they love doing difficult things – and they are sure they will be able to do them".

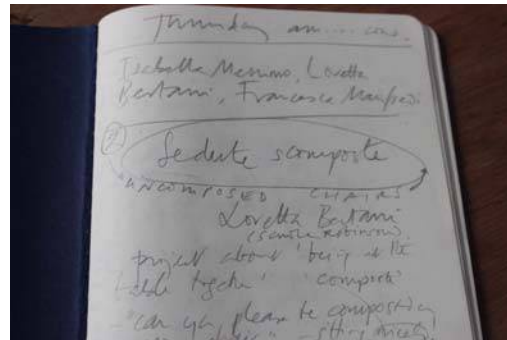


"Before we came to Reggio Emilia we were invited to think about *why* we were coming and to put this into words. I wrote that I wanted to spend time in a place that takes children's brilliance seriously – and that has enabled educational contexts to flourish that hold this brilliance at their centre. I also wanted to spend time in a place where the brilliance of adults – their intelligence, imagination, sensitivity – is alive and well, and where educators have found strong and clear voices to express this.

I am going to offer back one of my many meetings with brilliance from this week, a visual image that carries for me, and I hope for many of us, some of what we have experienced, thought about, and realized during our time here.

It is an image from Thursday's project presentation "Sedute Scomposte" ("Uncomposed Chairs") – it's Mattia's chair, the one with the spring that comes out of the seat and the child flying off the chair into the space above it.

This image spoke to me for many reasons. I have a seven year old son who from the day he was born has never been able to sit in a 'composed' way on a chair. He will be delighted to know that someone has finally invented a chair he can thoroughly approve of – a chair that helps you to not sit still.



But this chair is also a beautiful example of a kind of exchange and meeting that has been so evident this week. A meeting between **the everyday and the extraordinary**. A familiar, everyday object becomes extraordinarily transformed - through children's conversations, through the skillful listening and communicating of their educators, through the way educators and children build together a project of close attention and precise exploration.



And the chair is about another significant meeting. A meeting between **the material and the immaterial**. The child who described going upside down on a restaurant chair said something like this: “when you go upside down you can see the chair’s legs, and the legs of the table, and the legs of all the people in the restaurant” – a fantastic observation of the material. But there is also the immaterial - “and you can feel what it’s like to be a bat”. The chair is equally and always a place of imagination, where unexpected and delightful transformations can take place, and where things can stop being what they are and start to be something else instead.



We have seen beautiful material places this week – and the infant-toddler centres and preschools are to my eyes astonishingly beautiful. But each beautiful physical space holds something more beautiful inside: a place for the unexpected; for transformation; for playful invention; for genius and laughter (Amelia, you said when you first saw the chairs project at the school you laughed for a long time, and I had the same reaction when I saw the documentation in the exhibition here – and shouldn't laughter have a central place in our children's education?)

A place for brilliance of all kinds.

Thank you, for all your brilliance.“

Deb Wilenski , Consultant, Cambridge



‘For centuries, children have expected adults to believe in them - in their talents, their sensitivity, their creative intelligence and their desire to understand their surroundings. We have to understand them through the things they want to do and show that they can do. Children use a hundred 'languages' to teach us and show us. They have an inexhaustible desire to learn. Here in Reggio Emilia we believe in children. And if we also believe in ourselves, we can change many things.’

Loris Malaguzzi (in conversation, 1992)

Sightlines Initiative

20 Great North Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 4PS

0191 261 7666

www.sightlines-initiative.com

