Applying the Reggio Emilia Philosophy to a Museum Context

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will understand core tenets of the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy and how they are integrated into three different museum contexts.
- Participants will apply their understanding of these tenets while engaging with Reggio-inspired, open-ended materials at their tables.
- Participants will discuss opportunities for community outreach in their own contexts after hearing examples of community outreach from the presenters.
What do you know about Reggio?
Reggio Emilia, Italy
Loris Malaguzzi

1920-1994

The Hundred is there.
The Child
Is made of one hundred.
The child has
A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
Ways of listening
Of marveling, of loving
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding
A hundred worlds
To discover
A hundred worlds
To invent
A hundred worlds
To dream.
The child has
A hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
But they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
Separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
To think without hands

To do without head
To listen and not to speak
To understand without joy
To love and to marvel.
They tell the child:
To discover the world already there
And of the hundred
They steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
That work and play
Reality and fantasy
Science and imagination
Sky and earth
Reason and dream
Are things
That do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
That the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach
Our task is to help children communicate with the world using all their potential, strengths, and languages, and to overcome any obstacle presented by our culture.

LORIS MALAGUZZI
Image of the Child

- **Capable** of constructing knowledge
- Powerful
- Curious
- Has an inner joy for learning
- Innately creative
- Wants to explore
- Wants to be loved
The pedagogy of listening means helping children and adults search for meaning and understanding in what they do and what they experience. Listening to children’s theories enhances the possibility of discovering how children think and how they question and develop a relationship with the world around them.
MAKING THINKING VISIBLE

Pedagogy of Listening

Listening to children's theories enhances the possibility of discovering how children think and how they both question and develop a relationship with the world around them.

Open-ended questions are questions that allow someone to give a free-form answer. Closed-ended questions can be answered with “Yes” or “No,” or they have a limited set of possible answers.

There are many benefits of open-ended questions. For example, asking open-ended questions boosts:
What a great question.

Why do you think ....?

Let them share their schema (background knowledge) on the topic. Listen to their theory.

Ask other kiddos around what they think.

Where can we find out more about that?
In Dialogue Threads
Making Learning Visible through Documentation
Documentation

- Helps children solidify concepts and their ideas
- Celebrates their work and shows that their thoughts and ideas are valued
- Honors process instead of product (process is important)
- Helps educators see the “What, So What, Now What?” (from Samantha Shannon at Kidzu)
Environment as the Third Teacher
Sharing Resources
- Deep Dives
- Staff Training Sessions
- Workshops
Teacher Workshops
- Reggio 101
- Environment as Third Teacher
- Open-Ended Learning
Reggio Emilia – How a small town in Italy inspired LCM

January 3, 2023

By Shannon Blady PhD, LCM Chief Learning Officer

Children have 100 languages. That’s 100 ways to express themselves and 100 ways to show us what they are thinking and learning. That’s one of the Reggio Emilia principles that we firmly believe here at the Louisiana Children’s Museum. These “languages” can be found all through our galleries as our exhibits encourage children to paint, sing, experiment, build, act, dance, and play. There are plenty of other Reggio principles that manifest throughout our Museum. In fact, we were designed with Reggio principles in mind. So, what is Reggio Emilia exactly?
Play Power is an embedded program delivered by LCM designed to empower children to grow, develop, and heal through play and the arts. We are currently in three schools, grade K-2.
I have seen many changes in his classroom after he attended the last Play Power PD. He immediately began implementing things that we talked about that night. And he said it was the motivation he needed to finally get his classroom cleaned up and organized. He told me that it was something he has tried to do for 7 years but after hearing it here he knew he had to do better for his students. He has cleaned up the clutter and made 1 central teacher area. He has also taken unnecessary things off the walls. **Now his walls contain purposeful items. He has created areas for students to chose to display their work.** He has also brought in a display shelf where students can put their creations...He has made room for 2 discovery/early finisher areas and today I saw that he has added provocations to these areas. One of these areas contain open ended items and a collection of loose parts with a provocation. The other discovery area is changed as the students’ interests change, he is very in tune to what the students are wondering about, and he tries his best to make it available.

Today when I was there, I noticed he has made documentation displays with pictures and a brief explanation of what was happening. These are placed around the room and when the students saw me take an interest in them, they told me stories related to the pictures...
Living With Water is an immersive experience in environmental stewardship for New Orleans third graders.
LCM Staff Discussing Student Projects from Living With Water
Nola Mark Makers
“Children’s Museums are about people, not stuff.”

- Michael Spock, Boston CM
Environment as a Third Teacher

“There are three teachers of children: adults, other children, and their physical environment.”

- Loris Malaguzzi
Environment as a Third Teacher
Environment as a Third Teacher
Environment as a Third Teacher
Materials

The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense their motivations and the richer their experiences.”

-Loris Malaguzzi
Materials
Materials

“Nothing lights up a child’s brain like play.”

- Stuart Brown
Provocations
Child-Centered Advocacy

symposium
Building a Child and Youth Centered Community

APRIL 19, 2023
8:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
McGavick Conference Center at Clover Park Technical College

Giant Kid-Powered Bubble Machine

Category: Kinetic
Target Age: 2 - 4 years

CORE IDEA: The Bubble Machine is something that would be found in playgrounds or splash pads, and it encourages kids to play with each other and exercise. The machine can be powered by bikes or some kind of fitness activity (it can be an event, too), or something that involves teamwork. It can also work so that the more kids that participate, the more bubbles there will be.
Time to Play!

Spend 5 minutes playing with the materials at your tables
From Reggio Emilia to Rural North Carolina: Kidzu Children’s Museum
“Weaving Community”
Community Needs Assessment

### WHO?
Among our 16 participants, here is how they identified:

- Early childhood educator (Pre-K/Kindergarten), current or past (6 participants)
- Higher education educator (university professors+), current or past (4 participants)
- Government Agency (3 participants)
- Non-profit agency, independent organization (3 participants)
- Early childhood researcher, current or past (2 participants)
- Later childhood educator (1st grade+), current or past (1 participant)
- Childhood mental health professional (1 participant)

### GREATEST NEEDS
Our participants identified what they believed to be the greatest needs of infants and their caregivers in Orange County. Here are those needs ranked:

1. **Age-specific educational resources and school preparation**
2. **Affordable learning opportunities**
3. **Opportunities for social connection and community among caregivers**
   - Opportunities to build parent-child connection
   - Opportunities to build social connection among infants
4. **Access to non-English/bilingual educational opportunities/services**
   - Safe and creative physical environment
   - Online resources
5. **Structured and unstructured play**

### ACTION ITEMS
As suggested by our participants, how The Nest can better meet the needs of infants and their caregivers as we transition into our physical museum space.

- Provide caregiver-specific training, resources, and support
- Create a safe, welcoming, and accessible environment for all communities
- Encourage caregiver involvement and self-efficacy
- Provide opportunities for social interaction and support among caregivers
- Reach out to underrepresented families (getting a van, advertise in affordable housing communities, etc.)
- Offer bilingual services/opportunities
- Maintain online resources post-pandemic
- Include caregiver involvement and input
- Offer multiple, routine events
- Create more free/affordable opportunities
- Trained ECE staff
- Guided play
- Healthy attachment activities
- Integrate outdoor space/play
The role of space: The infant-toddler centers and preschools convey many messages, of which the most immediate is: this is a place where adults have thought about the quality and the instructive power of space. The lay-out of physical space fosters encounters, communication, and relationships.

-Lella Gandini, Fundamental Values of The Education of Children in Reggio Emilia
“To make a lovable school, industrious, inventive, liveable, documentable and communicable, a place of research, learning, re-cognition and reflection, where children, teachers and families feel well - is our point of arrival.”

-Loris Malaguzi
What is documentation?

- A way to make learning visible for and to:
  - Children
  - Families
  - The larger community
- A visible history of a museum community's play and learning

Types of Documentation:

- Art work
- Pictures and videos
- Recorded and dictated conversations
- Recorded and dictated stories
- Caregivers' thoughts, ideas, and questions
Why do we document in a museum context?

- To construct a story or identity of a particular space
- To co-create the space with our visitors
  - By making the play and learning visible to ourselves and the community, we are able to make changes to the environment based on our observations
  - In this way, the children are informing the space and leaving traces of their learning for other children to interact with
- To advocate for the rights of children
  - By inviting children into our space as co-curators, we are amplifying their voices and modeling for our community how to respect and listen to our youngest community members
This documentation is displayed in the main playspace.
Caregiver Participation Documentation

Questions:
- How do you think young children learn about who they are?
- How do young children construct and understand their identities?
- As a caregiver, what parts of your identity are important to share with your child(ren)?

Responses:
- Spending time with extended family members
- Hearing stories about themselves from family members
- Exposure to various activities, books, places, family/friends. Exploration
- Parents provide them with the moral values/code of which to live their life. Then they provide space for the child to explore independently within that moral code. And exposure to important cultural/religious daily life, education, events
How do we document?
The Documentation Process as a Cycle of Inquiry

- Observing, recording, and collecting artifacts
- Framing questions
- Planning and responding
- Analyzing/interpreting observations and artifacts; building theories
- (reframing questions)
- Organizing observations and artifacts
Cycle of Inquiry in Action!

Initial Question:

How do young children construct and understand their identities?
Observing, recording, and collecting artifacts

Organizing observations and artifacts
Observation Template

- **What?**
  - Objective description

- **So What?**
  - Why is this important, meaningful, interesting?
  - What question might this answer?

- **Now What?**
  - How can we build on/expand on this observation?
Reframing questions:

● Original question:
  ○ How do young children construct and understand their identities?

● New questions, based on observations:
  ○ How do mirrors help young children develop their understanding of themselves?
  ○ Do other mediums of seeing themselves hold the same level of interest?
Planning and responding
Identity Documentation

Components:
- Original question
- Observations
- Caregiver Responses to the original question
- A concurrent cycle of inquiry produced by a Nest intern
  - How does technology influence the development of young children’s understanding of self?
- Resources for caregivers

Responses from A.S.K. Conference, February 2023

Statewide Needs Assessment
Documentation Practice - 10 minutes

- Find a partner at your table (or a group of three, if needed)
- Assign roles
  - Experimenter(s): engage with and manipulate the materials
  - Documentor: using the Observation Template, take notes on how your partner is using the materials
- How can the addition of the flashlight change your play? Can this technology help you learn new things about the materials, or a new way of engaging with them?

After 5 minutes, switch roles!
Share your reflections!

- What was your experience with the Observation Template?
  - Did it help you notice things or pay attention in a different way?
- Were you surprised by how your partner used any of the materials?
- Were you surprised by how you used any of the materials?
Outreach and advocacy discussions

Outreach to and advocacy for our communities is common thread between our three museums:

**Louisiana Children’s Museum:** Nola Mark Makers and Teacher Workshops

**Greentrike:** Annual Symposium and Child and Youth Centered Community

**Kidzu Children’s Museum and The Nest:** Statewide Needs Assessment and Outreach

We’d love to hear from you:

- What outreach and advocacy work are you already doing?
- How can the Reggio Emilia tenets shared today inform and expand this work?
- What are your hopes and goals for the future of your outreach and advocacy work?
Questions?

Thank you!

Stay connected!

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Shannon: sblady@lcm.org
Alyssa: alyssat@greentrike.org
Some of our Documentation of the Presentation
“What were you inclined to do with the materials when you first saw them?”

-Julia to her tablemates

Touch
Stack
Think
Play
Make Connections
Adding another element to the mix...
“How about this side of the table plays first and this side documents and then we’ll switch?”
Sharing our experiences with and wonderings about the materials.
Thank You!