



# ONTARIO REGGIO ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

JULY, 2008

## Inside This Issue

THE WONDER OF LEARNING	P 2-4
ORA BOARD OF DIRECTORS	P 5-7
INVITATION TO JOIN	P 8-9

## WELCOME!

We welcome you to the Ontario Reggio Association and invite your participation. Our intention is to bring together those who are interested in studying and working with the inspiration of the

Reggio Emilia philosophy.

The partnership of representatives from all levels of education that brought *The Hundred Languages of Children* exhibit to Toronto from September 2006 to March 2007 provided the basis for ongoing collaboration that has expanded to include the Canadian Association for Young Children. Momentum grew with the conference in February 2008 with Carlina Rinaldi. We have now formed this association with the support of Reggio Children. We have established a board of directors and will be working toward securing non-profit, charitable status. Our website is currently under construction, and will soon provide an excellent source of information about professional development opportunities related to the Reggio approach.

Although another organization already has official use of the acronym ORA, we will use it informally. We were very deliberate in the choice and sequence of the words in our name, because the acronym ORA is the word in Italian for “now” – the present – and this pedagogy of listening requires us to be truly present with children. Our logo includes a spiral, the symbol of openness and expansiveness, the visually pleasing combination of symbol and text in the graphic, and the signal of an ecological interest and connection pointing to an emphasis on relationality provided by the green colour.

## THE WONDER OF LEARNING: THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN



Amelia Gambetti and Carlina Rinaldi, accepting an award from NAREA on behalf of the city of Reggio Emilia, at the conference in Boulder, June 2008

“It is, thus, our continuing hope that creativity will become a normal traveling companion in our children’s growth and development.” -Loris Malaguzzi (The Hundred Languages of Children exhibit catalogue, 1996)

At the unveiling of the new version of the exhibit in Boulder, Colorado at the end of June, Amelia Gambetti explained that there was a perceived need to give visibility to thought processes in Reggio Emilia and to research. They wanted to define this exhibit as a democratic piazza, calling attention to the importance of education and schools as places for research, discussion and mutual exchange. She spoke of their desire to speak in many languages, to listen to head and hands, and to keep visible the connection between theory and practice. “The exhibition has its roots in a deeply interdisciplinary and intercultural conception of knowledge and learning, in which aesthetics is part of knowledge itself, and traverses the various languages.”

## THE WONDER OF LEARNING: THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN

This innovative exhibit is the result of collaboration between pedagogistas, atelieristas, educators, Reggio Children, graphic designers, parents, and visitors. There were different points of view, and lengthy negotiations to find agreement. The work was analyzed panel by panel, dialogue by dialogue. It includes technology in ways that enrich the experience and allow visitors who have not been to Reggio Emilia to see the children engaged in their work with each other. There are video clips and audio segments of conversations. It is a delight to hear the joy in the children's voices, and in the teachers' voices the quiet tone of anticipation that something wonderful is about to happen. We hear the sounds that intrigued the children of feet on stairs at the new Loris Malaguzzi International Centre, and follow their response to it. "The stairway's happy when we're noisy. The 'tremble' is the sound of the stairs laughing." Their competent use of computer programs to reflect their value of reciprocity allowed them to graphically represent and manipulate the sounds they had recorded, and compose a gift to the stairway.

This is one of many stories in this democratic piazza, told in many languages. The exhibit is structured in micro-places that interconnect. As always, the children's work is stunning, and the photos and transcribed conversations reveal the deep level of engagement between all protagonists, and their relationship with materials. In this version of the exhibit, there is much stronger evidence of the role technology can play, both for children and educators. Throughout, we see children's creative use of computers to "renovate" graphic images of an environment – to bring their own ideas into dialogue with a place. The educators' use of video enables us to see and hear the children's collaboration and playfulness in the languages of music and movement. One video allows us to see children and dancers together in joyful abandon, in a single dialogue. Vea Vecchi said of this experience, "Dance is a thought taking shape. It is first and foremost a response to space; it is architecture." This exhibit makes it clear that listening and documentation are ways to be close to children, to understand a little more about how they think, for them to feel our solidarity so they are motivated and interested in what they are doing to the greatest possible extent.

In addition to greater visibility of projects involving dialogues with material involving infants and toddlers, and a section on the enchantment of writing involving children aged 4 -10, this version of the exhibit highlights projects involving children with special rights, family participation, and school relations with the city. As Amelia indicated, the exhibit speaks to all those involved in schooling, and to all members of the public who believe that it is imperative to safeguard educational processes and their evolution.

## THE WONDER OF LEARNING: THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN

The most recent issue of the *Innovations* periodical (vol. 15, no. 2) has an article about the new exhibit accompanied by photos, and an excellent reflection from Margie Cooper on the presence of the exhibit in North America. In speaking of how challenging it has been for us to understand the complexities of the values, philosophies, practices and meanings, she said, “However, it is fairly undisputed that we keep trying because their example fills us with hope, stirs our passion for our work, and, frankly, provokes us at our core because we think of ourselves as a people who should be capable of better effort on behalf of our own children ‘over here’.”

*Dialogues with Places*, a catalogue related to the exhibit, will show pre-exhibit documentation from which selections were made by the interdisciplinary project group. The new exhibit will also be supported by an Italian / English website that is intended to complement visitors’ experience.

This exhibit is a provocation to reflect on the quality of educational contexts we are providing. Are they contexts capable of informing research into and development of the possibilities and resources of all children? Are we finding ways to give voice to children as bearers of a strong cultural message? The educators and children in Reggio Emilia continue to invite us to think with them, and through this exhibit, they give us the gift of hope.

### **Continuing our dialogue with the exhibit**

Several ORA board members were among the strong Canadian contingent in Boulder for the NAREA conference. The energy and inspiration of the experience of seeing the exhibit, hearing presentations from Amelia Gambetti, Veà Vecchi, Carlina Rinaldi, architect Tullio Zini, and American educators Ellen Hall, Andrew Stremmel, Mary Jane Moran, David Kelly, Judy Graves and Susan McKay, and visiting the Boulder Journey School will give us wings as we move into the first year of our new association.

We have begun to explore the possibility of organizing a small group to go to Boulder in October while the exhibit is there, to coincide with a visit to the Boulder Journey School. If enough people are interested, we should be able to negotiate reduced airfare and fees for accommodations. This is a powerful experience – well worth a fundraising effort. If you are interested, please contact Karyn Callaghan ([karyncallaghan@gmail.com](mailto:karyncallaghan@gmail.com)) or Allison Barrow ([allisonbarrow@powergate.ca](mailto:allisonbarrow@powergate.ca)) by August 29 at the latest. This trip would be suitable for a small group, and we may have to limit participation to those who respond earliest. The exhibit leaves Boulder on October 24, so the time frame is tight. Please let us know if you are seriously considering participating so we can make more detailed inquiries and plans.

## INTRODUCING THE INAUGURAL ORA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Front Row: Allison Barrow, Rosalba Bortolotti, Jennifer Armstrong**

**Back Row: Carolyn McGill, Lorrie Baird, Anne Marie Coughlin (peeking), Dianne Riehl, Karyn Callaghan, Gretchen Reynolds**

**Missing (but with us in spirit) Mary Fisher, Louise Jupp, Patti MacDonald and Carol Anne Wien**



**Jennifer Armstrong** is currently Principal, Junior School at The Bishop Strachan School in Toronto.

([www.bss.on.ca](http://www.bss.on.ca)). She completed her Master of Arts degree at the University of Toronto, specializing in a combination of Curriculum and Applied Psychology. Jennifer has also served as Director of Academics at The Sterling Hall School, Toronto, Consultant in French as a Second Language program at the Muskoka Board of Education, Bracebridge, and an elementary teacher in French Immersion classrooms in Toronto, Bracebridge and Huntsville. BSS is Canada's oldest independent boarding and day school for girls from Junior Kindergarten to university entrance. The Junior School teaching community has been exploring and investigating the Reggio approach for 6 years.

Jennifer and other staff members at BSS are catching their breath after co-hosting (other partners include Toronto District School Board, York University and Seneca College) the exhibit Hundred Languages of Children in Toronto- September 2006- March 2007. "We are describing ourselves as enthusiastically exhausted...and wondering what next?!"

**Lorrie Baird** graduated from the Early Childhood Education program in 1983. Since that time she has worked in various childcare programs with a variety of age groups both as a classroom educator and centre supervisor. In 1994 Lorrie began teaching in the Early Childhood Program at Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario. Over the next 11 years she taught numerous courses, worked as a college evaluator, as well as acted as a course writer for both print and web based ECE courses. Lorrie has spent much of her professional career researching and exploring the principles of Reggio Emilia and Emergent Curriculum. Currently she holds the position of Program and Curriculum Director with Kawartha Child Care Services in Peterborough. KCCS is a non-project charitable organization with 19 licensed child care programs. Lorrie was hired by KCCS in 2005 to support the implementation of Reggio Inspired Emergent Curriculum throughout the organization. Lorrie also currently sits as the Chair of the Peterborough City and County Child Care Network, and is an active member in City of Kawartha Lakes and the City of Peterborough with "Raising the Bar" and Community Professional Development committees.

## INTRODUCING THE INAUGURAL ORA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Allison Barrow** is the owner and Director of Beckenridge Discovery Preschool, and Heritage Discovery Preschool, celebrating 6 years of enriching childcare in Markham. Her passion has driven a new project "A Studio for Inspirational Play" to invite parents and infants to engage in a curriculum that supports investigational play and relationship building. Angus Glen Discovery Preschool will open Summer 2009. Allison has studied the Reggio Emilia Approach since 1997, inspiring her teachers to engage in a continuous dialogue with this philosophy and their passion for teaching. She was a participant on the Canadian Delegation to Reggio Emilia in 2002 and was TD Centre Site Liason for the Toronto Exhibit in 2006. Allison was nominated for Young Women in Small Business by the Business Development of Canada in 2004, and is a consultant for business initiation.

**Rosalba Bortolotti** has been in the field of Early Childhood education for over sixteen years. She holds a diploma in Early Childhood Education from Seneca College and a Bachelor of Arts degree from York University. In 1994, she joined a University of Toronto study tour to the Preschools of Reggio Emilia. Inspired by Reggio's innovative way of working with young children, Rosalba began presenting workshops at conferences, child care centres and parent meetings. She continued to explore emergent curriculum while on staff at Seneca College Lab school. For a number of years, she has taught curriculum courses at Seneca College. In 2005, she returned to Reggio for further inspiration. Rosalba is presently the principal and owner of a private preschool and kindergarten school in Richmond Hill called the Acorn School, drawing on Reggio Emilia's principles with young children. She is also the vice president of an educational consulting group which organizes conferences and workshops for educators, artists, and

administrators all over Canada and the U.S. The Acorn Collaborative hosts yearly conferences in Toronto and offers school tours [www.acornschool.ca](http://www.acornschool.ca), [rosalba@acorncollaborative.ca](mailto:rosalba@acorncollaborative.ca)

**Karyn Callaghan** is a professor of Early Childhood Education at Mohawk College in Hamilton, and coordinator of the *Artists at the Centre – Making Thinking Visible* project ([www.artistsatthecentre.ca](http://www.artistsatthecentre.ca)). She has her diploma in Early Childhood Education, Bachelor of Arts in Child Studies, and Master of Education degree from OISE / UT, specializing in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. She attended the International Conference and Study Tour in Reggio Emilia in 2004 and is still in recovery. Karyn co-chaired the 100 Languages of Children Toronto Exhibit committee with Jennifer Armstrong. She has collaborated with Carol Anne Wien on research into the impact of the Reggio approach, and spoken at conferences across Canada and in the United States.

**Anne Marie Coughlin ECE.C** first entered the field of Early Childhood Education as a student in 1982. Over her career she has worked as a classroom educator, a centre director, program director, professional development coordinator and part time faculty in the ECE Program at Fanshawe College. She has been an active member of the AECE, O, London Branch where she served as Professional Development Chair for six years. Currently she is the Director of Program Leadership at London Bridge Child Care Services, Inc.

For the past ten years, Anne Marie has been actively studying emergent curriculum and the philosophy of teachers in Reggio Emilia, Italy. In 2006, she co-authored an article in the CAYC journal, *Canadian Children* that details her involvement in a long term study on paper with toddlers. Anne Marie continues to work as a mentor for both classroom educators and program leaders, exploring ways to work with and think about both children's and adult learning.

**Mary Fisher** is currently the Academic Chair of the School of Early Childhood Education at Seneca College. Seneca College was one of the organizations to support through funding the 100 Languages exhibit in 2006/2007. Prior to coming to Seneca, Mary was the manager of Academic and Training programs at the Mothercraft Institute for Early Development, the director of the Metro Association of Family Resource Programs and project director for Equally Healthy Kids a health promotion initiative. Her career has been dedicated to the education and care of children

**Louise Jupp** is a professor of early childhood education at Seneca College. Louise has a Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning from Brock University. Her area of interest is teacher reflection and educational technologies. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Ryerson University, a Certificate in the Psychology of Human Relations and a Certificate in Intergenerational Programming, also from Ryerson University. Louise has facilitated workshops with early childhood educators, elementary school teachers, nannies, parents and home child care providers. She has also acted as a consultant for child care centres working towards pedagogical growth and the development of a new philosophy. Louise has been inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and its pedagogical and philosophical invitation continues to have a profound and lasting impact on the many teaching and learning communities in which she has had the honour of a being a participant.

**Patti MacDonald** is the Vice Principal of the Junior School at The Bishop Strachan School in Toronto. Before coming to BSS in 2007, she taught at The School at Columbia University in New York. At The School, Patti was involved with curriculum development, student assessment planning and teacher evaluation. She also coordinated the associate teacher mentoring program, student teachers and research.

While in New York, Patti acted as the educational consultant for The Harlem Episcopal School and facilitated the elementary education group at the Klingenstein Summer Institute, Teachers College. Before moving to TSCU, Patti taught at the Institute for Child Study at the University of Toronto (OISE). At ICS, Patti taught Junior Kindergarten, first and second grade as well as contributing to research initiatives and the teacher education program. Patti's previous experience includes teaching Junior Kindergarten through sixth grade in Ontario public schools and teaching 18 month to 6 year olds at the Glendon Day Nursery at Glendon College.

**Carolyn McGill** has worked in the child care field for the past forty years minus the six years spent at home raising her

own children. "I have seen some major changes in approaches and quality. I am pleased to say once I discovered the Reggio Emilia Schools from Italy my heart was stolen. What a wonderful amazing approach to work with children and educators with so much respect for each one of us. My heart fills with joy each day I go to work and listen to the wonderful conversations all around me, children have such amazing and interesting concepts and theories to explore. In my present job at Jacob Hespeler Child Care Centre I am the coordinator of five child care centres all based in public schools providing high quality child care to children from 2 - 12 years of age. We have been inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach for the past eleven years and we continue to grow and learn right along with the children in our care." Carolyn attended the first ever study group from Canada to the Reggio Emilia Schools in Italy.

**Gretchen Reynolds** received her Masters in Education from Bank Street College of Education in New York City and her Ph.D. in Education from the Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California. She has had an affiliation for many years as adjunct faculty with Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California. Gretchen has been a full time faculty member at Algonquin College in Ottawa since 1992. She is co-author with Elizabeth Jones (Pacific Oaks College) of The Play's the Thing: Teachers' Roles in Children's Play and Master Players: Learning from Children at Play (Teachers College Press, New York, 1992 and 1997). Gretchen is presently seconded half time as a consultant with a CIDA funded project in Egypt (ECEEP - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project - Egypt) to expand enrollment of eligible children in kindergarten from 18% enrollment at present to 60% in the next five years. Gretchen has participated in a study tour to Reggio Emilia.

**Carol Anne Wien** is a professor in the faculty of education at York University in Toronto, and is the author of Negotiating Standards in the Primary Classroom: The Teacher's Dilemma and editor of Emergent Curriculum in the Primary Classroom: Interpreting the Reggio-Emilia Approach in Schools. This new book highlights exemplary teaching practice by teachers and principals in elementary schools. She writes and speaks extensively about emergent curriculum and is interested in the quality of experience for children and teachers in all early childhood settings and promoting creative integration of the arts in daily life.

In addition, **Dianne Riehl** is a Board member. We will include her bio in our next newsletter.

## INVITATION TO JOIN THE ONTARIO REGGIO ASSOCIATION

We are attaching an invitation to join the Ontario Reggio Association. Please consider joining now if you have not already done so. The opportunity to join both the Canadian Association for Young Children and ORA for a reduced fee is worthwhile, as it includes a subscription to the excellent journal, *Canadian Children*. Send the form to colleagues. We hope to see our association grow. We welcome your suggestions and questions and look forward to seeing you at upcoming meetings and events. Our next issue will provide information about upcoming meetings which will take place at a variety of locations around the province.

Ciao!

# INVITATION TO JOIN THE ONTARIO REGGIO ASSOCIATION

## ontario reggio association

We wish to invite you to join a wide-reaching organization in Ontario that brings together those interested in studying and working with the inspiration of the Reggio Emilia approach. This organization has grown out of the partnership among The Bishop Strachan School, York University, the Toronto District School Board, and Seneca College which brought the exhibit "The Hundred Languages of Children" to Toronto from October 2007 to March 2007. A follow up conference Feb. 6-8, 2008 that brought Carlina Rinaldi to Toronto provided ongoing momentum for those interested in continuing their relationship with this work. At this point, the executive steering committee that brought the exhibit is interested in forming an ongoing organization to carry this work forward. We do this with the support and interest of Reggio Children, Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Our sense is that the organization will provide occasions for joining others who wish to continue their exploration and engagement with the Reggio Emilia approach. Possibilities include annual or semi-annual conferences including Reggio educators, professional development Saturday sessions in which small groups share documentation and discussion, website access and information, networking for members, and announcement for various events through the website.

We would love to have you join us and can promise an interesting and creative context for further professional development. Our intention is that the organization provide a forum for all sectors involved with young children, from child care, preschool, public and private schools to postsecondary institutions, from teachers to administrators to legislators and policy makers.

Membership benefits: These ideas have been brought to the table. Input from members will be welcome.

Automatic notice of events	Discount on conferences
Listing on the website	Electronic newsletter
List of consultants available	List of resources and recommended reading
Transcripts of presentations emailed to participants	

### Mission/Purpose

The Ontario Reggio Association exists as a non-profit organization to support the ongoing collaboration of Reggio-inspired individuals, schools, institutions and organizations. The association is a professional learning community/community of learners that seeks to include individuals whose interests span early childhood, preschool, elementary, secondary, university and post-graduate domains. The primary function of the association is to support an ongoing dialogue with the experiences of the Infant and Toddler Centres and Preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy and Reggio Children. Through its words and actions, the association strives to live as a community of collaboration and mutual support.



Membership Cost: \$40 (\$25 for students, with proof) or \$70 Joint Membership with CAYC (Canadian Association for Young Children)

Send Cheque to: 100 Languages Toronto Exhibit  
 Attention: Jennifer Armstrong  
 Principal, Junior School  
 The Bishop Strachan School  
 298 Lonsdale Road  
 Toronto, ON M4V 1X2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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