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Editors' Page

The current issue of *Teaching Today for Tomorrow* begins with the second installment in a series of articles that aim to inform the practices of educators working with Aboriginal youth. Louise Champagne, a qualitative researcher, educator, and community activist, has authored the first two texts in this series. The first article, published in the previous issue, "The Teacher as Ally: Community Solidarity Pedagogy" describes how teachers can become transformative agents in the lives of Aboriginal youth. This text may be accessed here:

http://www.7oaks.org/file/ttt/Issue_24_2008_Curriculum_as_Lived_Experience.pdf

The second article, "Aboriginal Communities in Historical Context" shows that a socially conscious and transformative teaching practice is rooted in a critical understanding of our shared history.

The other texts in this issue stem from a *Reggio Emilia* readings course offered at the University of Manitoba. Melanie Janzen was the instructor of this course. She joins us in this issue as one of the editors. *Reggio Emilia* takes its name from a geographic area in Italy and refers to an approach to early childhood education which emerged there after World War II. The ideas and theories of *Reggio Emilia* have since been taken up in preschool and classroom contexts throughout the world, as teachers seek to understand the ways in which children represent their thinking through various arts media.

Writing from the perspective of a music teacher, Sonja Wiens relates *Reggio Emilia* to *Orff* music pedagogy. Catherine Paul-Sawatzky argues that thoughtful documentation of learning processes can become a tool of advocacy for children and teachers. Jessica Dilts and Leanne Yeo, in their study of the concept of environment as the third teacher, explore how the purposeful arrangement of classroom space can create new possibilities for learning.

It seems timely that the publication of this issue follows on the heels of the inaugural Reggio Emilia Inspired Care and Education Conference (May 2009). This conference is an example of community collaboration and organization in an effort to better understand teaching and learning in the context of early childhood. The conference, organized by members of various school divisions, universities, child care organizations, and independent child-focused groups is an example of the possibilities that emerge when, together and across organizational boundaries, the community collaborates to foster discussion.

We are grateful to the authors for sharing their writing publicly and to Debbie Walstra for her assistance in formatting and preparing this issue for publication online.

We hope you are both pleased and provoked by what you read and we welcome your responses.

Melanie Janzen and Matthias Meiers

Aboriginal Communities in Historical Context

Louise Champagne

Communal Economies

Prior to the arrival and advance of merchant fur trade companies in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, communal “band” societies prevailed from the Central Rockies to the Atlantic seacoast and from the north shore of Lake Superior and the northern Plains to the Arctic. These included the Beothuk in what is now called Newfoundland, various Algonquian linguistic groups stretching through the Boreal Forest from the Atlantic to Lake Winnipeg, the Blackfoot towards the Rockies on the Great Plains, the Dene northwest of the Churchill River, and the Inuit of the northern tundra and Arctic coastal areas. Economic activity centred upon seasonal rounds and migrations of animal, fish and plants.

The basic workings of communal economic systems can be identified and understood by combining oral traditions in Aboriginal communities, the writings of early merchants and missionaries, and archaeological evidence. All Aboriginal societies had oral traditions but north of the Aztec Empire there were no written histories. However, a critical reading of the chronicles of European merchants and missionaries can be very revealing. The writings referred to as the “Jesuit Relations” provide a major example. They are basically field notes by missionary priests to inform superiors in France and each other of their undertakings. The Jesuits were Roman Catholic missionaries who were out to “save” souls by replacing “pagan” culture with their version of Christianity. As this mission centred on deliberate cultural subversion,¹ the Jesuit Relations have a lot of anthropological value. The missionaries had an interest in understanding

¹ Not unlike an intelligence agency plotting the overthrow of unfriendly foreign regimes.

the indigenous culture because of their intention to dismantle and supplant the belief system. Although their writings reflect their own racism, sexism, and religious myths, they provide a lot of information about egalitarian culture.

Iroquois and Huron villages in the vicinity of the upper St. Lawrence and lower Great Lakes and the Mandan and Hdatsan villages adjoining the Missouri River relied extensively on the cultivation of corn and other crops and were more formally structured than seasonally migratory communities to the north. They were typical of what anthropologists describe as “tribal” societies (Russ Rothney, *Ten Thousand Years of Development*, unpublished, 1979). The Siouan-speaking Assiniboine and Dakota communities, based in the Parklands and northern Plains, had strong elements of both tribal and communal band societies.

Both communal band and tribal economies were based on production for direct-use, social value, rather than on an impersonal market value. In other words, decisions about production and distribution were based on community needs and goals, rather than on the pursuit and accumulation of privatized commercial wealth. Accordingly, the concept of unemployment did not exist. The workings of communal economies would make Aboriginal students proud... if they knew about it!

Social Relationships

Social relationships within communal band and tribal societies were egalitarian because the economy operated on the basis of community interest. Every member of the community was involved in various forms of production, contributing to the well-being of the community as a whole. Individuals acquired self-esteem by sharing and contributing to the well-being of others. Distribution of goods and services was based on people’s needs, not on the ability to pay.

Production was directly geared to what people needed and used. Communities “produced what they consumed and consumed what they produced” (Russ Rothney and Stephen Watson, *A Brief Economic History of Northern Manitoba*, 1975). These consumption and production patterns ensured structured economic balance alongside highly egalitarian social relationships.

In 1634 Paul LeJeune, a Jesuit missionary, spent several weeks traveling and camping with Montagnais inland from the lower St Lawrence.² The Montagnais are part of the Algonquian linguistic group, which in the west includes the Ojibwa and Cree. The Montagnais lived in migratory communal bands, north of the tribal villages of Huronia. LeJeune’s perspective was one of a missionary from a patriarchal, class society trying to convert “les savages” to Christianity. Nonetheless his chronicles offer an unparalleled glimpse of communal band societies at a very early stage of European contact. LeJeune reflects on the quality of the social relationships he observed among the people he lived with, “They treat each other as brothers; they harbour no spite against those of their own nation”. In communal band societies people acquired self-esteem from sharing and displaying generosity. Being non-materialistic or non-acquisitive was a highly valued personal trait. LeJeune observed:

They are very generous among themselves and even make a show of not loving anything, of not being attached to the riches of the earth, so that they may not grieve if they lose them. Not long ago a dog tore a beautiful Beaver robe belonging to one of the Savages, and he was the first one to laugh about it. One of the greatest insults that can be offered to them, is to say, “That man likes everything, he is stingy.” If you refuse them anything, here is their reproach...: ‘Khisakhitan Sakhita’, “Thou lovest that, love it as much as thou wilt” they do not open the hand half way when they give... You will see them take care of their kindred, the children of their friends, widows, orphans, and old men, never reproaching them in the least, giving them abundantly, sometimes whole Moose. This is truly the sign of a good heart and of a generous soul. (LeJeune, 1633-34, VI, p.237)

² The social formation of the Montagnais was similar to the Cree and Ojibwa in northern North America. Communal band societies were the dominant social formation of hunting and gathering economies.

These non-materialistic values and patterns of caring and sharing were dominant characteristics of communal band societies. They have been continually undermined by colonization and commercial self-interests.

- **Respect for Young People and Women**

Elders, women and children, as well as men, enjoyed a high level of autonomy and social respect in communal band economies. In the early 1630s, LeJeune left a telling glimpse of the social respect experienced by young people. He described an incident where a Montagnais man was observing a young French boy playing a drum. The boy used his drumstick and struck the Montagnais man on the head and caused him to bleed. The French became upset with the child and the Montagnais demanded compensation for the injury, which was the custom. However, the French insisted on their custom, which was to punish the child with a public whipping. The Montagnais would not allow the physical punishment and one of them intervened by protecting the child and offering himself for punishment instead of the child. LeJeune described the incident in his journal as follows:

Our interpreter said: "Thou knowest our custom; when any of our number does wrong, we punish him. This child has wounded one of your people: he shall be whipped at once in thy presence." As the Savages saw we were really in earnest...they began to pray for his pardon, alleging he was only a child, that he had no mind, that he did not know what he was doing; but as our people were nevertheless going to punish him, one of the Savages stripped himself entirely, threw his blankets over the child and cried out to him who was going to do the whipping: "Strike me if thou wilt, but thou shalt not strike him." And thus the little one escaped. (Jesuit Relations, 1632-33, V, p. 219)

LeJeune's journal show how the Jesuits functioned as accomplices to commercial trade and colonial rule in trying to undermine egalitarian social relations, particularly in regard to women and children. In spite of his admiration for indigenous sharing, generosity and honesty, in 1640 he wrote with pleasure that, after being berated by recently converted Christian men, "some of these poor women" reported:

Yesterday the men summoned us to a Council, the first time that women have ever entered one; but they treated us so rudely that we were greatly astonished. 'It is you women' they said to us, 'who are the cause of all our misfortunes, - it is you who keep the demons among us. You do not urge to be baptized; You are lazy about going to prayers; when you pass before the cross, you never salute it; you wish to be independent. Now know that you will obey your husbands; and you young people, you will obey your parents and our Captains; and if any fail to do so, we have concluded to give them nothing to eat.... I believe, indeed, that they will not all at once enter into this great submissiveness that they promise themselves; but it will be in this point as in others, they will embrace it little by little. A young woman having fled, shortly after these elections, into the woods, not wishing to obey her husband, the Captains had her searched for, and came to us, if having found her, it would not be well to chain her by one foot; and if it would be enough to make her pass four days and four nights without eating, as penance for her fault (Jesuit Relations, 1640, XVII, p.107).

This implies that conversion to Christianity involved the introduction of social hierarchy and the use of domestic violence as a means of subjugating women.

- **Fatal Imbalance**

Like most Canadians, Aboriginal students generally know very little about how commercial trade underdeveloped indigenous economies. Nor are they aware of their forebears' constant resistance to commercial subjugation or the fact that commercial trade disrupted healthy economies and undermined egalitarian social relations, an eventuality that was particularly harsh for women and children.

Recognition of the tension between direct use, community value (social use value) and impersonal, commercial exchange value (market value) is fundamental to a critical understanding of the entire economic transformation that has been occurring ever since the arrival of merchant trade. However, this recognition is largely absent in published works.

Alongside the attack on community use values, commercial trade also steadily undermined the structural balance of communal band economies (Russ Rothney, *Native Economy Before the Arrival of European Commerce*, unpublished, 1983). European trade goods, such as metal pots and pans, traps and guns, had technological advantages over ceramics and other pre-metal manufactures. However, reliance on these items soon led to a critical dependency

on foreign imports. In turn, this created a fatal imbalance with production geared to commercial value, rather than to social-use value. Early roots of modern “welfare dependency” were planted rapidly, in the late 1600s, when Cree families periodically had to rely on rations of oatmeal doled out to them by the Hudson’s Bay Company. This was because they had started wintering around desolate trading posts on the Hudson Bay coast as a direct response to commercial trade. They remained late in the fall, after freeze-up, hunting and fishing to supply the company with provisions. In so doing, they were cut off from the inland forest resources that had sustained people in the region for thousands of years (Doug Elias, *Metropolis and Hinterland in Northern Manitoba*, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 1974).

By the end of the 18th century, local economic balance had been destroyed throughout vast woodland areas to such an extent that severe depletion of wildlife, hunger and submission to debt were common. Subsequently, in the year following the 1821 amalgamation of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North-West Company, the inland Governor of the consolidated Hudson’s Bay Company wrote:

I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of the Indians and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced that they must be ruled with a rod of iron, to bring, and to keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us. In the Woods and Northern barren grounds this measure ought to be pursued rigidly next year if they do not improve, and no credit, not so much as a load of ammunition given them until they exhibit an inclination to renew their habits of industry. In the plains however this system will not do, as they can live independent of us, and by withholding ammunition, tobacco and spirits, the staple articles of trade, for one year they will recover the use of their Bows and spears and lose sight of their smoking and Drinking habits. (Merk, Frederick, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson’s Journal*, p. 179)

People were no longer exclusively producing for the well-being of their communities. Rather, commercial commodity relationships increasingly undermined the egalitarian nature of local cultures. The spread of insatiable merchant trade and foreign goods increasingly undermined other forms of skilled, artisan manufacturing. Region by region, commercial trade

exhausted stocks of fur bearing animals and led to over-hunting of game and to other forms of resource depletion. In turn, this set the stage for widespread epidemics (smallpox and measles) and food shortages in the 18th and 19th centuries, all of which laid the groundwork for the wholesale surrender of land, packaged by treaties (Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, University of Toronto Press, 1974; Russell G. Rothney, *Mercantile Capital and the Livelihood of Residents of the Hudson Bay Basin*, MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1975).

Because of the prevailing patriarchal culture of Europe the merchant companies traded directly with men. Men became the captains of the trade while women became the carriers. While men did not travel without women, who were the principal producers of food, clothing, and shelter, commercial trade relations and the shift in production priorities of men undermined the social status of women.³ Although the egalitarian nature of Aboriginal culture has not completely disappeared, thanks to continued hunting and gathering activities and to household production outside the commercial sphere, it is still being eroded.

This shift in production priorities marked the beginning of the destruction of economic self-reliance and community health. Aboriginal people were pulled into the evolving global commercial marketplace. They became the victims of revolutionary, global restructuring, characterized by rising dependency on foreign manufactured goods at the expense of local manufacturing, and by over-production of raw resources for export. This devastating structural economic imbalance was part and parcel of the shift in the basis of production from community use to commercial use.

³ There are many archival descriptions of trade between local people and merchant traders. Prime examples include the journals of James Isham, Hudson Bay Governor at York Factory in 1740s, and Samuel Herne, who, in the early 1770s, was the first Hudson Bay Company agent to penetrate the interior north-west of Prince of Wales Fort (Churchill). Herne's writings are exceptional in their focus on a (Dene) band of intermediary traders.

On the plains, in the late 1800's another shift occurred, this time from the commercial fur trade economy to a commercial agricultural economy and European settlement. Following the Indian Treaties, which were concluded with Aboriginal people who were under severe economic duress, opportunities for European peasants to acquire free land for agricultural pursuits were heavily promoted throughout Europe. The result was heavy immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Export agriculture was soon followed by commercial mining, forestry and fishing, all of which perpetuated the imbalance between primary and secondary production, continued the assault on community based production, and began sidelining Aboriginal labour. Residential schooling was imposed during this period with the intention of training young people for the emerging industrial and agricultural industries but had a catastrophic impact on family and community integrity and cultural independence.

- **Implications for Aboriginal Students**

The destruction of community is a global economic process that has been happening internationally and has been evolving for several hundred years. The Hudson's Bay Company was the first-ever permanent shareholder company. Its first governor was Prince Rupert, cousin of Charles II. As part owner of the Royal African Company, he was also a prominent slave merchant. Other early HBC shareholders included Sir Robert Viner, dominant London banker and King's Goldsmith, Sir John Robinson, Lieutenant of the Tower of London and executive member of the East India Company, which monopolized commerce with India, China and south-east Asia, John Kirke, brother of Sir David Kirke, founder of the first (abortive) British colony in Newfoundland and recipient of British monopoly rights over the St. Lawrence fur trade, and Sir George Carteret and the Earl of Shaftsbury, both part owners of Carolina.

It is important to understand the significance of what was destroyed by commercial trade and how it happened. Aboriginal people had structurally balanced, healthy economies which fostered and nourished an egalitarian culture. Many educational change leaders who argue for traditional cultural programs in the schooling of Aboriginal students in the hopes of nurturing pride in their identity fail to focus on the connection between economic relationships and cultural values. Imagine the impact of a social studies curriculum that allowed Aboriginal pupils to understand that their ancestors

...lived in egalitarian, communal societies, free of governments, magistrates and police. Everyone enjoyed a high degree of personal autonomy and social responsibility alongside consensus-based group independence. Class distinctions arising from property relationships did not exist. Each person developed a very diversified balance of mental and physical skills and fully participated in all general spheres of human endeavour. All facets of industry and technology were locally pursued, controlled, and integrated. Communities produced what they consumed and consumed all that they produced. Thus, there was complete social and economic independence and balance (Russ Rothney, *Native Economy Before the Arrival of European Commerce*, Metis Economic Development Training Program and All-Chiefs' Budget Committee: Budget and Financial Analysts Training Program, unpublished, 1983, p.1).

Without this understanding how can parents and teachers effectively deal with the 'noble savage' commercial imagery used to sell "cures" for arthritis and to convince girls to buy Pocahontas paraphernalia? ⁴ How can Aboriginal young people feel positive about themselves without making historical sense out of the social crisis that weighs heavily on so many of their families. In addition to helping to offset self-doubt among Aboriginal students, historical knowledge also can foster self-respect through interest and pride in the egalitarian, self-reliant economies and culture of their ancestors and through fascination with the intricate material culture developed over the centuries.

⁴ Recent TV marketing of medication for arthritic pain using the stereotyped 'noble savage' imagery and, Walt Disney's marketing campaign of an animated film and related paraphernalia using a female "princess" version of a 'noble savage'.

The future of Aboriginal communities, rural and urban, depends heavily on the extent to which Aboriginal young people develop confidence in who they are and where they come from, and on the extent to which community values can re-gain economic prominence. As the stakes involved in the tension between community and commercial values grow bigger and bigger, and more and more global, narrow commercial priorities are being increasingly challenged. It is heartening to see a variety of examples of the renewal of community-based economics, both within and beyond Aboriginal communities.

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One of the Hundred: Reggio Inspirations in an Orff-Based Classroom

Sonja Wiens

If the people from Reggio Emilia used another art form such as music, would their work be as visible to the world? Would songs flow forth...? If the people from Reggio Emilia hired a dancer and built a dance studio in each school, would their thinking be visible through movement?
(Hertzog, 2001, p.5)

When one speaks of the hundred languages of children in a Reggio Emilia context, there is, of course, not an exhaustive list of the hundred (or thousand or ten thousand) ways in which children make meaning. One can only assume that if there were, however, not only would music and movement be included on this list, but also that within each of these domains the many different ways in which children can express themselves and their ideas would be recognized. To include “music” as only one language is analogous to sweeping all the ways in which one can make meaning through drawing, painting and clay into one category and calling it “visual art”. As I begin to consider the many ways in which music and movement are used by young children in their play, interactions, and communication – through vocalization, singing, invention of song, manipulation of sounds and rhythm, exploration of the sounds that familiar objects create, clapping and body percussion, to name only a few – the expressive power and potential of these domains only seem to grow. Never having visited Reggio Emilia myself, it is difficult to know how much music and movement goes on in these schools; but one cannot know young children or be familiar with Reggio Emilia’s image of the child without believing that these elements must have a place somewhere in their programs. It is true that most of what one “sees” when studying the approach of Reggio Emilia is visual art; but is that perhaps simply a function of the fact that visual art is, as its name implies, visual, and therefore most easy to see?

When reading the literature and looking at pictures of Reggio Emilia, one can indeed see hints of music and movement related practice: children playing xylophone and cymbals while other children draw (Tarr, 2001, p. 34), percussion instruments present in classrooms, and allusions to musical games and dances being reinterpreted through drawing or sculpture (Forman & Fife, 1998). Although the absence of obvious musical practice in Reggio Emilia has been lamented by North American music educators and even referred to as “the void” (O’Hagin, 2007, p.207), I personally am not yet convinced that music and movement are not valued components of children’s learning in the Reggio Emilia setting. That visual art and graphic representations are more concrete than musical improvisation or creative movement could account for the fact that visual “languages” are more prevalent in the materials that we see coming from Reggio Emilia.

In the context of applying the ideas of Reggio Emilia to North American elementary schools, however, the question of “where’s the music?” (Andress, 1998, p.14) in the schools of Reggio Emilia is not an overly pressing concern to me. As a music specialist in a Canadian kindergarten to grade five school where Reggio Emilia ideas are being taken up more and more often in classrooms, my questions are: how can the languages of music and movement be brought more often into the Reggio Emilia inspired classrooms of my colleagues, and how can the inspiration of Reggio Emilia be incorporated into my own teaching of music?

In the context of my own exploration, the Reggio Emilia inspirations and questions which emerge for me at this time are:

- *The Image of the Child.* How is the image of the child reflected in my approach to students’ learning? Do the structures and processes of my classroom reflect a child

- who is strong and capable (Reggio Emilia inspiration) or a child who is weak and deficient (empty vessel model)?
- *The Environment as Third Teacher.* What role does my music classroom play in students' learning? Is it designed in such a way that students can engage and interact with the classroom space independently, as with a third teacher (Reggio Emilia inspiration), or in a way which necessitates that students be managed and controlled (traditional music model)?
 - *The Role of the Teacher.* What role do I play in the music classroom relative to students' learning? Am I acting primarily as a facilitator of students' own learning and interests and as a student of that learning (Reggio Emilia inspiration) or rather as a leader and/or entertainer (traditional music model)?
 - *Relationships.* Are the relationships with my students' classroom teachers those of collaborators and co-teachers working together to construct an understanding of children's learning through various languages (Reggio Emilia inspiration), or as separate agents with separate agendas (traditional music model)?

Reggio Emilia Inspirations and the Music Teacher

I can see two distinct ways in which musical practice and Reggio Emilia ideas can function in relationship with each other. The first involves making space for music and movement as languages of expression, communication and learning within the Reggio Emilia inspired classroom setting. For me, this means creating possibilities for children to use movement and music as ways in which they make meaning and express their understanding of their learning across a wide variety of subject areas. For example, children might create a piece

of music to depict the metamorphosis of a butterfly, dance the water cycle, or interpret a mathematical concept through sound. In this context, music and movement are being used as tools or media through which children can explore and represent learning. Although an understanding of how music and movement work is necessary to enable this exploration or representation, musical learning is not the ultimate goal of the activity. This is similar to the way in which visual art media often functions in a Reggio Emilia classroom; the purpose is “to advance thinking and present challenges” (Hertzog, 2001, p. 5) and to give children a vehicle for their ideas.

The second way in which I see music and Reggio Emilia ideas functioning together is in the exploration and deepening of actual musical concepts. For me, this involves taking up the ideas of Reggio Emilia (particularly those of environment as third teacher and teacher as facilitator, provocateur and student) in the context of the music room in order to further children’s musical understanding. In this construct music is not so much the language of communication as the subject of inquiry, and therefore, could be explored and represented by any of children’s one hundred languages. It is likely, of course, that the languages used in these musical explorations will indeed be music or movement related: for example, using movement to illustrate a rhythmic pattern, or using the classroom instruments to explore high and low sounds. However, it is just as possible that visual art media or other graphic representation could be used to represent musical understandings or to interpret musical ideas: using clay to represent the various positions of a dance, for example, or drawing to express the form of a composition. The musical skills and understandings developed in this scenario would in turn support students’ ability to use music as a language of expression, representation and interpretation in their

classroom explorations, much as art techniques are explored in Reggio ateliers in order to familiarize students with “the grammars of different materials” (Rankin, 1998, p. 236).

Revisiting the Orff Approach: How does it fit?

Pursuing either of these constructs (Reggio Emilia inspirations through the lens of music, or music instruction through the lens of Reggio Emilia) has natural implications for the school music specialist and for the way music is explored and put into practice in the school setting. In this light, I would like to explore the Orff-based approach currently practiced in many North American schools (including my own) and the way that this approach may or may not resonate with the Reggio Emilia inspirations I have already outlined.

What is now commonly referred to as the Orff Approach (or the Orff/Keetman Approach, named after its co-creators) is a whole-child approach to music education developed by German composer Carl Orff and his colleague Gunild Keetman. Interestingly, Orff’s original interest was not so much in the musical development of young children, but rather simply in finding what he called an “elemental music.” He later defined it in this way:

What then is elemental music? ...It is music that one makes oneself, in which one takes part not as a listener, but as a participant...Elemental music is never music alone but forms a unity with movement, dance and speech. Elemental music is near the earth, natural, physical, within the range of everyone to learn it and experience it and suitable for the child. (Orff & Murray, 1964)

Orff began his search for this elemental music and for a new way to teach music along with avant-garde dancing colleagues at a school for young adults. “Without considering in any way what had previously been accomplished in this field, I wanted to tackle the problem in **my** way. This meant that the starting point was an artistic one, rather than a purely educational one” (Orff, 1978, p. 7). Although starting from a strong ideological place, a series of almost mythical developments influenced the foundations of the Orff approach. The ubiquitous “Orff

instruments” of today’s music room, for example, were originally created when two Swedish globe-trotting sisters, whom Orff had met once and who had intrigued him with their pictures of Javanese gamelans, mysteriously sent him an African xylophone from their travels. The sisters included a note reading simply “Good Luck!” and were never heard from again (Goodkin, 2002). In the aftermath of World War II, the Orff instruments and the application of Orff’s elemental music ideals eventually found their way to children and classrooms, where they are still being interpreted and re-invented to this day.

The Orff Approach is built on the premise that all children are inherently musical and are naturally able and inclined to respond to the world around them through song, sound and movement. The approach is designed to nurture this innate musical understanding in a developmental and active way by building on the rhymes, songs and games of childhood, as well as on the musical experience that children bring to the classroom. Child-centred play and experimentation, song, speech (i.e. chant, rhyme, poetry, and unsung vocal sounds), movement (encompassing creative movement and dance), and instrumental play are united under the umbrella of exploration and improvisation. In essence, children are invited to learn about music by making music. Through observation of the child and scaffolding of experience, teachers lead children to what Doug Goodkin (1998) calls the “edge of discovery”, where they are able to uncover and explore musical concepts for themselves.

This approach has many elements in common with the approach taken by educators in Reggio Emilia. The image of the child in the Orff Approach, for instance, is not of an empty vessel, but rather of a child who arrives in the classroom rich with potential, experience, curiosity and knowledge. The environment is equipped with child-friendly (not childish) instruments and materials, which are aurally enchanting, visually appealing and equally accessible and satisfying

to both the sophisticated and novice musician. In the Orff approach, the teacher's role is that of facilitator and guide, one who creates opportunities and provocations for children to use the skills and understanding they have to make music. From that point, the teacher finds ways to help deepen and extend their understanding and skills.

The social construction of knowledge is another element inherent in the approaches of both Orff and Reggio. Just as Reggio Emilia's small group projects enable children to construct and negotiate ideas together, in an Orff class children are invited to create music together. The children build collaboratively on each other's ideas and each make contributions to the whole. In both of these contexts, collaborative experiences enable children to "realize that the world is multiple and...discover how satisfying it is to exchange ideas and thereby transform their environment" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 94).

Interestingly, one area in which Carl Orff was unsatisfied at the end of his life was the fact that at that time, the Orff approach (which he called "Music for Children"), although prevalent in Europe music schools and conservatories, had not yet been taken up by the school system in general. In 1978, Orff wrote that the Orff approach had:

not yet found the place where it belongs, the place where it can be most effective and where there is the possibility of continuous and progressive work and where connections with other subjects can be explored, developed and fully exploited. This place is the school. 'Music for Children' is for the school. (p. 245)

This belief that music-making in its many forms belongs interwoven with other subjects in the school context, seems philosophically similar with the Reggio Emilia idea of informing and representing one's learning through many languages.

In terms of the development and "making conscious" of musical skills and concepts, the Orff approach does seem to follow a more linear progression than one might see in the schools of Reggio Emilia. (It could probably be argued, however, that although the areas of study in Reggio

Emilia are emergent rather than prescribed, art techniques themselves are still presented and taught in a relatively developmental progression, [Herzog, 2001, Rankin, 1998] much as the grammar of music is taught in the Orff approach.) Another difference between the two approaches is one of documentation. Orff experiences (perhaps by virtue of the aural nature of music) tend to happen mainly “in the moment” and are not routinely subject to the discussion, deconstruction and documentation which accompany experiences in Reggio Emilia.

Carl Orff’s hope that his “Music for Children” would eventually find its way into schools has become a reality and brings us to the way in which the Orff approach manifests itself in North American schools today. In Manitoba, at least, it would be hard to find an elementary school that is not equipped with the Orff instruments. It would also be hard to find a music specialist who has not had at least some exposure to the basic principles of the Orff approach. Most teachers use the body percussion and echo techniques that Carl Orff developed, and many use the developmental progression of melodic and rhythmic concepts evidenced in the books that he and Gunild Keetman created. (Incidentally, these books of instrumental pieces, songs, chants and rhythmic exercises were originally created as examples from which it was hoped that teachers and students would then create their own music, not as the “repertoire” of the approach [Goodkin, 2002].) In keeping with Orff’s belief that children’s musical education should spring from what they know, much of this work has been adapted to a North American, English-language context (and more and more from a multi-cultural perspective). I think that Carl Orff would appreciate these adaptations, as he said at an address to music educators at the opening of the Orff Institute in 1963, “I have done my part: now you do yours” (Orff, 1977). Having been handed the torch in this way freed future Orff educators to re-create the approach in their own contexts, but it also posed a challenge. As Doug Goodkin (2002) has written:

Those of us of the second, third or fourth generation who have inherited the full-blown plant must recreate that journey in our own time and place if we're to catch the spirit (of that original) step off the path of what has been done into the dark forest of possibility, equipped with a relentless curiosity, an artistic sensibility and a strong determination to experiment. (p. 4)

Although I think Carl Orff would be pleased to see the degree to which the Orff approach has been embraced in the schools of North America, I think he might be troubled by the fact that what began as a creative, organic and holistic approach to making music now increasingly resembles a method. (He would probably also be disturbed by the people for whom "Orff" simply means doing a xylophone unit once a year, a misconception similar to believing that by redecorating one's classroom and placing baskets of natural materials around the room, one is "doing" Reggio Emilia.) Perhaps in answer to the structure of a 30 minute music class or perhaps due to large class sizes, a typical "Orff lesson" seems to increasingly follow a very teacher-directed format. Although it could be argued that children are still learning by doing and that the teacher may be building on what the children know, the element of discovery and emergent curriculum which was inherent in Orff's original approach is oftentimes missing in these North American Orff interpretations. There also appears to be an increasing reliance on pre-packaged materials as musical sources, rather than a co-construction of material between students and teacher. One wonders how much of children's own interests and experiences can be truly reflected and pursued in a lesson which is based around material chosen by the teacher for instructional reasons ("we're ready for the half note!") or seasonal influences ("time for the pumpkin game!"). Additionally, although the nursery rhymes, singing games and children's songs that continue to form the basis of Orff repertoire were once representative of the out-of-school musical experience of most children, many children no longer come to school already knowing these songs, games and rhymes. This creates a disconnection between current practice and original intention. That is, although these rhymes and songs are still developmentally

appropriate for young music learners, they no longer serve the purpose of allowing children to discover what they already know about music through the use of familiar material.

Something else to consider when examining the Orff approach in the constructivist context of Reggio is the idea of “music *for* children” as opposed to “music *of* children”. The former implies a music that is designed (most likely by adults) with children in mind, whether it be to teach them, amuse them, interest them or stimulate them. In this category one would place the aforementioned songs, nursery rhymes, singing games, and other similar “child-friendly” music. Music *of* children, on the other hand, implies music which is actually created by children and is reflective of their musical understanding. This music is very different from “adult” music or adult-created “children’s” music (much like the drawing or writing of children differs from the drawing and writing of adults). However, for some reason the music of children seems to be much more suspect in the eyes of adults than children’s expression through other media (Upitis, 1991). “Adults are accustomed to recognize musical production of children according to arbitrary standards of their own...rejecting most of what is real music for the child” (Moorhead & Pond, 1978, p. 32). Research of children’s free-play in musical settings indicates not only that what children do when given the opportunity to explore freely differs greatly from the sorts of musical engagements which teachers may themselves choose for children (Smithrim, 1997), but also that groups with no adult intervention tend to exhibit more sophisticated and original musical behaviours than children who are guided or aided by adults in their music-making (Tarnowski & Leclerc, 1994). This research resonates with the experience of Reggio Emilia and has enormous implications for those seeking to construct an understanding of children’s musical learning. As O’Hagin (2007) states, “The art of music should not be limited to a product as

narrowly defined as a composition... We may want to discuss what musical thinking and musical behaviour are, especially in constructivist practice” (p. 205).

Implications for Practice

Despite the fact that in my own practice I do endeavour to embody the original principles of the Orff approach, and despite the fact that I do believe that I see my students as strong, capable, and musically able, I increasingly question the teacher-directedness of my own lessons. I wonder if my students are getting enough opportunities to pursue their own areas of interest and to explore and discover musical concepts independently. I wonder if the large group format in which our lessons often take place allows for the same level of experimentation, critical thinking and social construction of knowledge that small group projects might facilitate. I wonder how I can make more intentional opportunities to “revisit” and build on our musical experiences. I have also begun to wonder if the rules of my classroom and structure of the environment are truly conducive to exploration of, and creation with, musical ideas.

Meanwhile, outside of the music room, although I know that my Reggio-inspired colleagues value music and would like to (and in some cases do) provide musical opportunities for meaning-making in their classrooms (that is, using music to represent, interpret and express learning), many factors (among them a lack of confidence, a perceived lack of “expertise”, logistical concerns, and lack of resources) often seem to conspire to keep musical explorations out of classrooms. This makes me regret the role of “prep-provider” in which music specialists are inevitably cast in our schools. The fact that classroom teachers receive their preparation time while their students are in music class works against the possibility for co-teaching or

collaboration between classroom teacher, music teacher and students, either in the classroom or the music room.

What could Reggio Emilia inspirations through the lens of music, or music instruction through the lens of Reggio Emilia, look like? Considering the concerns I have listed above, I think there are several ways in which I could take up the inspirations of Reggio Emilia to deepen and extend musical learning and expression, both in the music room and in the greater context of our school. Beginning in my own classroom, I would like to adapt and redesign the environment in order to better facilitate independent exploration with musical instruments, musical concepts, and musical expression, essentially creating a musical version of the Reggio Emilia atelier as imagined here by Isabel O’Hagin (2007):

The music atelier should be a space rich in material, tools, and people with professional skills. It should be visually appealing and arranged so that children can easily access musical materials and have free, open space for movement exploration. A variety of musical instruments, everyday objects, and natural materials can be available for sound exploration. (p. 206)

In the context of our school’s music room, I would like to find more ways to build authentically on children’s real musical interests and backgrounds, although I imagine this could create some cognitive dissonance from a pop-culture perspective. Further, I would like to find ways to encourage the “music of children” as much as “music for children.” To this end, I would like to provide my students with more opportunities for free play, as well as opportunities to bring the ideas, interests and discoveries that come up during these explorations back to our whole group for collective development and discussion. Documentation of these free-play times and the subsequent discussions would be an important part of my own research, and would offer students the opportunity to revisit their thinking and musical exploration.

Following the explorations going on in the music room, I would like to find space to take appropriate musical provocations back to the students' classrooms, and to work with interested classroom teachers to create music areas (or a portable collection of instruments and resources) which could be accessed by students to support their in-class explorations and to represent their classroom learning through music. I would like to think creatively about time schedules in order to create spaces for communication and collaboration with the classroom teacher; spaces in which we could create appropriate musical invitations for the classroom, share feedback on the interests/needs/musical ideas which arise during our respective explorations, create opportunities for co-teaching, and, ideally, enable me to work with small groups of children on small group projects which develop classroom inquiries through music or explore musical ideas in more depth.

Implementing all or any of these ideas will be contingent on the will to rethink structures – particularly those of time and space – and to rethink relationships between colleagues in order to facilitate opportunities for co-teaching, collaboration, and work with small groups on specific inquiries. It also will necessitate trust in the ability of my students to learn what they need to learn and to go where they need to go, without my constant direction and manipulation. I will have to let go of the role of teacher as slightly bossy co-participant, and to recast myself in the drama of my students' learning as an observer, provocateur and student. Above all, it will require me to follow Loris Malaguzzi's (1998) advice: "Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 82).

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Documentation as Advocacy: Making a Culture of Childhood Visible

Catherine Paul-Sawatzky

Reggio Emilia invites educators to explore their image of the child and to ask how this image is reflected in practice. After all, our view or understanding of the child and our pedagogy emerge within contexts of culture, teaching experience and human interaction. As such, our image of the child and our evolving pedagogy must be recognized as dynamic and fluid in nature. Viewing the child and education in this light challenges us as educators to reconsider some of our own preconceptions which assume that children are empty vessels who need to be filled with knowledge or that learning may be encapsulated between the covers of a prescribed curriculum document. As teachers, our image of the child, and therefore our ideas about the purpose of education may expand beyond traditional models. In this article, I intend to foreground the essential role that context and relationships have in constructing both our intentional and our *unintentional* image of the child. My purpose is to suggest how we as educators may create a valued space for discourse about our image of the child to challenge some of our preconceived definitions of education and to support children's social construction of knowledge. Creating this space is an act of advocacy which values the 'image of the child' as a competent, creative, and resourceful human being.

Why Advocacy?

When considering my own image of the child, I have been inspired by Rinaldi's recognition of the child, and of childhood itself, as situated not only within the educational context, but also within society. Rinaldi (2007) states:

Each child born is a 'could be' of humanity...The child is not a citizen of the future; he is a citizen from the very first moment of life and also the most important citizen, because he represents and brings the 'possible'...The child is a bearer, here and now, of rights, of values, of culture: The culture of childhood. (p. 171)

If we honour the right of the competent child to be an active, valued citizen, we must consider how this child is visible in our systems of education and in our society. We need to consider critically whether the voice we honour in our schools is in fact the authentic voice of the competent, creative, resourceful child, or the 'assumed' voice of the child, constructed often without thoughtful intention by 'adult others' or input from the child him/herself. It is this quest to honour the child as an active, valued citizen, a 'most important citizen' that calls for advocacy.

Gandini refers to a need for "citizens to know about the rich culture of childhood and its right to flourish and be sustained through advocacy" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). I understand advocacy as the active support of an idea or cause. I choose to put the emphasis on "active" and to define the idea or cause as the rights of children, hence the value of a culture of childhood within our educational landscape. Reggio educators stress that this culture of childhood cannot actually be considered outside of the context of relationships, culture, or the larger society. The Reggio Emilia approach is described as a system of communication, where the child, teacher, and parents all enter into relationships of reciprocity as protagonists (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998, p. 8). The active role of all three protagonists can be viewed as "participatory democracy (which) assert(s) that people can and should speak out 'as protagonists' on behalf of

themselves and their group, on the basis of their own experience and at their own level of consciousness” (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 8). As a protagonist, the teacher has an essential role in communicating, negotiating and socially constructing new understanding within relationships with children, parents, and society. The teacher may make this process visible through documentation. The visibility of the knowledge and experience of the competent child may engage other protagonists in reflective conversations about the child or the culture of childhood. By understanding that the culture of childhood is socially constructed through the reciprocal relationships of all the protagonists, one may advocate for an educational and societal space, a public space, where a shared image of the child as a bearer of rights, here and now, may emerge.

Of the preschools in Reggio, Rinaldi states, “the school is not isolated from society but an integral part of it” (Gandini in Edwards et. al, 1998, p.164). In Reggio Emilia, the connection between the school and the larger society is made publicly visible. Documentation can be found on the walls of walkways within the community, in the market square where the classroom may be transported for the day, or in the ‘gifts’ of documentation left behind at the many “incursions” (Nimmo, 1998, p. 306). These incursions occur within the community where children and teacher visit and construct understanding in relationship to people and places in their lived community. Although most people would agree that our schools are an integral part of our society, I argue that we need to look critically at whether our schools are in fact *reflective* of our society. Upon closer consideration, we might find our schools to be functioning largely in isolation of the larger community.

Malaguzzi (1998) suggests that our school space is “a sort of aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and culture of the people who live within it” (p. 177). In my mind, this assertion raises the question: how is our socially constructed culture of childhood mirrored in our

schools? If we believe a culture of childhood honours the image of the child as a rich, could-be of humanity, is this culture in fact *lived* in our schools?

Rinaldi (2007) suggests that, “childhood, we know, is a cultural interpretation and construction. Every society, and every historical period, defines its own childhood, what is meant by, expected of, and dedicated to childhood” (p. 91). This idea of childhood, as a cultural interpretation and construction, invites us to consider what is dedicated to childhood and to name or make visible what we value. As such, one has to question whether what is visible in our context (our schools in Manitoba for example, or in our larger society), is an accurate reflection of how we define our image of childhood. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) suggest:

we have choices to make about who we think the child is, and these choices have enormous significance since our construction of the child and early childhood are productive, by which we mean that they determine the institutions we provide for children and the pedagogical work that adults and children undertake in these institutions. (p. 43)

This speaks to the need to advocate for making visible a culture of childhood that is socially constructed by the protagonists (child, teacher, parent, society) with *thoughtful intention*.

Documentation as Advocacy

Educators of Reggio Emilia believe that documentation has the potential to be “a true act of democratic participation” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 122). In considering what we value in our educational context, we need to ask how our image of the child is made visible there. Rinaldi (1998) asserts that the school has “both the right and the duty to make the culture of childhood visible to the society as a whole, in order to provoke exchange and discussion” (p. 122).

Documentation may serve as the invitation or provocation for this exchange and discussion that is only possible through the essential relationships between the protagonists.

What is Documentation?

Gandini (1998) offers the following overview of what documentation looks like in

Reggio preschools:

These displays include the teacher's reflections, and next to the children's work, photographs that tell about the process, plus a description of the various steps and evolution of the activity or project. These descriptions are meaningfully completed with the transcription of the children's own remarks and conversation (often tape recorded) that went along with a particular experience. Therefore, the displays, besides being well designed and contributing to the general pleasantness of the space, provide documentation about specific activities, the educational approach, and the steps of its process. (p. 175)

Documentation not only makes visible the learning process of the child and the teacher, but also demonstrates to children the value placed on their work. Documentation that moves beyond bulletin boards or portfolios of finished products provides both a visual representation of the *process* of learning through interpersonal relationships, and "a visible trace that supports learning and teaching, making them reciprocal because they are visible and shareable" (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 100). Documentation approached in this way represents or interprets learning, and may actually *generate* learning through this process of sharing. The sharing process can occur with teachers, children, parents, or the community/larger society. As such, documentation is a way to not only recollect or remember, but also an impetus for reflection and reconstruction of understanding.

Pedagogical documentation gives the protagonists the opportunity to create their own meaning within contexts, rather than accepting predetermined, or sweeping assumptions about the child or his/her learning. "Rather than rely on some standardized measure of quality, as in the discourse of quality, pedagogical documentation enables us to take responsibility for making our meanings and coming to our own decision about what is going on" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 145). As educators negotiate documentation in relationship with the other protagonists, they can reflect on the visibility of what they believe to be true both in their practice and in their

documentation. “Pedagogical documentation enables us to reflect critically on whether these ideas (of honouring the competent child) are just at the level of talk or whether they are being put into practice and, if so, in what way are they understood?” (Dahlberg et. al, 2007, p. 153)

If we consider advocacy as active support of a culture of childhood, documentation can serve as a place of reference that makes visible the active participation of the teacher and child in co-constructing understanding through relationships and communication. This participation honours the competent child as it serves as a “point of strength that makes timely and visible the interweaving actions of the adults and of the children; it improves the quality of communication and interaction. It is in fact a process of reciprocal learning” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 120). The process of reciprocal learning may also occur between other protagonists, for example teacher and parent, or teacher and community members, as they explore alternative ideas and theories about the child and pedagogy in their dialogue. In this way, the Reggio Emilia approach to documentation values the process of social construction of knowledge and makes this process visible and transparent.

Documentation as Advocacy for Teachers

Documentation can serve to makes teachers’ pedagogy more transparent and thus communicate what teachers value or honour in the context of a culture of childhood. It may clarify the essential relationship between the teachers and the children and emphasize the creative and deeply layered understandings that can be uncovered as teachers and children work together through the process of socially co-constructing knowledge. “Through documentation we leave traces that make it possible to share the ways children learn” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121). Documentation of this process of meaning making through many creative and expressive modes

of representation and understanding, may help others to see the potential of the competent, resourceful child. Allowing other protagonists a glimpse into the thinking and theories of children, as well giving them a voice in socially constructing an understanding of this culture of childhood, is essential if we are to move beyond a traditional, transmission model image of the teacher. This glimpse at the competent child may be a first step in informing and advocating to parents, members of our community, administrators, curriculum developers or policy makers. As teachers, our documentation can make visible the learning that emerges through the social co-construction of knowledge.

Documentation gives teachers a voice in advocacy for the child as it creates a space for teachers to dialogue, think critically and reflect with each other – essential processes for supporting a pedagogy that honours a culture of childhood. Documentation therefore creates a space for “the *study of study* that defines the discourse that supports negotiated learning” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 254). As teachers participate together in this *study of study*, they are engaged in a common experience or discourse from which they can collaborate and reflect. It is in this space of collaboration and reflection that teachers may experience the necessary cognitive dissonance to challenge assumptions, support learning, and construct a pedagogy that is reflective of the competent child. Teachers may rethink their image of the child, as they reflect on how that image is, or is not, reflected in practice. Documentation within these teacher relationships requires “dialogue with other pedagogues in which multiple perspectives can be introduced, discussed and confronted. In this way, the process can be a way of problematizing one’s own understandings and a way of ‘working together across differences’” (Dahlberg et. al, 2007, p. 149).

In Reggio preschools documentation is seen as a form of professional development. Viewing documentation in this way challenges educators to reconsider their notions of professional development opportunities. Often professional development is offered to teachers from an ‘expert other,’ and is viewed by teachers as being ‘top down’ or another ‘add on’ to our already full plates. In Reggio preschools however, the teacher’s experience and voice is valued, as is the importance of dialogue and the social construction of knowledge by teachers in relationship with each other. Structures are in place within the school day to allow teachers time to review documentation and collaborate on pedagogy. Teachers are recognized as invaluable resources to each other. Teachers are therefore not viewed solely as consumers of research or professional development, but are valued as producers of research. Systematic documentation “allows each teacher to become a producer of research, that is, someone who generates new ideas about curriculum and learning, rather than being merely a consumer of certainty and tradition” (Edwards, 1998, p. 186). As a researcher with the structures in place to participate in a shared discourse around the competent and creative child, teachers in this Reggio environment can work together to honour the culture of childhood in their pedagogy and relationships with children.

The use of documentation can serve to advocate for a space for teachers to negotiate their own role in the context of the culture of childhood in which they are teaching. Through documentation, “the teacher intervenes, joins with the children in their experiences and activity, and facilitates or provokes the next occasions for learning – always in negotiation with the children and on the basis of agreement with them” (Edwards, 1998, p. 185). In this way, teachers are truly co-constructing their role as teacher in relationship with the child. The teacher’s role is based on their contextual experiences, negotiations and relationships, and not on arbitrarily

imposed criteria of what role a teacher should play, or a prescribed role, for example as outlined in a teacher manual or resource guidebook.

Using documentation can make visible not only the learning and thinking of children, but also the process of reflection and dialogue amongst teachers. Making this process of collaboration and social construction of knowledge amongst teachers visible and shareable, advocates for the fundamental role this process plays in enriching pedagogy. When this process of professional dialogue, research and pedagogical co-construction is seen as integral to the education of the competent child, perhaps it will no longer be relegated to hallway conversations, lunchtime meetings, or often interrupted and impromptu after-school gatherings, or in some instances, relegated to nonexistence. Through making our attention to dialogue and collaboration shareable, we may advocate for the structures, budgetary considerations, and time necessary to support and sustain this kind of invaluable pedagogical dialogue. “Discussing, offering your own ideas, taking advantage of others’ ideas and constructing together with the same dynamics as those of the children is a wonderful opportunity for one's own thinking” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 131). Therefore, the opportunity for teachers to socially construct knowledge together advocates for their own participation in the very process of inquiry and knowledge construction one would encourage in students.

Documentation as Advocacy for Reconceptualizing Curriculum

The use of pedagogical documentation as a means of communication and strengthening learning relationships, allows the protagonists (teachers, parents, members of society) to reconsider their conceptions of curriculum. With its allowance for multiple interpretations of understanding and socially constructed learning, the process of documentation challenges a

traditional or modernist view of education that assumes that there are universal truths, or that knowledge may be simply transmitted from teacher (the ‘knower’) to child (the ‘empty vessel’).

Documentation that moves beyond a bulletin board of photographs or finished products makes the multi-layered process of socially constructing understanding more transparent. As such, it creates a shareable space for negotiation which in turn can serve as an invitation to other protagonists into the minds and experiences of the competent child and into the collaborative process of an emerging curriculum. Malaguzzi (2008) describes this reconception of education as:

opposing any prophetic pedagogy which knows everything before it happens, which teaches children that every day is the same, that there are no surprises, and teaches adults that all they have to do is repeat that which they were not able to learn. (Reggio Alliance)

Curriculum therefore reflects the needs and interests of the children in a given time and space, and does not presume to limit the potential of a learning journey to a set of pre-determined outcomes.

In Reggio preschools, the sharing of knowledge by the competent, creative child is not limited to traditional or limited means of expression. The child is seen as having a hundred languages for creative expression which challenge a traditional image of curriculum as preparing children for the next grade, or meeting standards, or achieving outcomes, or as covering the basics. Documentation serves as a visual and valued space for children’s understanding to be represented in multiple ways. The hundred languages as captured in documentation “represent a strategy for the construction of concepts and the consolidation of understanding. But above all it is a declaration of the equal dignity and importance of *all* languages, not only writing, reading and counting” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 175). Making the languages of children visible through

documentation may open up the door for a shareable discourse around what children are capable of and how we may honour their potential through a negotiated curriculum.

Through documentation children are versed not only in the hundred languages, but are also given opportunities to develop their own ideas and identities independently and in relation to a group. Documentation allows the child to revisit and reconsider their thinking in relationship to the thinking of others, and in the context of their interrelations as they may socially co-construct and re-construct their understanding. As such, education in the context of this culture of childhood is never static or universal. Instead, it continuously evolves with the experiences, relationships and ideas of the competent child and his/her surrounding protagonists.

Documentation can propel the protagonists' interactions with a child to a new conception of education and curriculum that expands beyond a transmission model and advocates visibly for a "pedagogy of listening" (Dahlberg et. al, 2007, p. 60). Rinaldi (as quoted in Dahlberg et al., 2007) describes this pedagogy as "an approach based on listening rather than speaking" (p. 60). Pedagogical documentation requires the teacher to listen carefully and socially co-construct understanding in relationship with the children, teacher colleagues, and potentially parents. When documentation is negotiated in this way through relationships, a conceptualization of curriculum becomes more about meaning making within a culture of childhood and less about informing or transmitting knowledge assumed by adult 'knowers' to be relevant to the child.

It is evident as one examines documentation from Reggio preschools, that each of the protagonists has had a voice in the social construction of knowledge. Each of these voices exists in relationship with another, and thus education is conceptualized as existing beyond the "teaching-learning relationship" (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 67). A traditional view of the teaching-learning relationship assumes that there are two individual participants, thus negating the social

construction of knowledge within a group. Documentation can therefore highlight the generative quality of a group for creating new ideas or renegotiating pre-existing ideas. Rinaldi (2007) proposes that a school should be “first and foremost, a context of multiple listening. This context of multiple listening, involve[s] the teachers but also the group of children and each child, all of whom can listen to others and listen to themselves” (p. 67).

The process of documentation advocates for the understanding that a negotiated curriculum is essential in making learning meaningful for the competent child. As such, the time and space for contemplation, analysis and theorizing must be made more readily available within our educational structures. Educators in Reggio preschools have reconceptualized their curriculum and moved beyond the child-centered approach which implies the child is an “autonomous and decontextualized being” (Dahlberg et. al, 2007, p. 59). The Reggio approach to curriculum is centered on relationships and refers to learning as “child originated and teacher framed” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 240). This curriculum is viewed as socially constructed within multiple relationships and not exclusively within the child-teacher relationship. Documentation invites the protagonists to enter into a “co-constructivist curriculum, (where) the teachers form a community of learners with the children and with the parents and other teachers” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 240).

The role of documentation in this reconceptualization of education values the importance of “knowledge of knowledge” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 126). Documentation provides the medium for this knowledge of knowledge and situates one of curriculum’s primary tasks in helping “the child or group of children learn how to learn, fostering their natural predisposition toward relationships and the consequent co-construction of knowledge” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 126).

Documentation as Advocacy for the Child

Above all, the process of documentation advocates for the competent child by honouring his/her voice. As children negotiate, revisit and interpret documentation with the teacher and other children, they are able to “express their differences and be receptive to the differences of others” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 67). Furthermore, documentation provides a space for the child to “revisit and reinterpret their own experiences of the events in which they were the direct protagonists” (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 130). This opportunity invites the child to identify or re-identify him/herself in relationship to others and through negotiating new understandings. This experience

... produces new cognitive dynamics, a new and different vision of oneself and one’s actions in relation to others...(and) creates that sort of disorientation that opens the way to amazement doubt and desire to know more and to know ourselves better. (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 130)

Honouring the competent child requires such opportunities for children to negotiate their identity and understanding of the world around them in relationship with others.

Documentation advocates for the rights of the child as an active protagonist in the social construction of knowledge, thus respecting the child as a “knower” who can be both a learner and a teacher. This honours a competent, contributing child. Documentation also allows the child to be reflective, which recognizes that “knowledge is never verifiable through listening or observation alone, but rather it gains clarity through negotiated analysis of the communication process itself” (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 239). The process of communication creates a forum for children to socially co-construct and reconsider or renegotiate their understanding in relationship with others. Documentation is therefore not only a place for us to understand childhood, but a place for a child to understand him/herself in the context of a culture of childhood.

Documentation values process over product and the social construction of knowledge over the transmission of knowledge from adult to child. Documentation honours the wonder and inquiry of the competent, creative child, which cannot be formally evaluated, nor can it authentically unfold in a product-driven approach. Further, documentation provides a visible and shareable space for the hundred languages of children to emerge. Thus, the wonder and inquiry inherent in the competent child are nurtured by meaningful pedagogy and enriched by the collaborative opportunities afforded by pedagogical documentation.

Documentation advocates for the rights of the competent child as it invites educators to evaluate critically how their image of the child is reflected in their practice. This is not only significant for helping teachers to improve pedagogy, but is in fact essential to honouring the child as a bearer here and now of rights. Within a culture of childhood, the child has the right to an education and an educator who reflects his/her ideas, values, interests and needs.

Pedagogical documentation allows for the social construction of knowledge to become visible in a public space. By making that which we value shareable and negotiable through documentation, we can enter into a dialogue and socially construct an image of education, the teacher, and the child within our context. In this way, documentation as advocacy honours the fundamental relationships between teachers, parents and children, as they work together each day to build community.

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Catherine Paul-Sawatzky is currently a Grade 1 teacher at West St. Paul School and has been teaching for 7 years. She has been exploring the tenets of Reggio Emilia in dialogue with other early years colleagues over the past 4 years. The Reggio Emilia approach has inspired Catherine to consider her own image of the child and look critically at how the voices of children can be honoured in the daily life of the classroom through pedagogy and relationships.

Environment as a Third Teacher : Does our Classroom Space Mirror our Image of Child?

Jessica Dilts and Leanne Yeo

Our exploration of Reggio Emilia began during the 2007-2008 school year when we were welcomed to the staff of West St. Paul School. As teachers who were new to the Reggio Emilia approach we talked to experienced teachers, listened to the discussions and questions that came up at our Reggio meetings, and continued to learn more about the approach and the possibilities it presents. As the new school year approached we both turned our focus to one tenet of the Reggio Emilia approach: environment as the third teacher. We wanted to create classroom environments that optimized the organization and aesthetics of the space and that reflected our image of child, while honouring who we are as teachers and our educational beliefs. We wanted our spaces to provoke and inspire children as well as provide opportunities for children to use many of their hundred languages. This paper reflects our work in unpacking our thoughts, questions, and beliefs about our classroom spaces and how we have worked towards creating environments that can act as a child's third teacher.

Our Connection between Image of Child and Environment as the Third Teacher

Susan Fraser (2006), author of *Authentic Childhood*, summarizes that “respect for the image of the child as rich, strong, and powerful is fundamental to preparing an environment that allows the child to be actively engaged in the process of learning” (p. 103). While reflecting on this quote, we acknowledge this as a key goal for ourselves. We are working towards creating a space where children can participate, engage, internalize, and make connections from their

learning. During a presentation in a Reggio Emilia course we were taking at the University of Manitoba, we were asked to reflect on our image of child. To do this, we took into consideration the following questions: *Who is 'child' to us? What do children deserve to experience in their childhood?*

Reflecting on our image of the child is our first step as we begin to think and explore ways to create environments which can support and reflect our understandings of image of child. “The thought that goes into creating beautiful spaces for children reflects the belief that children deserve the very best and that their aesthetic sense needs to be nurtured in the early years” (Fraser, 2006, p. 103). Aesthetics was one of the initial concepts that we began exploring and reflecting on. Initially, we thought that to create a “Reggio space” we needed to make it look more appealing, try to bring some of the outdoor nature in, and to organize and de-clutter the space. As we began to learn more about Reggio Emilia however, we quickly realized that Reggio Emilia is not just about beautifying our classroom spaces, instead, we needed to consider the reasons *why* we are creating and organizing the space. “Creating an environment that acts as a third teacher supports the perspective that knowledge is constructed not in isolation but within the social group” (Fraser, 2006, p. 104) and that providing opportunities within that space for the co-construction of knowledge is integral (Fraser, 2006). We now understand that every decision we make regarding our classroom spaces must relate back to our understandings of image of child and our values that underlie those images.

“In Reggio, the space is made to respond to each group of children and teachers” (Wurm, 2005, p. 30). Therefore, the space evolves over time, and should do so to reflect what is happening in the classroom. Wurm believes that the space can be recreated or modified throughout the year, and that in this modification, new elements can be added to the space. These

elements may include art, music, physical or dramatic play, but they should be added to reflect the students' and the teacher's needs and interests. We realize that as our communities grow and change, the spaces will as well. We agree with Malaguzzi (1998) who writes that "children are not shaped by experience, but are the ones who give shape to it" (p. 86). The classroom space must support the building of relationships and sense of community. Curtis and Carter (2008) observed, "young children feel more relaxed in a homelike environment than in an institutional school setting" (p. 36). Creating an aesthetically pleasing and homelike classroom helps to promote forming of relationships. There is a "relationship between the quality of the space and the quality of the learning" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 77).

What does 'Environment as the Third Teacher' Mean?

Malaguzzi (quoted in Gandini, 1998) refers to space as "...a sort of aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the people who live within it" (p. 177). When making decisions about the physical space in the classroom, we realize that we must think carefully about how they reflect our beliefs and values. We want our environment to provide a "sense of well-being to children, educators, and families, and at the same time [to] favour[s] learning and exploration" (Gandini, 1998, p. 163). Environments have the ability to stimulate learning, curiosity, and should be "responsive to the children's input" (Fraser, 2006, p. 113). Lella Gandini (1998) explains that the organization of the space has the ability to spark feelings of comfort, a variety of learning and conversational possibilities, as well as promote relationships. We also want to create an environment that stimulates interaction, learning, exploration, discussion, and curiosity.

We began by exploring a wide variety of texts focusing on Reggio Emilia and environment as the third teacher. One text that we connect with is *Authentic Childhood*, where Fraser (2006) provides a brief summary the Reggio Emilia principles. Fraser states, “a number of principles, including aesthetics, active learning, collaboration, transparency, ‘bringing the outdoors in’, flexibility, relationship, and reciprocity, need to be addressed to create an environment that acts as a third teacher” (p. 108). By outlining and examining our own responses to ‘who is child’, and considering the principles stated by Fraser, we began to create our classroom environments.

Children are at the center of our teaching. We consider where children are coming from, what their interests are, and how to support their growth. We ask ourselves: *What is it we believe about children? How is this reflected in our classroom spaces?* The following are some of our key understandings of our image of the child and the subsequent implications for our space. We believe that by identifying our beliefs of image of the child, we can then develop a thoughtful and supportive space that reflects these beliefs.

Belief: Children are playful, happy, and energetic beings.

The child is playful, happy, and energetic when stimulated and provided with the time to explore and interact. Children have the ability to creatively play, have fun both independently and with others, explore and engage in their surroundings, and be active. They are engaged in the world around them and are motivated by their life surroundings. Our beliefs are reflected in Katz’s (1998) statement “children have an inherent desire to grow, to know, and to understand things around them” (p. 44).

What this means for our space: Elizabeth Jones (Stacey, 2009) states in *Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings*, that classrooms should be “places where there [is] space and time to make choices, and friends to negotiate problems and enjoy solutions with” (p. ix). When considering our spaces and how it can support this, we have reflected on aspects of space including the walls, physical organization, and creating a visually appealing area. We had the opportunity to have one of our rooms painted this year. When we were looking at the paint samples, we were considering how the colours can play a role in creating a welcoming, calming, and cheerful feeling in the classroom. The colours we chose reflect earth tones that include shades of browns and blues.

In our physical organization of furniture we deliberately included space for small, medium, and whole group areas. At the same time, we intended to create a space that is aesthetically pleasing and organized so that children can confidently find and use materials throughout the day. Our materials are organized, labelled and accessible for children to find, use, and put away. Talking about using, sharing, and cleaning up materials has become a part of ongoing classroom conversations to remind us that it is everyone’s responsibility to help take care of our space.

Belief: Children are engaged beings.

Children are engaged in and by their surroundings. We believe that it is a natural characteristic of children to be engaged in life, education, play, and conversations. We believe children are “competent and able to construct [their] learning either alone or with the support of others” (Fraser, 2006, p. 109). By providing materials children find interesting and activating their innate curiosity, this sense of engagement and exploration will come naturally. As new teachers, we are very familiar with classrooms that are filled with primary coloured furniture and

plastic toys. Yet after exploring principles of Reggio Emilia, we now ask ourselves, are we really promoting children's sense of wonder and curiosity by filling the classroom with artificial and cartooned items, primary coloured furniture and toys, and manufactured decorations?

What this means for our space: Imagine a classroom where wicker baskets contain a wide variety of beautiful materials of different textures, shapes, sizes, and colours that can be manipulated and explored. Through children's examination and play with these items, they can develop their thinking around certain materials and concepts. We provide a variety of mediums for children to use in their explorations and representations, such as clay, playdough, plasticine, pens, pencils, markers, pencil crayons, crayons, pastels, paint, wiki sticks, wire, light, water, shadows, and blocks. We agree with Malaguzzi's observation that "the wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences" (p. 79).

Belief: Children are creative beings.

Children are creative in expressing who they are, what they know, and what they are thinking. As we continue learning about Reggio Emilia, we have learned that there are many languages children use to represent their thoughts and understandings. We realize the need to keep in mind that "the more we resist the temptation to classify children, the more capable we become to change our plans and make available different activities" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p.79). Opening our minds to what children are capable of and where their interests lie, opens a world of possibilities that are not only enriching, but motivating and inspiring. This also speaks to the fact that when we are setting up our space we can only do so much without the children there. When the children are there, we can learn from their interests as well as the languages in which they best share their knowledge.

What this means for our space: Making the “range of possibilities” (Malaguzzi, 1998), such as dramatic play, clay, paint, beads, fabric, cork, seashells, pinecones, wire, and buttons, available to children in the classroom is integral to support their creative expression and to allow for greater means with which to display their understandings. Providing opportunities for children to creatively express themselves will create additional chances for them to make connections. It will thus provide us as teachers with new opportunities for observation, conversation, provocations, and documentation of the learning.

Recently, we have been asking ourselves questions about music in the classroom. We have many students in the classroom that share what they are capable of doing with music. We are collaborating with our music specialist to find ways to authentically incorporate music into our exploration time in our classroom.

Belief: Children are curious and thoughtful beings.

Children are not only curious by nature but are curious about the world around them. They constantly question, think, wonder, and explore. “Why?” is so often asked, and as educators we want to honour the children’s questions, take their hand, and join them in the journey of exploration to consider the various answers to their questions. The experience and the journey embarked on, when exploring a question, is incredibly valuable for children to experience. We value the curiosity, thought processes, and explorations a child’s mind will take. We also value children’s learning processes and thoughts so that they will continue to be inquisitive, knowledgeable, and creative, because as Malaguzzi (1998) comments, “through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning and how to learn” (p. 83).

What this means for our space: One aspect Reggio Emilia explores is bringing natural objects into the classroom. We have made sure to bring natural materials into our classrooms,

such as shells, leaves, twigs, feathers, flowers, pinecones and rocks, most of which was gathered with the students. Incorporating nature into the classroom by bringing the ‘outdoors in’ “heightens children’s awareness of the natural, physical, and social environments in which they live” (Fraser, 2006, p. 116), which in turn “helps to strengthen the children’s sense of belonging in the world” (Fraser, 2006, p. 116). It can also help them to make connections, value and respect their own community and culture (Fraser, 2006).

On the walls of the classroom is documentation of the children’s learning experiences which are available for children to revisit and reflect on. We provide children with opportunities to return to and revisit their work to show that we value the time, thought, and interest the child invested into it. We want each child to know that we value what they are wondering, thinking, and learning about.

Our students helped us to realize that we have not been providing enough space for them to leave their unfinished work. This leads us to ponder how we are demonstrating that we value the processes that they are taking in creating their projects and extending their learning. We recognize that neither of our classroom spaces offers children a good space where they can safely leave their unfinished work so that they can return to it. One of our current goals is to look at our spaces and see what can be changed in order to offer this kind of space to our students.

Belief: Children take care.

We believe children are respectful and responsible beings. They are respectful when being respected, and can show respect for one’s self as well as others and their surroundings. Children are responsible for their actions, their space, and their learning. Children should have the opportunity to foster these qualities, as well as practice and internalize them. Nimmo (1998) states that “emotions are a binding force; they add depth and breadth to the humanity of a

program” (p. 301). Respect is expected and supported in the classroom to reflect the value of the differences among children, while acknowledging that each individual is an important part of the greater community.

Malaguzzi (1998) summarized different types of situations that children can interact in, varying occasions for interaction, and multiple learning opportunities where the topics are derived from the interests presented by the students as important aspects of the classroom. As Rinaldi (quoted in Fraser, 2006) mentions, “the potential of children is stunted when the endpoint of their learning is formulated in advance” (p. 158). Believing that children can accomplish more, and have extensive potentials to learn about anything which interests them is part of our job as teachers. We need to find the way to support their interests, questions, and learning.

What this means for our space: We feel it is important that the room reflects respect for the learners, their families, and our colleagues. Fraser (2006) states that a classroom can “communicate respect for the families and community, as well as for the cultural background of the people involved in the program and in the community served by the school” (p. 115). The walls of our classroom reflect the members inside the classroom and school. We have a Classroom Family Album wall where children are invited to bring in and share pictures of their families before putting it up on the wall. The children’s work is up on the walls, and can be found around the room to reflect the value of their processes and thoughts. We are not only hoping to instill pride in the child of his/her work, but demonstrate our values of them as thoughtful, knowledgeable individuals.

We often reflect on where our spaces started, what they have come to look like now, and continue to look at future possibilities. When thinking back to the classrooms that we started with last year, we think of how the children used the space and the things in it. They all loved art

but the way we had our rooms organized, the art supplies could be found throughout the room. It does not surprise us now that the children were not making use of what was available to them. This year we set up a mini *atelier*, or mini art studio, in our classrooms. Accessibility was key when we were considering designing the space. The supplies needed to be visible and available for the children. The *atelier* is a sectioned off space in our rooms where the art supplies are stored in baskets with photos identifying the supplies found in that particular basket. With the supplies now organized and labelled, children can easily find what they need and put away what they use. We can see the success we are experiencing when materials are organized in sensible and appealing ways.

Belief: Children are learners.

Children are learners when they are provided with time to think and wonder. They constantly question and explore. As learners, they interact with others, are interested and intrigued in solving problems or answering questions that arise, and deserve time and opportunities to practice making connections and trying new things. Learning is not an individual task. It is a “cooperative and communicative activity, in which children construct knowledge, make meaning of the world, together with adults and, equally important, other children” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007, p. 50). When children see teachers as “interested in and open to discovering and learning along with them” (Gandini, 1998, p. 163), the role of learner is experientially defined in practice.

What this means for our space: As children express themselves and learn in social situations, it is important that we take time to look around our room. Children are social beings and need spaces to interact in a variety of ways--large groups, small groups, pairs, and

individually. We had to examine where these spaces were in our rooms. We asked ourselves, is there furniture in the room which will allow for these social relationships to flourish?

Fraser (2006) makes the connection between relationships and space by stating that “creating an environment that acts as a third teacher supports the perspective that knowledge is constructed not in isolation but within the social group” (p. 104). This social aspect allows for the co-construction of knowledge to occur. The room “needs to be designed to provide opportunities for the people involved to interact with one another and with the environment” (Fraser, 2006, p. 104) for this co-construction of knowledge to be possible. Ensuring there are spaces for whole group and small group interactions is important to make this possible. Using a variety of grouping for different activities provides additional opportunities to co-construct knowledge. This is made possible by different sizes and shapes of tables in the room. There are clipboards available if children need to do ‘field work’ where working at a table is not possible. There are also quiet, comfortable areas where children can go if they feel they need a moment to sit and think, either alone or with others.

To support the feeling of safety and security, we try to ensure the space is organized in such a way that things can be easily found and manipulated, acknowledge that everything in the space is for everyone to use, and make sure that children know that we are there to support as well as learn from them.

Belief: Children are teachers.

Children are teachers of those with whom they are in contact. They come to our classrooms with a wealth of knowledge that is willingly shared with others. In *The Hundred Languages of Children*, Nimmo (1998) explores the concept of children being “viewed as ‘resources’ to teach each others’ learning” (p. 302), and Edwards (1998) points out that they are

co-constructors of knowledge and that teachers and children share the control in the learning that is happening in the classroom (p. 182). Children are “capable of being independent if they are helped to value their own competencies” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 78). We feel that part of our job as educators is to support children in realizing their wealth of knowledge. We work towards supporting the ongoing development of independent, thoughtful and confident students, but we start by helping children to see their competencies.

There are several opportunities throughout the day where children are presented with a chance to interact and communicate with others. We believe that “through shared activity, communication, cooperation, and even conflict, children can co-construct their knowledge of the world using one child’s idea to develop another’s, or to explore a path yet unexplored” (Gandini, 1998, p. 170). Children are intrinsically motivated to interact with others to learn as well as to teach. Providing children with the space, time, and appropriate guidance will promote this kind of interaction and development in the classroom.

What this means for our space: We feel it is important to support the concept of children as teachers in the classroom not only by encouraging it and modelling what it looks like, but by selecting and arranging the space to “encourage children to pursue their interests and questions, represent what’s on their minds, and build strong relationships and love of learning” (Curtis & Carter, 2003, p. 15). New discoveries, connections, reflections, and past experiences are opportunities for children to teach each other, as well as teach adults. The classroom spaces, activities, and conversations provide opportunities for children to represent their values, understandings, and to reflect pride. We feel that the classroom space needs to provide areas for this to occur. We have large, carpeted, meeting areas where modelling, discussion, and whole group activities occur on a regular basis. Children can also perform the role of the teacher during

our daily activities in the classroom, when they support each other's learning. This can happen as they share their theories, ask each other questions and work together through challenges.

What this Means for Our Practice: Making use of exploration time during the day is an excellent way to stimulate children's playful curiosities. The use of imagination is an important part of learning in the classroom because "when imagination is valued and encouraged in all aspects of the curriculum, the classroom comes alive with the creative input of children and teachers" (Fraser, 2006, p. 252), thereby enriching the educational development of all involved. Allowing our children to be creative has meant that we have turned away from a product focus in our classrooms and focus instead on the process. Therefore, exploration time provides children with opportunities to explore a variety of materials, and use them in multiple ways to represent their understanding. Giving this time to play, explore, and interact helps children to build their social skills and problem solving skills, as well as provide them opportunities to explore the provocations put out for them.

Through our observations during exploration time, we develop an understanding of the children's interests, and consider opportunities to support further development. Rebecca New (1998) states that "play is highly valued for its ability to promote development" (p. 274). During the exploration time, we are listening, recording, questioning, suggesting, and reflecting on what we are seeing and hearing while children engage in meaningful play opportunities. When we take the time to observe children in their play, we can learn about what they believe and think about the world as well as the theories that they hold.

Engaging children in a space means learning to listen. This is a task that we have found very challenging. Fraser (2006) states that "listening attentively to what children are saying and

being able to follow up with questions that uncover the child's level of meaning are essential skills in implementing a negotiated learning approach to curriculum" (p. 165). Quite often we reflect upon the things we hear and wonder why it has captured our attention. We also consider what we have heard and what we can and should do about it to support children's interests and learning.

The language we use can help to extend the children's thinking by asking questions or sharing our own theories. It helps them see different perspectives, and works to support their understanding as well as extending their thoughts and theories. Using thoughtful language, modelling reflective thinking, and sharing our questions have become part of our everyday language. 'I wonder...', 'I think...', 'What if...', 'I have a connection...', and 'Tell me more', are examples of the kinds of language that we use with students in our rooms when engaging in different activities. Fraser (2006) states that "communicating with children means listening carefully to their ideas, participating with them in conversation, and documenting their experiences" (p. 56).

We are always working to support children's participation in the classroom. We are trying to support this by allowing for longer thinking times to provide time for children to formulate their thoughts, questions, or answers. To offer longer think times we always try to make sure that our exploration time is at least an hour in length each time we have it. The length of time is important because it allows the students the opportunity to submerge themselves in an experience, fostering deep thought and supporting wonderful questions. These large blocks of time not only allow think time but also ensure that the children have time to share their thoughts with each other.

Sharing circles demonstrate that we value the time and effort that the children put into their work. During sharing circles students may share something they are proud of, something that made them think, something that surprised them, or something that they are excited about. We make use of sharing circles, where students can share their thoughts, surprises, and things that they are proud of. Quite often these sharing opportunities happen before or immediately after exploration time. Sharing circles are always an important part of our days. They provide our students with an opportunity to present their knowledge or experiences to others and activate conversations that can support the children's inner learner and teacher. During sharing time, we discuss, listen, and share theories and ideas with the children about what is being explored and examined during exploration times. This is an ongoing challenge for us as we try to figure out the balance between having children support their own explorations and understandings, and determining when and how to step in to lend a hand.

Looking Forward

Every day we continue to examine and reflect about our spaces. We find ourselves looking at exploration time in our rooms and how this time is represented in our spaces. As we think critically about our own spaces, we continue to question purposefulness and how it might change to better reflect our image of child. We feel it is important to remember that our group of children will not be the same group of children that we will have in three months or six months-- children grow and change every day. In reflecting on adapting the space to suit the needs and interests of the class, Curtis and Carter (2008) remind educators that "shaping your environment with your philosophy and values doesn't mean things always stay the same. As children use the

space, continually consider whether it is working to support your objectives” (p. 38). A space that we arrange thoughtfully in September may not work in January.

We have tried throughout this school year to consider the environment “from a child’s point of view” (Curtis & Carter, 2003, p. 12), from our point of view as the teacher, and also from the parent’s perspective. We want our spaces to welcome, inspire, intrigue, and reflect respect for all who enter it. This is something that we will continue to work towards and reflect on.

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Leanne and Jessica began their Reggio journey one year ago when they joined the staff at West St. Paul School and are interested in continuing to develop their understandings of the key concepts around Reggio including explorations, image of child, documentation, and environment as the third teacher.