

Re-imagining Childhood

The inspiration of Reggio Emilia
education principles in South Australia

Carla Rinaldi



Adelaide Thinker in Residence 2012 - 2013

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Prepared by Carla Rinaldi,
Adelaide Thinker in Residence 2012–2013



**Government of
South Australia**

Department of the Premier and Cabinet C/O PO Box 2343 Adelaide SA 5001
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No way. The Hundred is there

The child is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.

A hundred. Always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling, of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.

The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and at Christmas.

They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi, (translated by Lella Gandini)

from the Catalogue of the Exhibition "The Hundred Languages of Children",
© Preschools and Infant-toddler Centres - Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy
Reggio Children, 1996



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Premier's Foreword Message from Jay Weatherill

Professor Carla Rinaldi has challenged South Australians to think differently.

Her report has left South Australia with profoundly challenging questions: What is our image of a child? What is the role of the school in society? How do we view education and care, and why do we separate these into distinct categories?

Carla Rinaldi is widely regarded as the world leader in the Reggio Emilia approach to learning and teaching in the early childhood years. This approach embodies something which I regard as fundamental. It treats the child as a citizen – competent, connected to adults and other children, and in a perpetual state of active learning.

A priority of this government is to provide Every Chance for Every Child. By declaring this to be a priority, we make a firm commitment to children and young people. This is why I invited Carla Rinaldi to South Australia as Thinker in Residence.

We are committing to doing whatever we can to improve the quality of our children's formative experiences, and to provide them with the stable and supportive relationships to which they are entitled, so that they in turn can be resilient, creative, and self-determined.

South Australia has a rich history of leadership in education, especially in the early years. Realising the potential of each and every child and their learning is our perennial responsibility. The late Fraser Mustard, a former Thinker in Residence, left an indelible mark on this State through his focus on the early years.

Building upon his influential work, Carla Rinaldi further emphasises the need to focus on the rights of children as citizens. Helping children realise their potential would enhance the strength and wellbeing of the whole community.

It is a wonderful endorsement that over 60% of the partner organisations involved in this residency have come from outside government. The commitment and work of this group has positioned South Australia to lead the nation in rethinking early childhood.

The influence of this residency is rippling out into our childcare centres, kindergartens, schools, local governments, health and community development sector and to families. There are over 35 prototypes already underway, involving new research and projects that challenge thinking and traditional practices.

Carla has urged us to examine long held beliefs and question our perceptions of the child and childhood. Our future will be determined by how we interact with children today.

I hope this report inspires you as much as it has inspired me. It will become a trusted resource to guide early childhood development in South Australia for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Weatherill". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jay Weatherill, Premier of South Australia



Professor Carla Rinaldi

Adelaide Thinker in Residence 2012–2013
Professor Rinaldi is a world leader in education for children in the early years. She has been the President of Reggio Children since 2007 and is the first President of the Reggio Children-Loris Malaguzzi Centre Foundation. Carla is also a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

Professor Rinaldi worked side-by-side with Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach, from 1970 until his death in 1994 in the municipal infant toddler and preschool system of Reggio Emilia, where she was the first pedagogical coordinator.

Carla has been working as pedagogical/scientific consultant for Reggio Children since 1994, following the supervision of all Reggio Children initiatives. She was responsible for research projects in collaboration with Harvard University, the University of New Hampshire and the University of Milan - Bicocca.

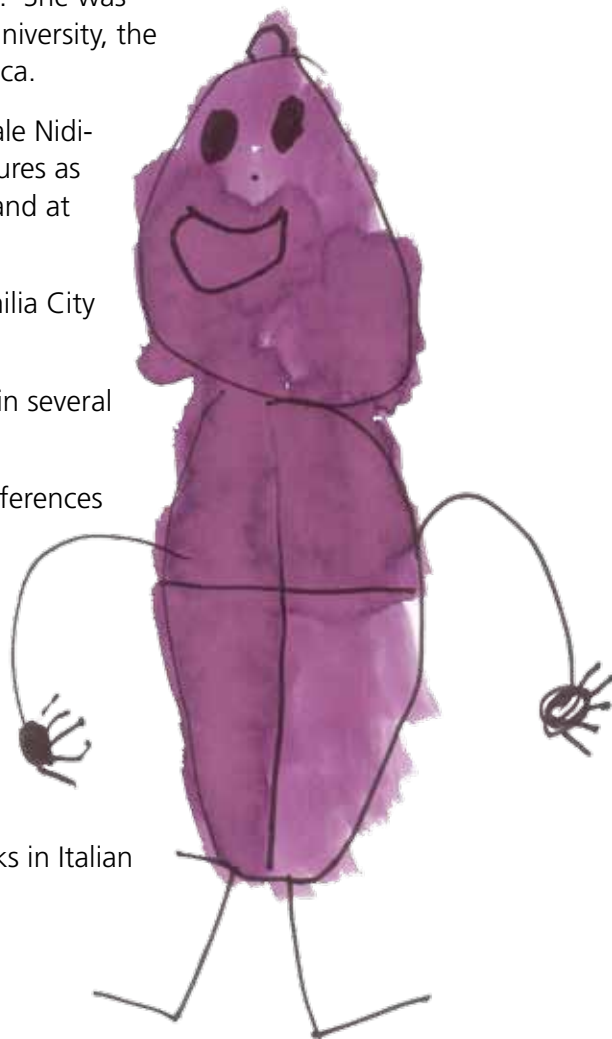
Professor Rinaldi has been vice-president of the Gruppo Nazionale Nidi-Infanzia (National Early Childhood Association) and has had tenures as visiting Professor at the Webster University (St. Louis, Missouri) and at the Colorado University (Boulder, Colorado).

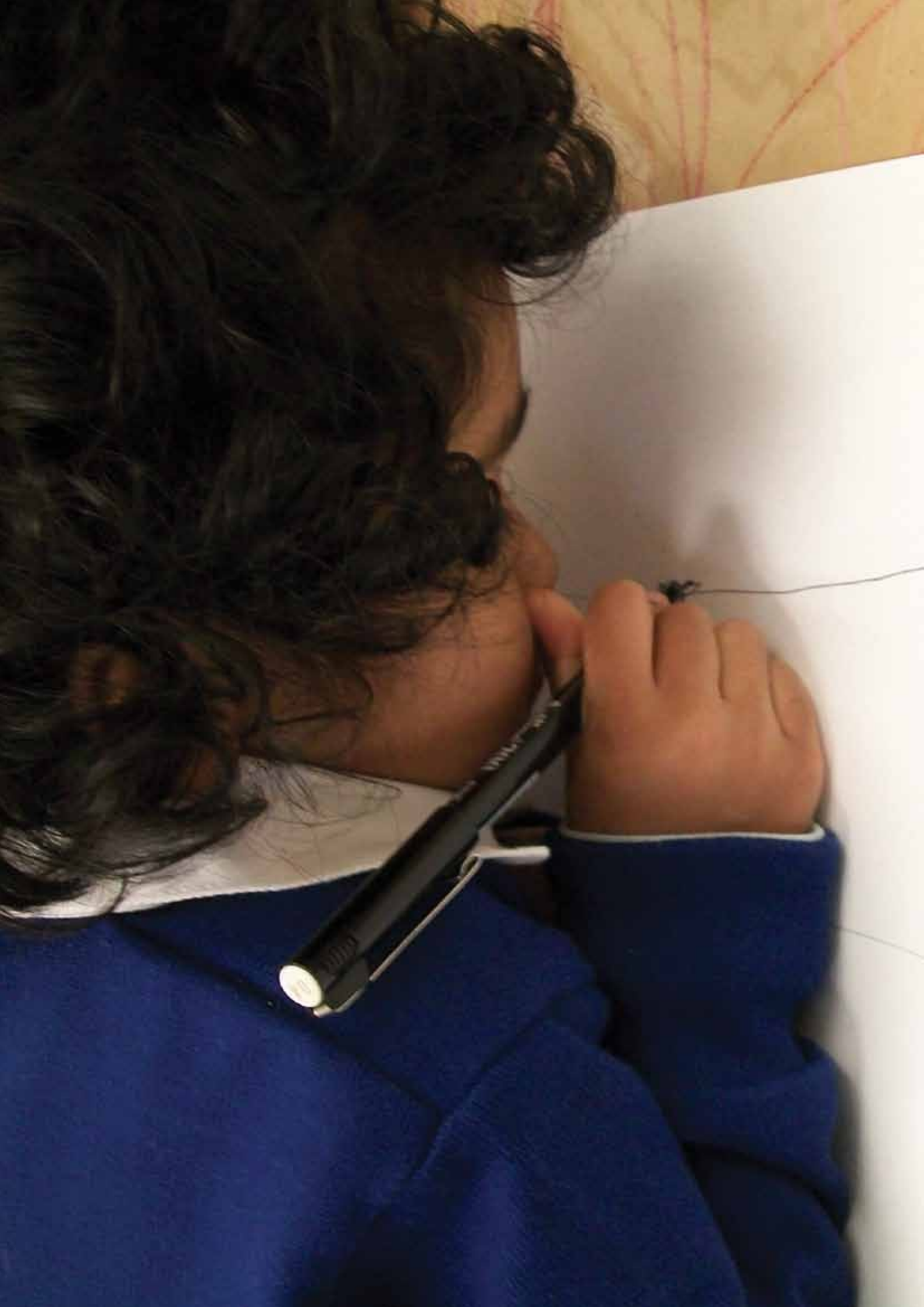
From 2004-2007, Carla Rinaldi was a member of the Reggio Emilia City Council.

In 2007 and 2008, Carla Rinaldi was appointed as a consultant in several different Commissions of the Italian Ministry of Education.

Carla Rinaldi has been a speaker at numerous seminars and conferences in Italy as well as in Europe, the United States, Australia and Asia. In 2011 she was invited to participate in the Presidential Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care "Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care", Budapest. In 2010 she participated in the UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care "Building the Wealth of Nations", Moscow.

Professor Rinaldi lectures frequently on the Reggio Emilia experience, and has published many articles, chapters, and books in Italian and English.





The Partnership

It was after Premier Weatherill returned from Reggio Emilia in Italy in 2011 that the negotiations with Reggio Children began in order to attract Professor Carla Rinaldi as Adelaide's Thinker in Residence. The government already had a strong advocate for the early years in Premier Weatherill himself. In addition, an initial scan of the early childhood sector quickly revealed a strong appetite for this residency in South Australia. In an unprecedented level of commitment, the partner organisations that invested in this residency were over 60% from non-government sectors. This indicated a breadth and depth of interest in the Reggio Emilia approach to early years learning. Partners soon revealed their leadership in discovering possibilities for the Reggio Emilia principles coming alive in Australian contexts.

The lead partners in this exciting venture were the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) and Goodstart Early Learning. DECD has responsibility for 585 preschool, care and early learning sites in SA. Goodstart brought a national perspective to the residency with their 655 centres around Australia, 44 of these in SA.

The Rinaldi partnership group also included Catholic Education SA with 103 schools and the Association of Independent Schools of SA with 96 schools and 34 preschools and Early Learning Centres.

Our other partners were: Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE); the Local Government Association; Flinders University; University of South Australia; TAFE SA; Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch); Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI); Early Childhood Organisation (EChO); Northern Connections; The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI); and the Office for Design and Architecture.

The commitment and engagement of these partners has strengthened the residency and ensured that South Australia has a critical mass of people who are researching the principles from the Reggio Emilia approach and are continually learning as they trial various ways of implementing the principles in the South Australian context.





The Residency

Professor Rinaldi made three trips to South Australia between March 2012 and April 2013. Over the duration of the residency, she

- Attended over 120 meetings with partners, political leaders and education groups
- Met with the Premier of South Australia, Hon. Jay Weatherill MP
- Presented to South Australian Cabinet Ministers
- Met with Hon Grace Portolesi MP, Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills
- Met with Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, Minister for Education and Child Development
- Met with Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood and Child Care
- Engaged with over 3300 people in her first visit (March 2012)
- Engaged with over 880 people in her second visit (August 2012)
- Engaged with over 4000 people in her final visit (April 2013)
- Visited over 15 childcare, preschool and school sites throughout South Australia
- Attracted 2000 people to her inaugural lecture with more than 200 online live video streaming connections to her inaugural lecture
- Reached 22,502 people via Twitter with over 113,452 impressions
- Attracted 1800 people to her final lecture
- Enabled The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition which attracted over 3,500 visitors to the State Library of South Australia and was supported by 200 volunteers

Residency Objectives

The objectives of the residency were to contribute to Premier Weatherill's strategic priority area, Every Chance for Every Child by:

Challenging common perceptions of children and their learning, and provoking 'deep thought' and reflection about these perceptions and beliefs

Stimulating and influencing a state wide review of the structures, organisation and coordination of early childhood education and care services in South Australia

Opening dialogue and influencing debate about the culture of childhood and the value of the child as citizen from birth

Building a collaborative culture among the various groups and sectors researching the Reggio Emilia principles in order to consider how these principles could inspire South Australian pedagogy and practices

Stimulating change in the processes for the design and provision of spaces and places for children through deepening understanding of the interdependence of physical and psychological elements of space with learning and wellbeing

Stimulating new research to sustain learning about the possible influences of Reggio Emilia principles within South Australia.

The influence of Carla's presence among educators in South Australia has already been deep and profound. Educators have talked about the challenge of the Reggio Emilia principles not providing a package or a model to be superimposed upon our Australian settings. Rather, it offers us all a philosophy, a way of being, of living, of teaching and learning.

"The 'Reggio Approach' in other parts of the world, outside Reggio Emilia only makes sense if we are capable of re-inventing it, if we are capable of understanding the context we work in, the values in which each culture believes, and then compare these with what Reggio has been capable of creating in its own specific context, and with its own resources."

Howard Gardner 2012

Introduction to Reggio Emilia Video:

<http://youtu.be/IWf9mBJ548k>





“Nothing
without joy.”

Loris Malaguzzi, 1995

A Vision for South Australia

South Australia has an amazing opportunity to THINK and REFLECT ON early childhood as a new source, a new source that can inspire a big cultural, philosophical and economic change for the country. Early childhood centres that don't simply want to offer services for families, but as places of and for learning for children, teachers, parents and the community, 'a learning community'.

South Australia can redesign a political and social project where democracy and education can find a fusal moment and can offer and guarantee a "bottom up" process of participation: a new possible style of democracy.

The wellbeing and the sustainability that comes as a consequence is the idea of a society inspired by the Aboriginal cultures where the welcoming and wellbeing of children is the welcoming and wellbeing of all the human beings from 0-99 years of age.

The children become the best essence and expression, not only of human beings but also of nature. We are humans and nature together because we are first of all part of nature and the universe. We are reciprocal, we are interdependent. We have to take responsibility for our interdependence.

The challenge for South Australia is not to separate or make a special pedagogy for the disabled, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, the children at risk or the Aboriginal children. The challenge is to create a pedagogy, with schools that are able to welcome all differences that come from the uniqueness of each child, all human beings, and create a context where the differences can learn to dialogue and enrich each other.

The competent child is in Australia, in South Australia, in every culture. The competent child is amazing if we are able to make them visible. The competent child, the competent teacher and the competent parent can and do exist in South Australia. They are waiting for our pedagogical, cultural, social and political decisions.

Through Reggio Children and South Australia working in a close and permanent relationship we can develop a system that can guarantee continuity of learning from 0 - 99; a holistic approach related to research on human development and neuroscience, learning by doing, learning how to learn with an approach where we do not separate the body and the mind.

Through working in partnership with Reggio Children, South Australia can become the vibrant state of quality education; a new economy, a leader in Australia and the Asia Pacific. However the quality can only be guaranteed by working in partnership with Reggio Children to develop an original South Australian approach and I strongly recommend the commencement of a permanent research. It is impossible to replicate the Reggio Approach but it is possible to develop a local South Australian approach that has the traces of the Reggio Emilia principles. Education must be constructed within its local context.



Provocations from Carla Rinaldi

What is our image of the child and childhood?

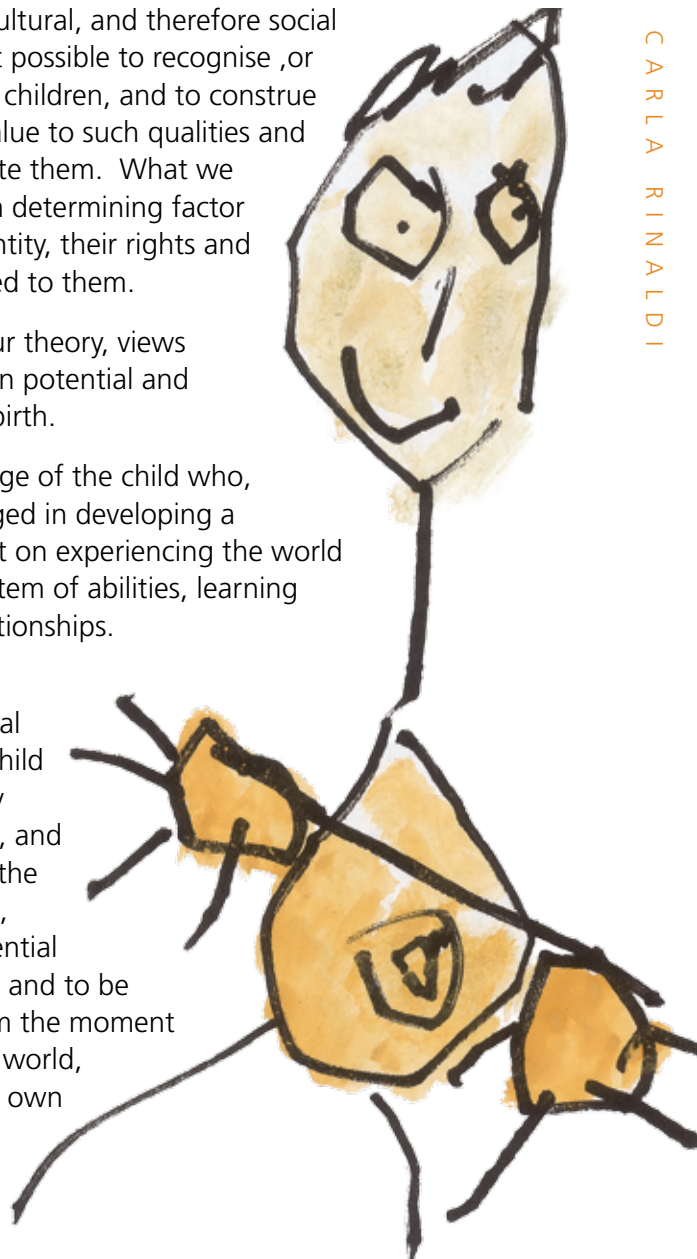
There are many images of the child, and many images of childhood. We need only think of psychoanalysis or the various branches of psychology and sociology. Though these theories are quite different, they tend to have one recurring aspect in common: the deterministic identification of the child as a weak subject, a person with needs rather than rights.

The image of the child is above all a cultural, and therefore social and political convention that makes it possible to recognise, or not, certain qualities and potentials in children, and to construe expectations and contexts that give value to such qualities and potentials or, on the contrary, to negate them. What we believe about children thus becomes a determining factor in defining their social and ethical identity, their rights and the educational and life context offered to them.

Our image in Reggio Emilia, part of our theory, views children as strong, powerful and rich in potential and resources, right from the moment of birth.

As Loris Malaguzzi wrote, it is the image of the child who, from the moment of birth, is so engaged in developing a relationship with the world, and intent on experiencing the world that he or she develops a complex system of abilities, learning strategies and ways of organising relationships.

In this sense, we share the values and meaning of the constructivist and social constructivist approaches. We see a child who is driven by the enormous energy potential of a hundred billion neurons, and by the incredible curiosity that makes the child search for reasons for everything, and who has all the strength and potential that comes from the ability to wonder and to be amazed. A child who is powerful from the moment of birth because of being open to the world, and capable of constructing his or her own knowledge.





This image first espoused by Loris Malaguzzi as a result of the research emanating from the early childhood centres in Reggio Emilia is now further confirmed and endorsed by the ever-evolving research coming from neuroscience which indicates that the human brain is a 'work in progress', beginning before birth and continuing through the life-span. Neuroscientists have found that the first three years are the period of most rapid growth, during which there are specific sensitive periods for optimal learning in particular areas. However, a significant proportion of human brain development also takes place up to approximately 8 Years of age.

(Shanker, in McCain et al., 2007:13).

Our image is of a child who possesses his or her own directions and the desire for knowledge and for life. A competent child!

Competent in relating and interacting with a deep respect for others and accepting of conflict and error. A child who is competent in constructing; in constructing his or herself while constructing the world, and who is in return constructed by the world. Competent in constructing theories to interpret reality and in formulating hypotheses and metaphors as possibilities for understanding reality.

A child who has his/her own values and is adept at building relationships of solidarity. A child who is always open to that which is new and different. A possessor and builder of future, not only because children are the future but because they constantly re-interpret reality and continuously give it new meanings.

Our image is of the child as a possessor and constructor of rights, who demands to be respected and valued for his/her identity, uniqueness and difference. To think of a child as a possessor of rights means not only recognising the rights that the society gives to children, but also creating a context of 'listening' in the fullest sense. This means that we must recognise and accept the uniqueness and subjectivity of each human being (and thus each child), as well as create spaces that are self-generative, that is, spaces where each child can create and construct new rights.



A society which 're-cognises' (re-knows, re-understands) its childhood adds not just a social subject but modifies itself because in recognising children's rights it recognises new rights for everyone.

The relationship between childhood and society

I believe a possible and important nucleus for reflection in South Australia is the relationship between childhood and society.

The concepts we need to deconstruct relate to questions such as:

What is childhood?

Who defines it?

How is it defined?

What identities, what rights are given to childhood?

And what IMAGE of the child (human being) do we have?

Childhood, we know, is a cultural interpretation and construct. Every society, and every historical period defines its own childhood in determining what is meant by, expected of and dedicated to childhood.



Competent Child Video: <http://youtu.be/5A4j0DDHGfk>

The child as citizen: the competent child, the child as possessor of rights

The key concept for us in Reggio Emilia is the concept of “child as citizen” right from birth. Not just the child as a private subject (the son or daughter of....) but as a citizen.

The emergence of this new subject of rights has incredible implications on the cultural, social and political levels of a society. Recognising the child as citizen makes it necessary to re-examine the very concept of citizenship, but especially to revisit the organisation of all the social and educational places of children’s lives, not only early childhood centres and schools, but also hospitals, theatres, swimming pools, the town squares and streets, the architecture of our homes. We must re-conceptualise participation, and democracy itself. What is the relationship between rights and duties? A citizen, citizenship, and therefore a concept of democracy is defined and expressed beyond the traditional boundaries.

Moreover, when we define the child as ‘a competent subject’, we mean competent first of all in learning and therefore in living. When we talk about the child as ‘a possessor of rights’ we want to affirm something even more innovative.

With the first declaration, ‘The competent child’ we declare the competence of the child, of all children, to learn, and at the same time the inseparability of the right to life and the right to education, affirming education as a responsibility and duty of the society in which the child lives, and not just the family into which he or she is born.

With the second declaration, ‘the child as possessor of rights’, from birth, we make a declaration that is complex, certainly, but that is now more than ever topical: recognising the child’s right to citizenship, so different, so ‘foreign’ and so far from the concept of the statutory citizen who goes to the polls to vote, places at the centre of attention the rights of all ‘others’; the rights of women, of victims, of outcasts, of others who are ‘foreigners’ with respect to ‘statutory citizenship’.

The child is an expression of the identity of humanity, of a human being who knows how to ask questions and ask himself questions, a child who is the first ‘foreigner’ among us. The child is a ‘foreigner’ in terms of being an ‘outsider’, outside the rules and the conventions. A foreigner is the one who, despite our predictions, is not predictable, and as such changes our schemas of expectation, the paradigms of reference (Malaguzzi’s “challenging child”).



A 'foreigner' who with her foreignness may be able, as Freud said, to reveal the 'foreigner in us' that is, the part of us that we do not want or know how to recognise in ourselves, the 'Other' who is in us. The child who brings the unexpected, the certain and the future that is inside of him.

This search for life and for the self is born with the child, and this is why we talk about the child who is competent and strong in this search toward life, toward others, toward the relations between self and life. A child, therefore, who is no longer considered to be fragile, suffering, incapable; a child who asks us to look at him or her with different eyes in order to empower their right to learn and to know, to find the meaning of life and of their own lives, alone and with others.

In Reggio Emilia, ours is a different idea and attitude toward the young child, who we see as active and who, along with us, searches every day to understand something, to draw out a meaning, to grasp a piece of life.

For adults and children alike, understanding means elaborating an interpretation, that which we call an 'interpretive theory', that is, a theory that gives meaning to the things and events of the world, a theory in the sense of a satisfactory explanation. We take the term 'theory' which usually has such serious connotations, and instead make it an everyday right, and we recognise this right in the child who we define as 'competent.'

Can a three or four-month-old child develop theories? I like to think so, because I feel that this conviction can lead to a different approach and, in particular, to these concepts of listening and relational creativity. A theory, therefore, is viewed as a satisfactory explanation, though also provisional. It is something more than simply an idea or a group of ideas. It must be pleasing and convincing, useful and capable of satisfying our intellectual, affective and also aesthetic needs. That is, it must give us the sense of a wholeness that generates a sense of beauty and satisfaction.

So I must ask directly, What is the image of the child in South Australia?

"I will never think of children in the same way again. You have opened my eyes to their capability and potential."

Teacher of 4 year olds



Competent Teacher Video: <http://youtu.be/qQfEh4ECIno>

The Hundred Languages

An important question for all people, is to consider what it means to see the child as full of potential from birth? At the same time we must ask ourselves what it means to learn in a global and pluralistic world inundated with information.

As human beings, children possess a hundred languages, a hundred ways of thinking, of expressing themselves, of understanding and encountering others, with a way of thinking that creates connections between the various dimensions of experience rather than separating them.

The hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed.

The hundred languages are understood as having the potential to be transformed and multiplied in the cooperation and interaction between the languages, among the children, and between children and adults.

It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre and the preschool to give value and equal dignity to all the verbal and non-verbal languages.

“I’ve been saying that I see children as capable, but if I’m really honest I’ve really had two views of children: one for those who find learning easy and an empty view of the children who have learning difficulties. Why didn’t I see this before?”

Teacher of 5 year olds



What does it mean to be an educating community?

I believe that South Australia can rise to my challenge of being an ethical state. But when can a state, a city, a community be defined as ethical? I think it can be when a community is an educating community.

Educating, this present participle, is not describing a quality, a state of mind, as the word educating can be, but it is a permanent process, a vocation, and an organisation that allows this process to be made accomplishing its incompleteness.

What and how is an educating community/city?

Who educates whom?

What does it mean to educate?

The Latin roots of the verb 'to educate' "ex ducere" means coming out, making do-able (visible) what is possible, what is implicit in each individual since childhood: its power, its potentials, its value as a person, its human dignity.

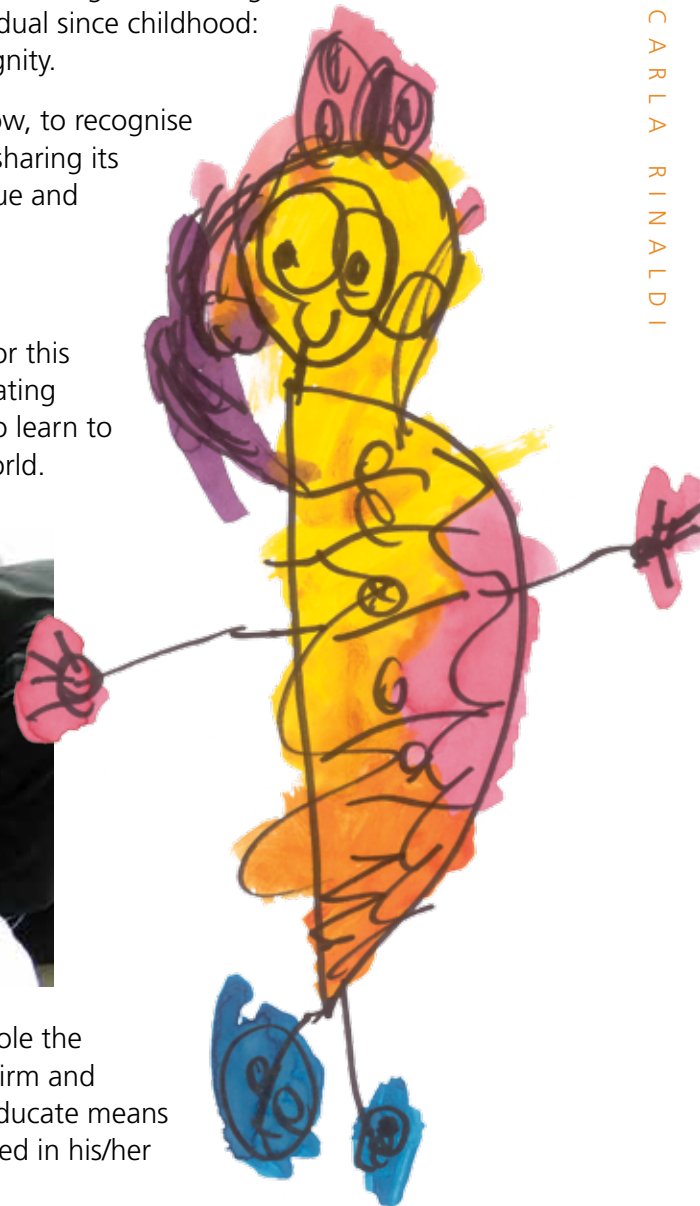
Allowing therefore each one of us to be known and to know, to recognise ourselves in a culture and to know the signs and symbols, sharing its values and at the same time innovating them in the dialogue and exchange.

But this is not enough.

To educate means building together identity and future. For this reason the early childhood centres and schools, in an educating community, play a primary role for the children that have to learn to become citizens of a community but also citizens of the world.



The role of the teachers is crucial, but also essential is the role the community can play, not only to integrate, but also to confirm and expand the concepts and the values discussed earlier. To educate means above all an act of reciprocity. Who educates is also educated in his/her knowledge.





Professor Gardner writes that his “favorite example of an ethical community is a small city called Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Aside from providing high-quality services and cultural benefits to its citizens, the city provides excellent infant and toddler centers and preschools. Children feel cared for by the community. So when they grow up, they return this regard by caring for others. They become good workers and good citizens. The tone has already been set at such a high level that one rarely encounters compromised—that is, qualitatively or ethically sullied—work.”

Howard Gardner, 2012

You can only learn ethical thinking, such as the synthetic or the creative one, very dear to Professor Gardner, through an act, an action, a good and ethical context, a context in which people have the right to understand why they do and learn what they do and how this knowledge can be used for constructive purposes.

Institutions therefore must be the first to ensure and secure that they are ethical places and that they offer themselves as parameters of reference for all places of work, public and voluntary associations that intend to act primarily as educational places.

It therefore becomes crucial to reflect on the fundamental relationship that exists between education and democracy.

An educating community is a community, a city, where early childhood centres and schools, play a key and crucial role. The role they play is not only for learning formal knowledge by children, but for learning values on which the community itself bases its identity and can reflect on the moral aspect of becoming a citizen and a worker in, and of, a society. A school that gives time to all expects time to be given by all to the society.

“As adults, we must offer ourselves spaces for reflection: the experience of discussion groups and exchange of viewpoints between and with parents and teachers has always characterised our way of working. Parents, children and teachers can view themselves in the light of new stories of the world, and culture, and therefore schools, offer them this privilege. The privilege and right of a family to be perceived as the bearer of theories, of expectations, and the possibility of exchanging them and seeing them from different points of view.”

Gunilla Dahlberg, 2012.

It is also a community where these questions can find many places to look for answers but above all giving back meaning to existence itself. A community, an educating city, is the one that educates citizens but also can be educated and changed by its own inhabitants. Life long learning is therefore not only an educational project but also it is a community project, where the citizens, not just workers, can learn to give and receive, build new and diffused knowledge and create courageous and unexpected futures.

“A Reggio preschool is a special kind of place, one in which young human beings are invited to grow in mind, in sensibility and in belonging to a broader community.”

Jerome Bruner, 1998

Now more than ever it is necessary to believe that schools can still have the duty and the task of being a ‘cultural agent’. In particular it is time to recognise that early childhood centres can have this extraordinary role and power. Not just ‘can’ but ‘must’.

I know all the difficulties that schools and early childhood centres encounter today, in particular difficulties at the economic and logistic levels, and difficulties in terms of identity. But thinking big, acting within and for broader landscapes, in perspective and with strategies that are rich in future and therefore in hope is an obligation for educators.

“My real hope is that we will see Reggio Emilia as a provocation. To be discussed, debated, and experimented with. Hopefully, we can document our findings and through this to discover, perhaps, a new image of the child and, as outstanding documenters and tireless collaborators, see ourselves as life-long learners in relation to our profession.”

Jan Millikan, 2003



Education and Social Values Video: <http://youtu.be/uLRIIWLy9I>

What is the role of the school in society?

“By the time of compulsory schooling, we risk having squandered children’s resources and potential, making the rich child poor: rather than making children fit for school, we need schools that are fit for children.”

Rinaldi & Moss 2004

In considering this question I will refer to school as a term that encompasses all places of learning, from birth to adulthood. For South Australia, this includes preschools, child care, early learning centres, primary and secondary schools.

I urge South Australia to examine a fundamental question that is a permanently open question:

What is the role of the school in this society?

Alongside this question, I urge consideration of the following questions:

How can schools be places where you build quality standards for the quality of life for children?

What is a teacher’s role?

How can schools aspire to be not only family services, but also education places for all? Places of rights for all?

The role of school can be defined as a fundamental place for the formation of the citizen according to the constitutional dictates. This gives all of us, teachers first of all, a responsibility that is far more complex than the teaching of specific disciplines: that is, the responsibility to be educators. Not the only ones, but certainly among those who can understand the meaning and the difficulty, and therefore seek alliances in this complex task, starting with the families, and then to the broader context in which the child lives.



The school can be identified as one of the cultural places that can and must contribute to the definition of the concept of “new citizenship” by both acting upon it and developing theories around it. School is a living organism and a fundamental tool for a civil society.

School is not a place only to transmit culture but to create it, to encourage critical thinking, creativity and relationship. No longer can schools simply be reproducers of knowledge. They are places where children and adults construct knowledge and their understanding of the world together.

“Reggio Emilia... inspires us with its profound understanding of knowledge and learning. Challenging the vertical relations between child and teacher, it has been able to contest the transition model of teaching, where the adult is viewed as the one owning knowledge; as well as the child-centred model, that has often led to a passive teacher and an active child. For Reggio Emilia, learning is a relational place; a process of co-constructing meaning, always in relationship with others. It entails being sensitive to the unpredictable results of children’s inquiries and research.” Gunilla Dahlberg 2012

Fundamentally, schools are places of research, cultivating attitudes of research and capacities for life long learning. Schools and teachers have a responsibility to be listeners: listening as an attitude, to the ideas, questions and answers of children and then struggling to make meaning from what is said without preconceived ideas of what is correct or valid.

“We know that children are born with amazing potential and capacities: curiosity, a drive to understand, the ability to wait, to wonder and to be amazed, the capacity to express themselves in many ways and the desire to form relationships with others and with the physical world. What kind of schools and what kind of teachers do we need to foster these capacities?”

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange

Teaching can exist if it is based on the learning processes of children as observed, experienced and documented. It is not simply to change the way of traditional teaching but learning how to teach based on the learning processes of children. It is a context in which the teacher has a concept of constant professional development.

This way the teacher becomes a researcher of learning, as the children are researchers of the meaning of life. This is a paradigm shift of viewing the child as cute and weak to an image of the child as competent.



THE PLACE OF RESEARCH IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS.

The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition brought home to me the frequency of skills developed by children of this age which frequently appear in senior secondary schooling. In particular, I am referring to the processes of assessment, self-assessment and the significance of research. Research is often seen as an academic pursuit and seldom linked to the everyday decisions people make. These daily decisions reflect the principles of research in identifying issues, investigating them and finding solutions. At this time in secondary schooling there is a need to teach these skills to students as a way of expressing their understanding of the capabilities required of young people today to practice active citizenship and make a positive contribution to society. The fact that decision-making capacities are developed at a young age has a major impact on character formation and the capacity to think wisely in later life.

John Smith,
SENIOR SECONDARY CONSULTANT, CATHOLIC EDUCATION SA

What then does professional development mean to us? It is learning. Our job is to learn, because we are teachers. It means staying away from balance, from what has already been decided, pre-constructed, from what is certain. It means staying close to the place where objects and thoughts interconnect: it means doing and reflecting, theory and practice, emotions and knowledge.

Professional and personal development means rejecting the idea of development as “shaping” from one way of being to another. This kind of personal and professional development tries to think and act with the idea of becoming, of changing in mind.



“When teachers begin exploring the principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project alongside their children, something magical happens. It’s almost as if they fall in love with teaching again. They always loved the child, but had fallen out of love with teaching...but not now.”

Lisa Burman

What is the role of the environment in the human experience?

I urge you to think of the environment not as a shell but as a skin – how does it change with those in it? How is it nourished?

The Reggio experience has always been very attentive to the subject of spaces and also on a more general level, to environments in education. Loris Malaguzzi as well as defining spaces as ‘the third educator’ also made a declaration on the rights of the child to a quality environment.

Designing the space of an infant-toddler centre – or perhaps we could just say designing a school – is a creative event not only in terms of pedagogy and architecture but more generally in social, cultural and political terms.

In fact, schools can play a very special role in cultural development and real socio-political experimentation, so that this moment (designing) and this place (the school) can be experienced not as a time and space for reproducing and transmitting established knowledge but as a place of true creativity.

Designing a school means, above all, creating a space of life and of the future.

This requires the shared research of pedagogy, architecture, sociology, and anthropology, disciplines and fields of knowledge that will state their own epistemologies and compare their languages and symbolic systems, in a new freedom born of the desire to dialogue and exchange ideas.

Only by working in this way can we guarantee that the architectural project will be in itself research, and therefore capable, day by day, of taking stock of its own outcomes, of the effectiveness of its language, of its capacity to dialogue with the process of ‘becoming’





which is the basis of true education. This means constructing a ‘metaphor of knowledge’ that both represents and suggests possible changes and actions.

Architecture is not the assembling of spaces. To ‘give a school meaning’ involves a philosophy; a way of thinking about education, learning, the teaching/learning relationship, the role of action and doing in the co-construction of knowledge. The school building is a pedagogical project and, as such, must be the result of careful, in-depth dialogue between the pedagogical and architectural languages.

The physical space can be defined as a language, which speaks according to precise cultural conceptions and deep biological roots.

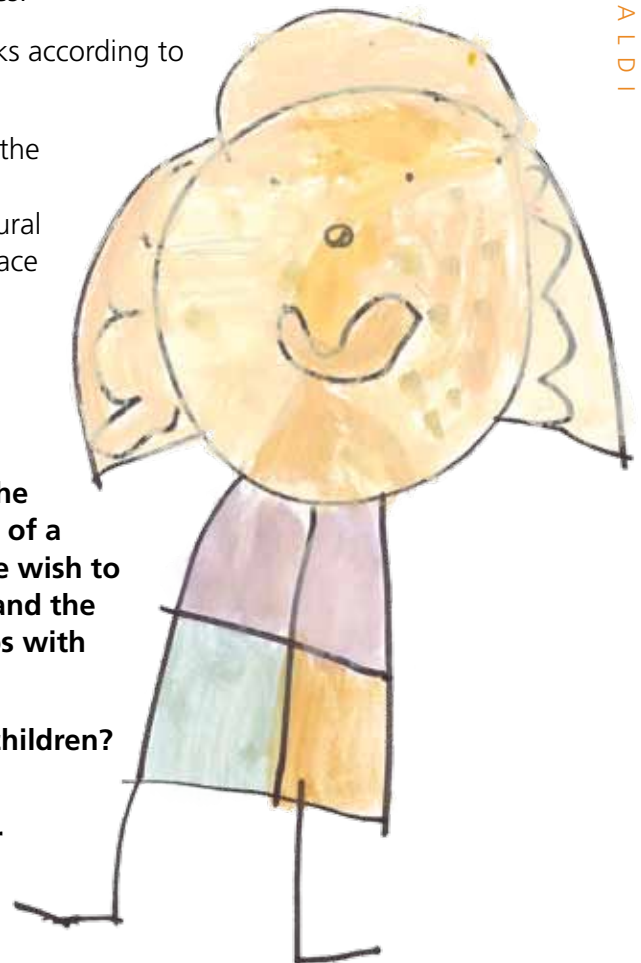
The quality of the space can therefore be defined in terms of the quantity, quality and development of these relationships. The pedagogical approach must be interwoven with the architectural project in such a way as to support the processes that take place in the space, the processes of learning, teaching, sharing and understanding, on the part of all the protagonists; children, teachers and parents.

Architecture and Pedagogy group

We are looking for a new paradigm with the focus on the ‘child as citizen’ including improving our understanding of a child’s sense of place and use of space. In this sense we wish to broaden our agenda beyond school facilities to homes and the wider community – our context is all of our relationships with the built environment.

How, then, do we undertake proper consultation with children?

We believe that it is important to lift the profile of the physical environment as critical to everything we do for children – it is not external or peripheral to learning, but an essential element.







What are the principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project?

Children are active protagonists of their growth and development processes

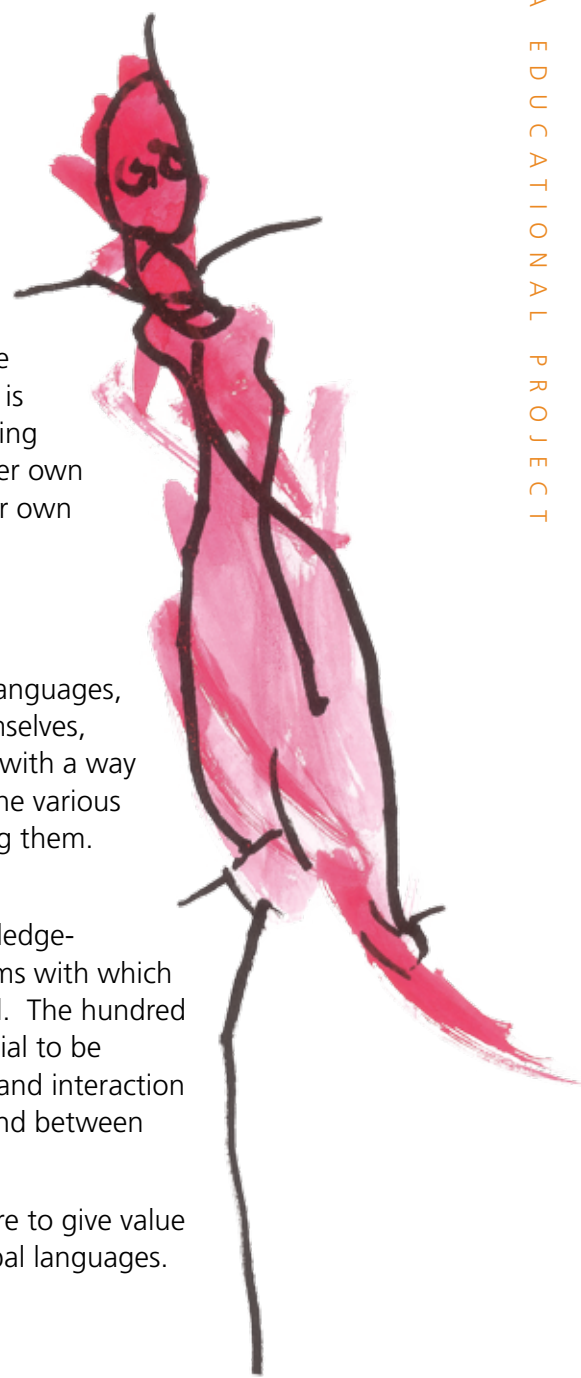
Children possess extraordinary potentials for learning and change, as well as extensive affective, relational, sensory and intellectual resources that manifest in an ongoing exchange with the cultural and social context. Each child is the subject of rights, first and foremost possessing the right to be respected and valued in his or her own identity, uniqueness, difference and in his or her own rhythms of growth and development.

The hundred languages

As human beings, children possess a hundred languages, a hundred ways of thinking, of expressing themselves, of understanding, and of encountering others, with a way of thinking that creates connections between the various dimensions of experience rather than separating them.

The hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed. The hundred languages are understood as having the potential to be transformed and multiplied in the cooperation and interaction between the languages, among the children, and between children and adults.

It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre to give value and equal dignity to all the verbal and non-verbal languages.



Participation

Participation is the value and the strategy that defines the way in which the children, the educators, and the parents are stakeholders in the educational project; it is the educational strategy that is constructed and lived day by day in the encounter with others and in the interpersonal relationships.

Participation gives value to and makes use of the hundred languages of children and of human beings, viewed as a plurality of points of view and of cultures; it requires and fosters forms of cultural mediation and develops in a multiplicity of occasions and initiatives for constructing dialogue and the sense of belonging to a community.

Participation generates and nurtures the feelings and culture of solidarity, responsibility and inclusion; it produces change and new cultures that contend with the dimension of the contemporary world and globalization.

Listening

In participated education, an active attitude of listening between adults, children and the environment is the premise and context of every educational relationship.

Listening is an ongoing process that nurtures reflection, welcoming and openness towards oneself and others; it is an indispensable condition for dialogue and change.

The attitude of listening raises the threshold of attention and sensitivity toward the cultural, values-related and political scenarios of the contemporary world.

The infant-toddler centres have the responsibility to foster and make visible these processes by means of the pedagogical documentation.

Learning as a process of individual and group construction

Each child, like each human being, is an active constructor of knowledge, competencies and autonomies, by means of original learning processes that take shape with methods and times that are unique and subjective in the relationship with peers, adults and the environment. The learning process is fostered by strategies of research, comparison of ideas and co-participation; it makes use of creativity, uncertainty, intuition, curiosity. It is generated in play and in the aesthetic, emotional, relational and spiritual dimensions, which it interweaves and nurtures. It is based on the centrality of motivation and the pleasure of learning.

Educational research

Research represents one of the essential dimensions of life of children and adults alike, a knowledge-building tension that must be recognized and valued.



Shared research between adults and children is a priority practice of everyday life, an existential and ethical approach necessary for interpreting the complexity of the world, of phenomena, of systems of co-existence, and is a powerful instrument of renewal in education. The research made visible by means of the documentation builds learning, reformulates knowledge, underlies professional quality and is proposed at the national and international levels as an element of pedagogical innovation.

Educational documentation

Documentation is an integral and structuring part of the educational theories and teaching practices, as it gives value to and makes explicit, visible and assessable the nature of the individual and group learning processes of both the children and the adults, processes which are identified by means of observation and which become the common wealth. The educational experience that unfolds in the infant-toddler centres assumes its fullest meaning when the documentation produced in progress is revisited, reconstructed, re-signified, and assessed; that is, interpreted, in the exchange and with the contribution of different points of view. Viewed as a “public place”, documentation substantiates the idea of the preschool and infant-toddler centre as a forum in which a culture of childhood and of education is elaborated by means of a democratic process.

Progettazione

The educational action takes shape by means of progettazione, which is the process of planning and designing the teaching and learning activities, the environment, the opportunities for participation and the professional development of the personnel, and not by means of applying predefined curricula.

Progettazione is a strategy of thought and action that is respectful and supportive of the learning processes of the children and the adults; it accepts doubt, uncertainty and error as resources, and is capable of being modified in relation to the evolution of the contexts.

It is carried out by means of the processes of observation, documentation and interpretation in a recursive relationship, and through a close synergy between the organization of the work and the educational research.

Organization

The organization of the work, the spaces and the time of the children and the adults is a structural part of the values and choices of the educational project. The organization constructs a network of choices and the assumption of shared responsibility at the administrative, political and pedagogical levels; choices that contribute to guaranteeing identity, stability, and security to the children and to the educational service, connoting it in its potentialities, quality, and praxis. The administrative, political, and pedagogical levels also bear shared responsibility for a constant and systematic assessment of the consistency between the principles of the educational project and the organizational choices made. Particular importance is given to the working conditions and the contractual forms that foster stability, continuity and a sense of belonging.

Documentation Video: <http://youtu.be/hUVi-fLc0zA>



Environment, spaces and relations

The interior and exterior spaces of the infant-toddler centres are designed and organized in interconnected forms that foster interaction, autonomy, explorations, curiosity and communication, and are offered as places for the children and for the adults to research and to live together. The environment interacts with, is modified by and takes shape in relation to the projects and learning experiences of the children and of the adults in a constant dialogue between architecture and pedagogy.

Care of the furniture, the objects and the activity spaces by the children and the adults is an educational act that generates psychological well-being, a sense of familiarity and belonging, aesthetics and the pleasure of inhabiting a space, which are also primary premises and conditions for the safety of the environments.

Safety is therefore a quality that is generated by the dialogue and the shared elaboration between the different professionals who are engaged and concerned with this aspect, and who must likewise assess both risk prevention and the richness and quality of the opportunities offered.

Professional development

Professional development is characterized as a process aimed at building understanding and awareness of the meanings and methods of education, the central qualifying points of the educational project and the specific competencies of the various professional roles. Ongoing professional development is both the right and duty of each individual and of the group, and is included and taken into consideration in the work schedule and organized collectively in terms of its contents, forms and the methods of participation of each individual. Professional development is given priority within the daily activity of the centres and schools through the reflective practices of observation and documentation, with the weekly staff meeting being the primary occasion for in-depth study and sharing.

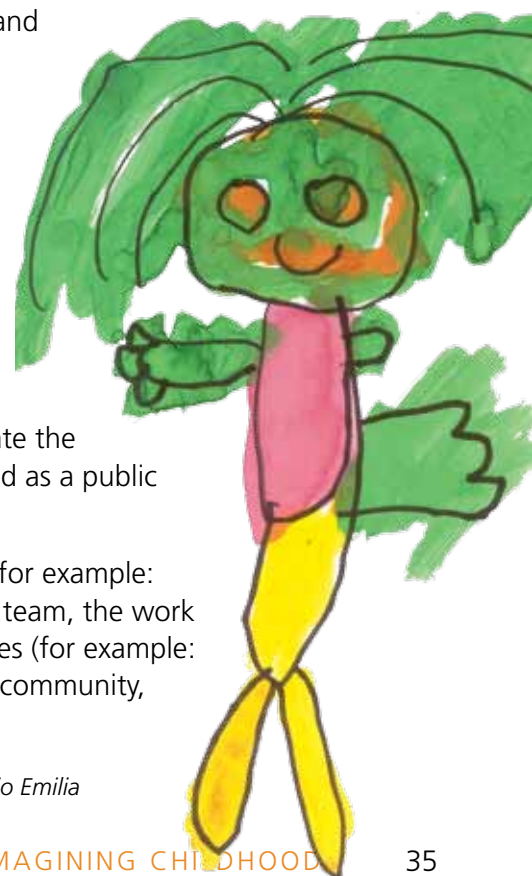
Assessment

Assessment, being an action aimed at the continuous attribution of meaning and of value, is a structuring process of the educational and administrative experience.

The assessment process is part of the totality of the aspects of scholastic life, including the children's learning, the professionalism of the personnel, the organization and quality of the service. It is understood and proposed as an opportunity to recognize and to negotiate the meanings and intentionalities of the educational project and is configured as a public action of dialogue and interpretation.

To this end, the infant-toddler centres make use of specific instruments (for example: the Community-Early Childhood Councils, the pedagogical coordinating team, the work group and the co-presence and co-responsibility of teachers) and practices (for example: documentation, the participation of the families and of the surrounding community, participation in the integrated public system).¹

1. *From: Indications: Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia Reggio Children, Italy*





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Provocations for South Australia

Diagnosis of the South Australian Early Childhood System

Fragmentation

The current situation is the fragmentation of early childhood services:

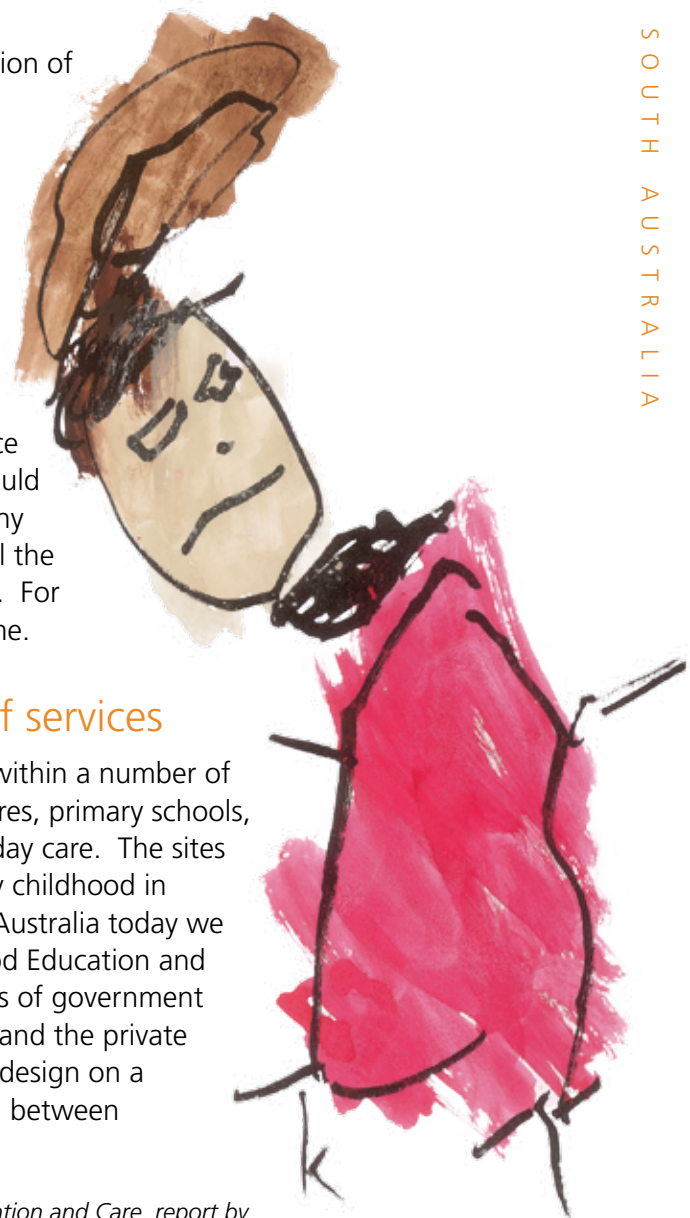
- 0-3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years

The fragmentation is experienced from the child's perspective in that it can be possible for a child to experience a different setting every day; a child could even be in five different situations in any one day. The relationships change. All the relations, systems and cultures change. For some children no two days are the same.

Organisations and range of services

Each early learning site is an "island" within a number of systems: preschool, early learning centres, primary schools, long day care, occasional care, family day care. The sites do not connect. The language of early childhood in South Australia is not consistent. "In Australia today we have a very fragmented Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system with all three levels of government involved as well as community groups and the private sector. There is also no overall system design on a national basis with significant variation between jurisdictions."²

2. *A Practical Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care*, report by Pricewaterhouse Coopers Australia, March 2011





The challenge for South Australia is not to continue to separate or make a special pedagogy for the disabled, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, the children at risk or the Aboriginal children.

In the current system, "Indigenous children do not participate in child care at the same rate as non-Indigenous children, while children living in remote areas and children with disabilities also participate at a lower rate."³

Ignoring the opportunity and evidence of neuroscience (0-6 years)

The implications of and opportunities presented by the vigorous brain development research of 0-6 years are not evident in the provision of services and in the general community. In countries all over the world, systems of services are set up in support of the work needs of parents, often with little regard for the educational rights of children. "Many families construct a patchwork of care for their young children, supplementing the system of formal care with informal arrangements or modified work arrangements."⁴

Concerns

This fragmentation results in:

Discontinuity of the required conditions and protective factors for wellbeing and education of citizens from birth.

A community unaware of the value of childhood

Structural and community confusion

Problems for the supply and quality of workforce

Discontinuity of provision of education and care services from birth

"Placing the interests of the child at the centre of decision-making around ECEC services provides a common focus and orientation for the full range of stakeholders, including parents, providers, policy makers and the broader community."⁵



3. *A Practical Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care*, report by Pricewaterhouse Coopers Australia, March 2011

4. *Ibid* p 41

5. *Ibid* p 41

A fragmented week – from a child's perspective

Among the rights of children and in particular the very small ones, there is the right to live and be in situations in which it is possible to build long-lasting, constant relationships.

In these relationships, time and space are structuring themselves in order to help the child to recognise and be recognised, to give and to have continuity, and helping him be oriented in the affective environment and in his relationships.

In this way, the child builds his own identity and his security: at home and in the situations in which he is welcomed.

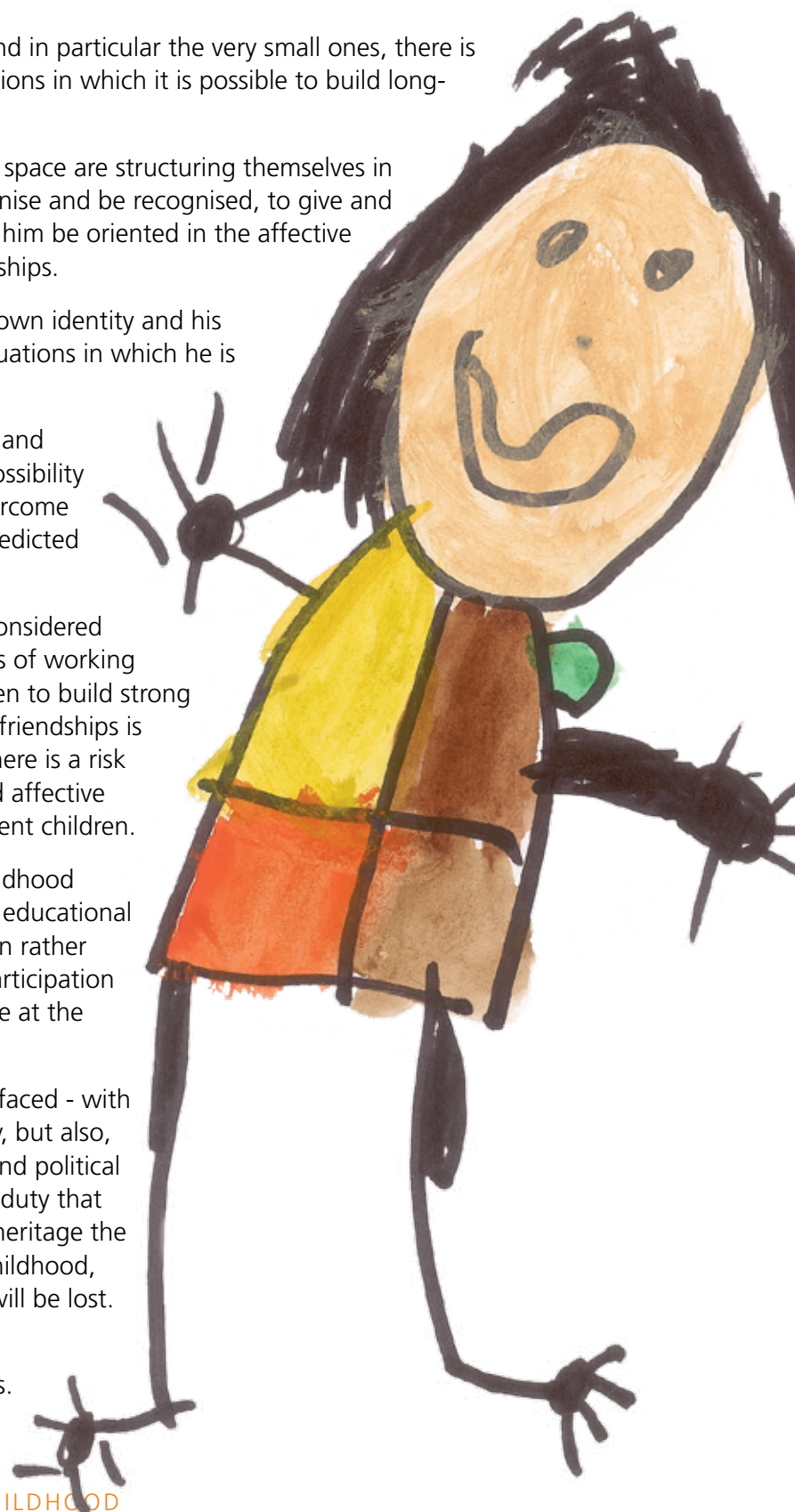
Rituality, rhythms, relationships and continuity are giving him the possibility to recognise himself and to overcome small and big stresses and unpredicted change.

If early childhood services are considered just as places to meet the needs of working families, and the right of children to build strong and constant relationships and friendships is not taken into consideration, there is a risk of environmental, cognitive and affective fragmentation that could disorient children.

It must be possible for early childhood services to be places where the educational quality and the rights of children rather than the needs of workforce participation of their parents and families, are at the centre of the attention.

This is a truth that needs to be faced - with the families and the community, but also, and above all, from the social and political point of view. It is a goal and a duty that cannot wait, or the significant heritage the society has: its children, their childhood, their present and their future, will be lost.

What follows aims to be a contribution to these reflections.



A fragmented week – Two children's perspective

Tuesdays

- Parent at home – all day

Mondays & Wednesdays

- Parent 7.00am – 8.15am
- DECD Preschool 8:15am – 3.45pm
- Grandparent/Family Friend Care 3.45pm – 5.30pm
- Parent 5.30pm – 7.00pm

Thursdays & Fridays

- Parent at home 7.00am – 9.00am
- Montessori Preschool 9.00am – 3.00pm
- Parent 3.00pm – 7.00pm

*Data collated by Early Childhood Australia –
South Australian Branch, March 2012*

Monday

- 8.00am – Arrives with Dad at long day care
- 8.00am – 6.00pm Long Day Care Centre
- 6.00pm – leaves long day care with Mum

Tuesday

- 8.00am – Arrives with Dad at long day care
- 8.00am – 6.00pm Long Day Care Centre
- 6.00pm – leaves long day care with Mum

Wednesday

- 8.30am Arrives with Mum at long day care
- 8.30am – 3.30pm Preschool
- 3.30pm – 6.00pm Grandparent/Family/
Friend
- 6.00pm – leaves long day care with Dad

Thursday

- 8.30am Arrives with Mum at long day care
- 8.30am – 3.30pm Preschool
- 3.30pm – 6.00pm Grandparent/Family/
Friend
- 6.00pm – leaves long day care with Dad

Friday

- 8.30am Arrives with Mum at long day care
on Alternate Fridays
- 8.30am – 12.30pm Alternate Fridays
Preschool
- 12.30pm – 6.00pm time with Grandparent/
Family/Friend
- 6.00pm – leaves long day care with Dad

*Data collated by Early Childhood Australia –
South Australian Branch, March 2012*



Deconstructing and Re-Constructing Perceptions

Reimagining childhood first and foremost requires a fundamental change in thinking about the child:

Moving from the view of the child as being 'weak' or 'cute', to recognition of the competent and capable child who possesses many resources from birth.

Moving from an emphasis on children with needs, to a focus on the rights of all children.

Moving from the acceptance that children are invisible, to recognition that children are fully participating citizens from birth.

These re-constructions will need to occur in attitudes, in ways of thinking, and in approaches to early childhood.



Recommendations

1. Children are citizens from birth

- 1.1 Declare the child as ‘the competent child’ and a possessor of rights. This declaration should be made as a preamble to legislation on child development.**
- 1.2 Changing the language of relevant legislation to include learning and the nature of learning as beginning at birth.**
- 1.3 Conducting a complete review of existing State policies and practices with the lens of the child as a fully participating citizen from birth.**

The concept of a child as a citizen from birth makes it necessary to re-examine the very concept of citizenship, but especially to revisit the organisation of all the social and educational places of children’s lives.

When the child is declared as the competent child, he or she is competent first of all in learning and therefore in living.

Every child must be regarded as a fully participating citizen from birth.

This new perspective is a way of conceptualising participation. Provision of programs and spaces such as hospitals, theatres, swimming pools, the town square, schools, streets and the architecture of our homes can be redesigned with deeper thinking about children’s rights. South Australia must have a change in thinking and understanding from a needs or deficit position to an acknowledgement of rights and competence of children.

2. An integrated early childhood system birth to age 6

This should involve

- 2.1 Creating in South Australia an integrated early childhood system of services for children 0 - 6 years where ‘integrated’ means that care and education are inseparable.**
- 2.2 Redesigning early childhood education with a focus on two distinct learning groups: 0-3 years and 3-6 years and developing a culture of entry into primary school in the year the child turns 6.**
- 2.3 Create a pedagogy and schools that are able to welcome all differences that come from the uniqueness of each child, each human being.**
- 2.4 Create a culture in schools that fosters in each parent an awareness of his or her own role as a protagonist in their children’s learning.**

An integrated early childhood system is one where care and education are inseparable and where services and educators demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between care and education.

The evidence of current neuroscience, biology and anthropology give us the responsibility and the duty to create quality places of learning for children, teachers and parents.

The focus of learning in learning groups extends beyond the learning of individuals to create a collective body of knowledge. Learning groups share a focus on learning how to learn in a group and epistemological concerns such as understanding the understanding of others and how understandings are developed and modified. When individuals participate in learning groups, they come to see the group as a way to foster individual competencies and discoveries; they learn that the uniqueness of each person benefits from and acquires value in dialogue with others. Redesigning learning groups (0 – 3 years and 3-6 years) will create a sense of belonging to a group and promote continuity of learning.

This new system will welcome all children. The value of subjectivity with related affirmations regarding the uniqueness and unrepeatability of each individual is strongly connected to the value of difference: difference in regard to gender, race, culture, religion and abilities. By valuing differences we find a richer and more contemporary definition of the value of participation and avoid the risks of homogenization or standardization.

Involving parents as active protagonists in the educational project, requires educators to construct high quality education with the children, families and the community. The relationships both with and between groups of children, educators, families and the wider community are fundamental to an integrated, quality early childhood system.

Learning is an ongoing and reciprocal process that comes from relationship with one another and with the environment. Identifying early childhood learning centres as schools respects the knowledge that learning occurs from birth. This recognizes children as learning and growing in the present and the continuity of lifelong learning.

Children are not only the future but they are citizens of the present.



3. Develop a new perspective for the role of school and early childhood centres in South Australia.

Recognise and name all places of learning, from birth, as schools. Establish a common language for South Australia regarding teaching and prior-to-school settings, recognising that learning occurs prior to school. For example, remove the 'pre' from preschool.

Words are to change in order to welcome new concepts.

- 3.1 Refine the pedagogical approach in early childhood education to be one that is based on the image of the child as a competent child.
- 3.2 Ensure that all those working with children 0-6 have:
 - (a) Recognised degree qualifications in learning and teaching; and
 - (b) Ongoing quality professional learning opportunities to ensure teachers are engaged in research based on the learning processes of the children and how this should influence their teaching.
- 3.3 Establish a postgraduate Masters degree with a focus on Pedagogy and Pedagogical Leadership (see also recommendation 4).
- 3.4 Develop undergraduate programs in relation to early childhood, linked to the concepts of the Reggio Emilia principles, for inclusion in degrees across the variety of professions. These could include nursing, medicine, allied health, social work, architecture, planning and design
- 3.5 Promote and support ongoing collaborative research regarding pedagogy and architecture in South Australia based on the concepts of child as citizen from birth and the competent child (see also recommendation 4).

From this new perspective of the competent child and the child as a citizen from birth there is a need to revitalize the role of the teacher in schools and early childhood centres.

Redefine the role of the teacher and the school to teachers as researchers and schools as places of research. To refer to teachers as practitioners implies that they act without thinking: it is impossible to separate thinking from acting. The traditional relationship between theory and practice, which designates practice as consequent to theory, is redefined and therefore surpassed. Theory and practice are places in a relationship of reciprocity, but one in which, to a certain extent, practice takes precedence over theory.



The qualification of teachers working with children 0-6 years is crucial to the provision of quality learning opportunities. If we recognize children as citizens from birth and that learning occurs from birth then we must acknowledge that children from birth have a right to well qualified teachers. There is a strong link between the qualifications of teachers and quality: "International research and experience suggests that the qualifications of ECEC staff is the most important determinant of quality, with clear links demonstrated between a higher proportion of qualified and experienced primary contact staff and a higher quality service."

The teacher should have a concept of constant professional learning that is focussed on the learning processes of the children, teachers and parents in the school and early childhood centre. The teacher is able to be in constant dialogue with the learning process, is very well prepared, reflective, and sees his or herself as a learner and researcher. Reflective thinking allows us to step back from ourselves, creating a distance that prevents us from getting caught up in 'events' thereby increasing our awareness of what we are learning and also of the dimension of the possible - of that which it is possible to know and to be. This phenomenon permeates the processes of adults and children alike.

"Documentation is an ongoing opportunity and responsibility to notice and respond to the continuous learning processes of children by their community, self, peers, educators, families."

Making Learning Visible research project participant, April 2013



Schools, Early Childhood Centres and Architects need to collaborate in researching the time, space and environment of learning spaces. The environment is essential to the learning processes of children.

The objective is thus to construct and organize spaces that enable children:

- to express their potential, abilities and curiosity;
- to explore and research alone and with others, both peers and adults;
- to perceive themselves as constructors of projects and of the overall educational project carried out in the school;
- to reinforce their identities, autonomy and sense of security;
- to work and communicate with others;
- to know that their identities and privacy are respected.

The construction and organization of the space should enable the teachers:

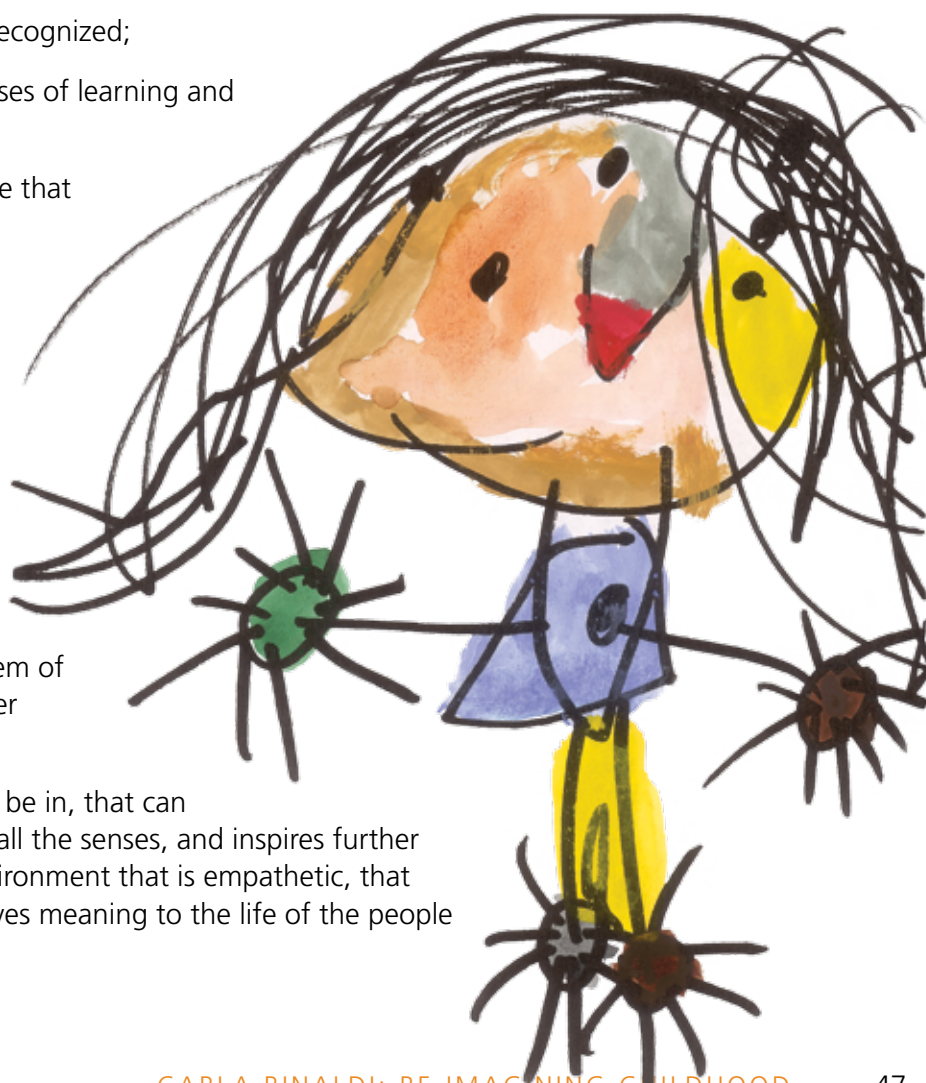
- to feel supported and integrated in their relationships with children and parents;
- to have appropriate spaces and furnishings to satisfy their need to meet with other adults, both colleagues and parents;
- to have their need for privacy recognized;
- to be supported in their processes of learning and professional development.

And finally, the space should ensure that parents can:

- be listened to and informed;
- meet with other parents and teachers in ways and times that foster real collaboration.

This is process-oriented architecture, which fosters communication and is itself communication. A form that is capable of sustaining the projectual interweaving - this system of systems - which is the infant-toddler centre:

An environment that is pleasant to be in, that can be explored and experienced with all the senses, and inspires further advancements in learning. An environment that is empathetic, that grasps the meaning of, but also gives meaning to the life of the people who inhabit it.





4. Establish a South Australian Collaborative Early Childhood Project

South Australia has a strong history of excellence, innovation and leadership in Early Childhood Education and Child Development. Leadership and coordination of a South Australian Collaborative Early Childhood Project would sustain and further develop the work that has commenced during the Rinaldi Residency. This Project could utilise the expertise, interest and willingness of the Rinaldi Residency Partnership Group to ensure the Project has positive outcomes across sectors of the South Australian community.

“The view a society holds of children will determine policies and the quantum of resources allocated for their care and education. The Reggio educators have made visible to their community the crucial importance of the early years; the subsequent resourcing of the early childhood schools in Reggio Emilia demonstrates what is possible when the community responds.”⁶

The Project should be hosted by the State of South Australia and be influenced by pedagogical leaders from all education and care sectors. The project should be cross-disciplinary with openness to working with any discipline which involves children such as architecture, health, social work, and law.

The work of the South Australian Collaborative Educational Project could involve:

- The establishment of continuous research, professional development and networking with Reggio Children, SA through the international study tours, Winter Institutes in Reggio Emilia and week long Institutes in SA with Reggio Children involving pedagogistas, atelieristas and teachers collaborating with Australian educators
- Professional exchanges between Australia and Reggio Emilia
- Annual leadership intensives with visiting educators and leaders from Reggio Emilia working with Australian educators
- Annual conferences for national audiences with Reggio Emilia keynote presenters
- Continuing the development of prototypes initiated throughout the Rinaldi Residency. This includes schools and early childhood centres (currently over 50 sites)
- Continue to encourage and develop the collaborations of the pedagogy and architecture group
- Gain permanent access in Australia (including regional centres) and the Asia Pacific Region to The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition
- Establish a Masters in Pedagogical Leadership in relationship with Reggio Children (under negotiation with Uni SA, DECD and Reggio Children).

“Reggio is not a blueprint. It is an inspiration to be yourself and to find your own excellence and perfect it.”

Jerome Bruner (2000)



⁶ Millikan, J. 2003 *Reflections – Reggio Emilia Principles within Australian contexts* Pademelon, NSW, p 39



South Australia's evolving responses

The Department for Education and Child Development has initiated the "Every Chance for Every Child – Image of the Child Research Project" in collaboration with Jan Millikan. The project invites participants to research their image of the child and reflect on how this affects their relationship and engagement with young children and their families. There are 100 participants from across agencies, preschools, schools and policy areas of DECD involved in the research project.

A prototype in the form of a book club was created to enable educators to explore the concept of pedagogical documentation. This book club focused on the text 'Making Learning Visible – children as individual and group learners Project Zero, Reggio Children'. As a result of this prototype, educational leaders from a diverse range of educational sites across South Australia are engaging in professional learning communities. The focus of these learning groups is on researching quality early years pedagogy, and the value of documentation to make visible the learning processes of children and adults.

Major financial support was provided for The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition held in the State Library of SA from 8 April until 10 May 2013.

Four DECD staff members attended professional learning opportunities in Reggio Emilia in 2013.

DECD staff are working in collaboration with the neo natal unit at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital to explore how the Reggio principles can assist and support the community of parents at the neonatal unit with an emphasis on the competent baby and child, parents, hospital staff, relationships and the environment





Over 3500 people visited The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition between 8 April and 10 May 2013 during its time at the State Library of South Australia. The associated Facebook campaign reached over 100,000 people and Twitter had a reach of 13,367 from #100Languages hash tag. During this time, more than 200 volunteers assisted by supervising the Exhibition and assisting visitors with questions and conversations.

Catholic Education South Australia

Catholic Education South Australia is a system of 103 schools across the state. Inspired by this residency we have established an Early Childhood Network for educators working with children from birth, and Early Childhood Reference Group as well as an Executive Reference Group.

These groups will guide a whole of system learning community approach to continue our research and learning in the area of early childhood education and what this means for our practice in teaching and learning and our service to children and families.

A new professional learning framework based on the principles of teacher as researcher is being implemented with a focus on exploring our Catholic identity in relation to our image of our child and childhood. Theological study of childhood has also commenced.

2014 will be a year of Celebration of Childhood for Catholic Education South Australia. In preparation for this celebration, a position paper on the child and childhood will be developed and documentation will be explored as a strategy for making the learning of children and educators in Catholic Education South Australia visible.



Reconfiguring Quality in Goodstart Early Learning Centres

The purpose of this project is to generate and establish a methodology for designing and systemically implementing a professional learning program in order to embed the principles of Reggio Emilia across all centres in South Australia. Participation in this program should build the capacity of the leadership group that sits around each centre (i.e., Area Manager, Early Learning Consultant and Centre Director) who, in turn, will provide a circle of influence that supports the staff working directly with children and families in each centre. The outcome is to work on a shared agenda to raise the quality of both pedagogical practice and pedagogical leadership across the 44 SA Goodstart early learning centres.

For the program of professional learning itself, there will be a core group of participants that will include:

- 5 Area Managers
- 3 Early Learning Consultants
- 44 Centre Directors

Across the 12 months, it is anticipated that the professional learning program will follow an alternating monthly frequency. That is, one month will focus on pedagogical practice (6 sessions) and the next month will focus on pedagogical leadership (6 sessions). Each focused formal program session will be 3 hours.



The professional learning program will be for an initial period of 12 months. A minimum of 12 months will present initial changes but a commitment of 3 years would enable sustained change to become embedded into the everyday practices, procedures, places and professional identities of the educators who live and work at the centres.

Goodstart Early Learning Whyalla

Goodstart Early Learning Whyalla has been exploring the principles of Reggio Emilia and as a result made some changes to the physical environments within the Centre and their approach to early learning pedagogy.

Reflections from the leaders involved include:

- Changes to the environment increased the trust the educators have in the children – they have planned the use of spaces together. Families, children and the educators were all consulted before any changes and alterations were made.
- There is an observable difference in the calmness of the children.
- The educators have an approach based more on the interests of the children while engaging in intentional teaching.
- The day to day routine is no longer governed by time and is more led by the children collaborating with the educators.
- There has been a process of transformation in the educators and with that, transformation of the environment.
- There has been a change of attitude in the staff. The educational purpose of what is being brought into the environment is being considered more.
- The language of the children has changed – they are now using words we hadn't heard previously like "let's explore".

Participating in the Rinaldi Residency has motivated the educators and has reignited their passion for early learning



Reflections from Salisbury North Goodstart

Before we had the opportunity to become involved in the Rinaldi Residency, we knew that we needed to change, but we didn't know where to begin. Then we met Carla Rinaldi... who taught us to see that the inspiration was right in front of us the whole time, our children.

We reflected on Carla's provocations, our practice and our image of child.

- **Do our spaces provide the children the opportunity to develop relationships?**
- **How do our environments show respect to our children?**
- **How do our environments inspire our children, our families, and ourselves as educators?**

Slowly our practice began to change, we began asking the children what they would like to see changed. This involved mind maps, conversations & drawings. We built meaningful relationships with our children which allowed us to know them and understand them better.

This approach helped us create an environment that truly reflected them.

We are never going to stop learning, we will never be finished, our journey has no end date or time line... The difference now is that we learn alongside our children



TAFE SA

This residency has further influenced and inspired the Early Childhood professionals of South Australia in our work with children, families and the community. At TAFESA, we will continue to investigate and explore the Reggio Emilia philosophy and educational principles which will inform our practice in delivering quality training and education, in the field of Early Childhood, across South Australia.

Carla has asked us to reflect on how we raise and educate our children from birth. At TAFESA we believe this is a question for all us within the community, as children are our citizens.

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange has coordinated the largest group of Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange Australians attending the International Study tour in Reggio Emilia in April 2013. With a total of 101 people attending, the largest single group within this was 31 from South Australia.

These 31 educators from various different schools and sectors met before leaving on the study tour and will meet again afterwards to discuss, share and consolidate their learning. REAIE also organised a national conference for 350 in Adelaide titled Reimagining Childhood: Rights, Potentials and Responsibilities in Dialogue with Carla Rinaldi, Frank Oberklaid and Mark Rose.



The Making Learning Visible project

The Making Learning Visible project began during the residency with the aim of the bringing together services and schools to use the principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Approach as a tool for deepening their understanding and practices in early childhood education.

More than 40 participants from 21 sites across each of the schooling sectors and including TAFE and Flinders University participated in an intensive and challenging project using the strategies of research and documentation, formal learning and professional dialogue to challenge learning and teaching.

Participants expressed a strong commitment to the project and desire to continue:

We have begun a journey and are only just at the beginning.

We have wet our toes... can not stop there, too destabilising to stop now.

We want to continue to go deeper into knowledge and learning processes.

We want to leverage the already positive impacts for children and teachers.

We wish to express this desire with a shared voice.

MLV March 8th 2013

Partners are currently investigating or already implementing ways of continuing the valuable learning and collaboration begun in this project.



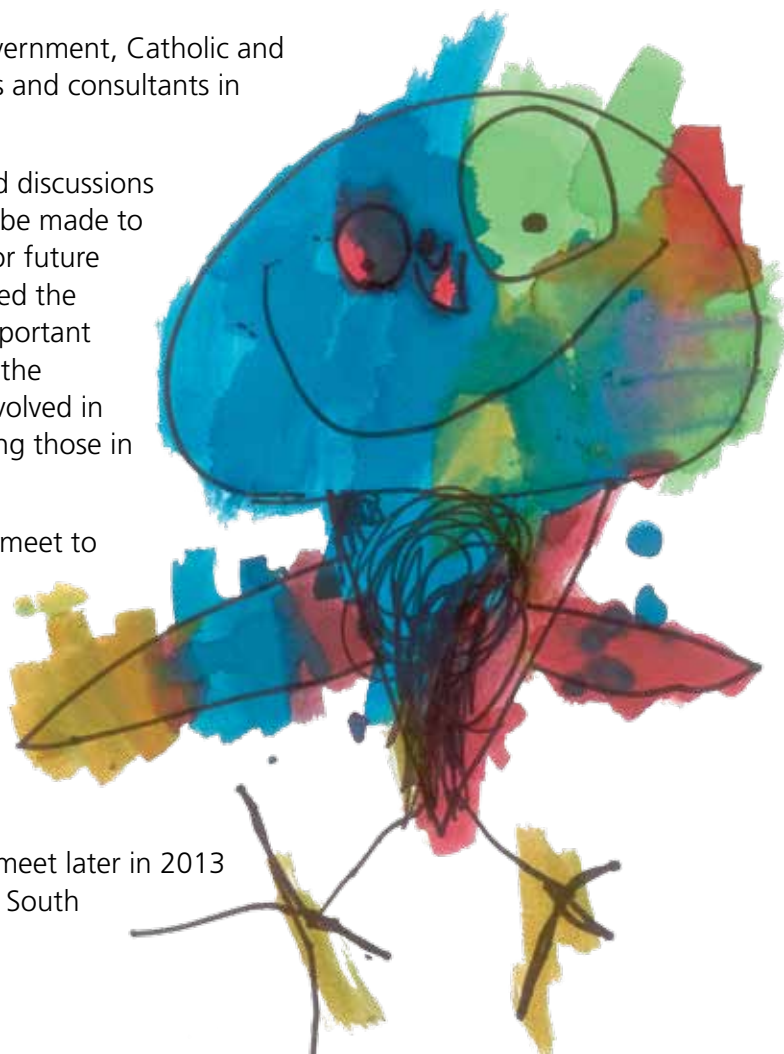
A Pedagogy and Architecture Working group was established as part of the residency to encourage a dialogue between educators and architects around the implications of the physical environment on learning. It included consideration of the outcomes from the Pedagogy & Architecture workshop event held with Professor Rinaldi, and to develop strategies and recommendations for future action.

The group comprises educators from the Government, Catholic and independent education sectors and architects and consultants in Government and private practice.

The group met on a number of occasions and discussions considered appropriate recommendations to be made to Prof Rinaldi as well as general observations for future exploration. These observations have informed the recommendations but are also considered important in driving future change in individuals and in the culture of organisations in South Australia involved in education and the built environment, including those in the training of teachers and architects.

It is intended that the group will continue to meet to further its explorations and to develop research projects in order to maintain the momentum of the residency and the interdisciplinary collaboration.

31 educators and leaders from South Australian early childhood services and schools attended the 2013 study tour to Reggio Emilia. This cross sectoral group will meet later in 2013 to consider possibilities and opportunities for South Australian children and educators.



EChO (Early Childhood Organisation SA Inc.)

EChO (Early Childhood Organisation SA Inc.) has named 2013 as their prototype year for exploring the principles and practices of Reggio Emilia in primary schools. The 'Reimagining Childhood' Project is a yearlong commitment for schools, with four primary schools and one Children's Centre having begun participating in a mentoring project. This Project targets the educators of schools and centres, with inclusion of leaders in order to encourage a whole site approach.

The project includes learning days, leader's days, a reading group and days when the mentors visit teachers on site.

Each site is working towards developing an inquiry question relevant to their community. Although it is still quite early in the project, several themes are emerging, including learning environments, learning through inquiry with children and teachers as researchers.

The Reimagining Childhood Project will grow annually, building the capacity of both mentors and the teachers involved – this is a systemic and structured way of building capacity over time. There are currently four mentors who together with a facilitator are growing knowledge and networks.

"I see a groundswell extending beyond the 0 -5 sector. The gulf between the primary and pre school needs to be bridged in a meaningful way. We are investigating the transition of practice into primary schools. Not the transition of children but of practice...schools being ready for children, not the reverse. "

Barbara Murray AISSA

Early Childhood Australia South Australia Branch

Early Childhood Australia South Australian Branch (ECA SA), DECD Eastern Adelaide Region and Campbelltown City Council developed a partnership in response to the AEDI data and the DECD Every Chance for Every Child discussion paper. We wanted to explore what we could do better for the children of Campbelltown.

As a partner in the Rinaldi Residency ECA SA invited our colleagues to join us in some of the Rinaldi workshops. This participation has initiated a new model of consultation with children for the Campbelltown Council. Such consultation has resulted in changes to spaces, such as the library maze and new projects with a number of schools and preschools in the area. The staff of the Campbelltown Council have since drafted a paper that considers their new image of the child as a competent citizen and what this could mean for decision making processes within the council.

During Professor Rinaldi's first visit ECA SA hosted a meeting with Professor Rinaldi to provide a context of early childhood in South Australia. This meeting involved executive members, branch members, Professor Irabinna Rigney and ATIR staff.

To further support Professor Rinaldi ECA SA conducted and produced case studies of children's current experiences with Early Childhood Services and mapped South Australia's Early Childhood Service provision.

ECA SA also hosted an evening forum "Advocacy: What does it mean? Who for and Why?" and networking dinner for members with Professor Rinaldi and Wendy Lee.

Council of Education Facility Planners International (CEFPI)

The 2014 CEFPI Australasia Region Conference will be held in Adelaide and is currently being organised by the South Australian CEFPI Chapter.

Planning for the Conference has been deeply influenced by the Rinaldi Residency. In particular, the Conference theme "Inside-out Upside-down" has been inspired by the upside down thinking caused by this residency.

A non-traditional conference format is being developed to provide opportunities for participants (predominantly educators and architects) to collaborate and learn in conversations about learning environments. The intention is to have tutors and mentors rather than 'presenters' to encourage exploration of ideas and sharing of experiences.

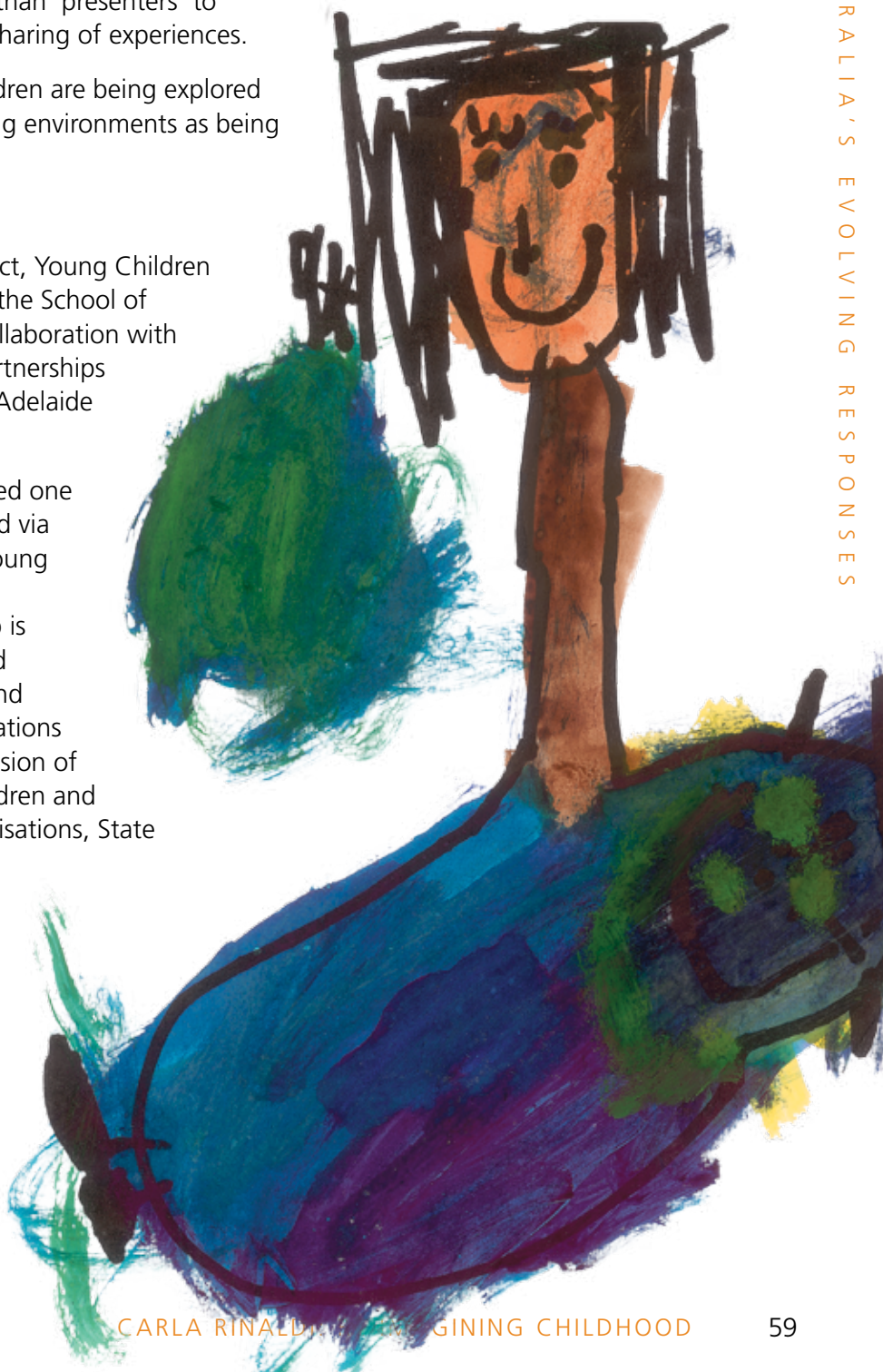
Opportunities for engaging with children are being explored to reflect the nature of school learning environments as being their environments.

Flinders University

During the residency a research project, Young Children as Active Citizens was conducted by the School of Education at Flinders University, in collaboration with the Southern Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Office at Flinders University, and the Adelaide Thinker in Residence Carla Rinaldi.

The first phase of the research involved one council area of southern Adelaide and via a survey examined the inclusion of young children in local government policies and plans, and how active citizenship is defined. The second phase examined in greater depth patterns of access and participation in all of the key organisations within the council including the provision of services and programs for young children and families (e.g. Non-government organisations, State government etc).

After the first phase, a literature review paper was presented to Carla Rinaldi and analyses of the local government data was published in a final report. Respondents in the survey indicated a willingness to further the research project with a focus on becoming more inclusive of young children as active citizens.





Conclusion

The 'Magic Moment'

This is the moment when The 'Thinker' becomes plural and we all have the responsibility.

The response of South Australian individuals, sectors and organisations to my residency has been overwhelming. Attendance at public events as well as meetings, workshops and other events has been significant with more than 6000 people involved. This is including over 3500 who visited The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition, and over 1000 leaders, educators and collaborators participating in meetings and workshops.

The involvement of so many and the wide spread openness to ongoing learning means that South Australia is in a moment of great opportunity, what I have called 'The Magic Moment'.

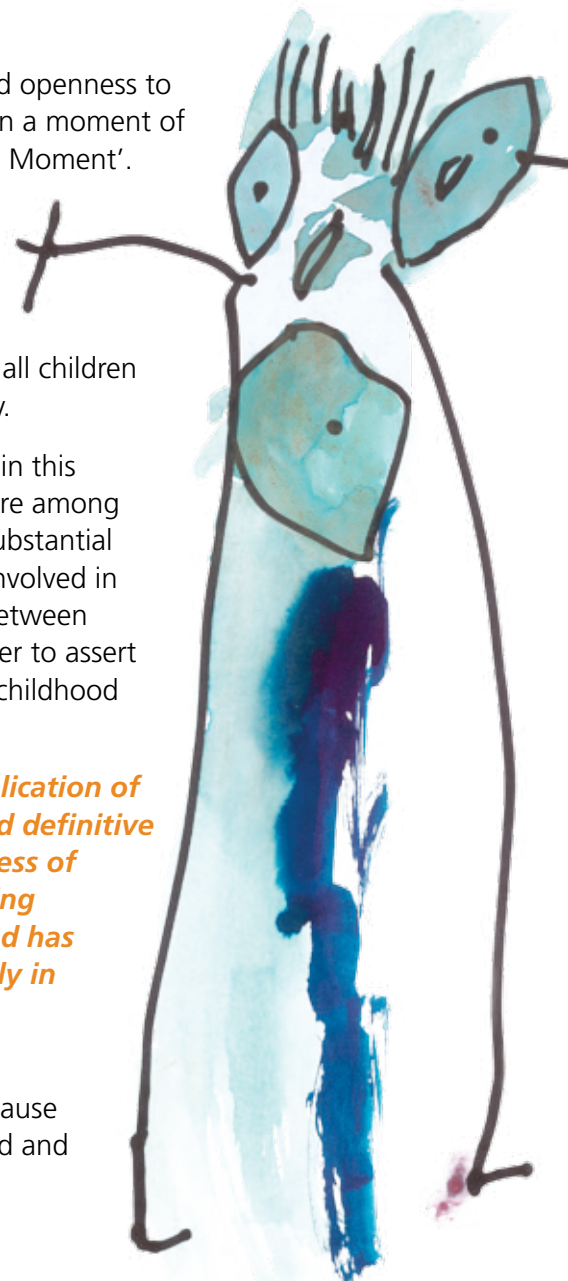
The work in which we have been involved in South Australia strongly aligns with the State Government strategic priority Every Chance for Every Child. I recognise that this State has a leader who is a true champion of the rights of all children which is why he has chosen this strategic priority.

As we came to the end of our partner meetings in this residency, the partners expressed the strong desire among all their organisations to continue to grow the substantial work that has begun. Partners wish to remain involved in confirming and strengthening the relationship between South Australia and Reggio Children, Italy in order to assert South Australia as a point of reference for early childhood education.

'...what we are talking about is not the application of some finalized model, universal in scope and definitive in nature, but rather the adoption of a process of questioning, dialogue, reflection and meaning making which leads we know not where and has no obvious end point: it is work continuously in progress.'

Dahlberg. G, Moss P. and Pence A., 2007.

Endless is the effort that we all should make because we, together with our children, could understand and live learning as an act of love.







Love which is at the same time pleasure and desire to enter in relationship with the world and with the others, to recognize ourself in the others, to be moved every time something new encounters our glimpse and caresses our minds.

Children know this emotion very well and they are biologically pre-disposed to welcome the world with a curious, enchanted and sympathetic glimpse.

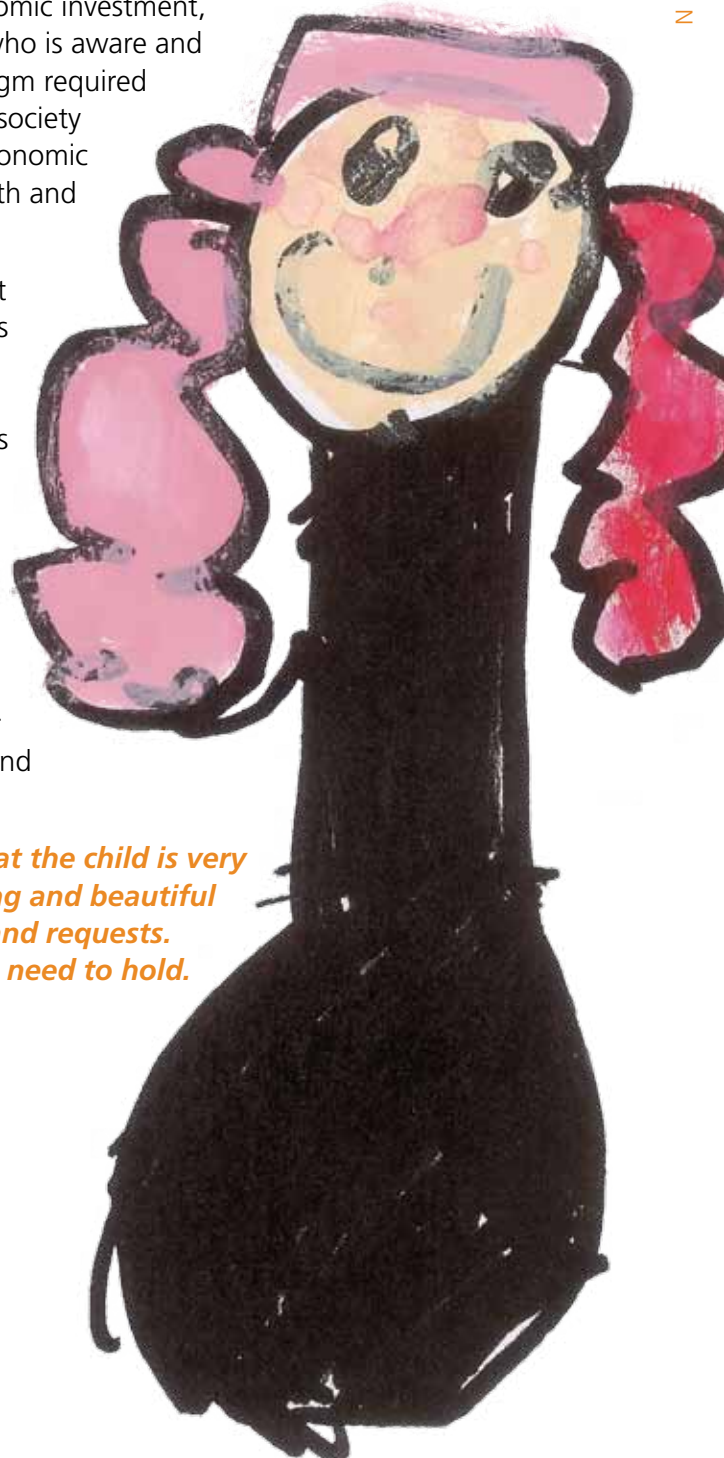
The places of education we want to create for them are schools of poetic quality of life. A project, as the one that has been proposed in this report, that, more than economic investment, requires courage. The courage of who is aware and responsible of the change of paradigm required to teachers, parents and the whole society and supports it with cultural and economic investment giving continuity, strength and future to the project.

It is a project that requires time, that does not tolerate hurry and the tests that aim to evaluate the child and its results with economic criteria, forgiving the beauty and uniqueness of every child and human being, his rights as subject and citizen of the present.

In their minds, in the quality of education we would be able to offer and to live with them there is not only the economic future of our country, but the destiny of humankind and of the world we wish for.

It's necessary that we believe that the child is very intelligent, that the child is strong and beautiful and has very ambitious desires and requests. This is the image of the child we need to hold.

Loris Malaguzzi



Alberton Primary school children created a wonderful work of art in the form of a quilt which was presented to Carla while she was in Adelaide. The images on pages throughout this report are those created by these children as part of their project with their teacher, Dannielle Gibson.

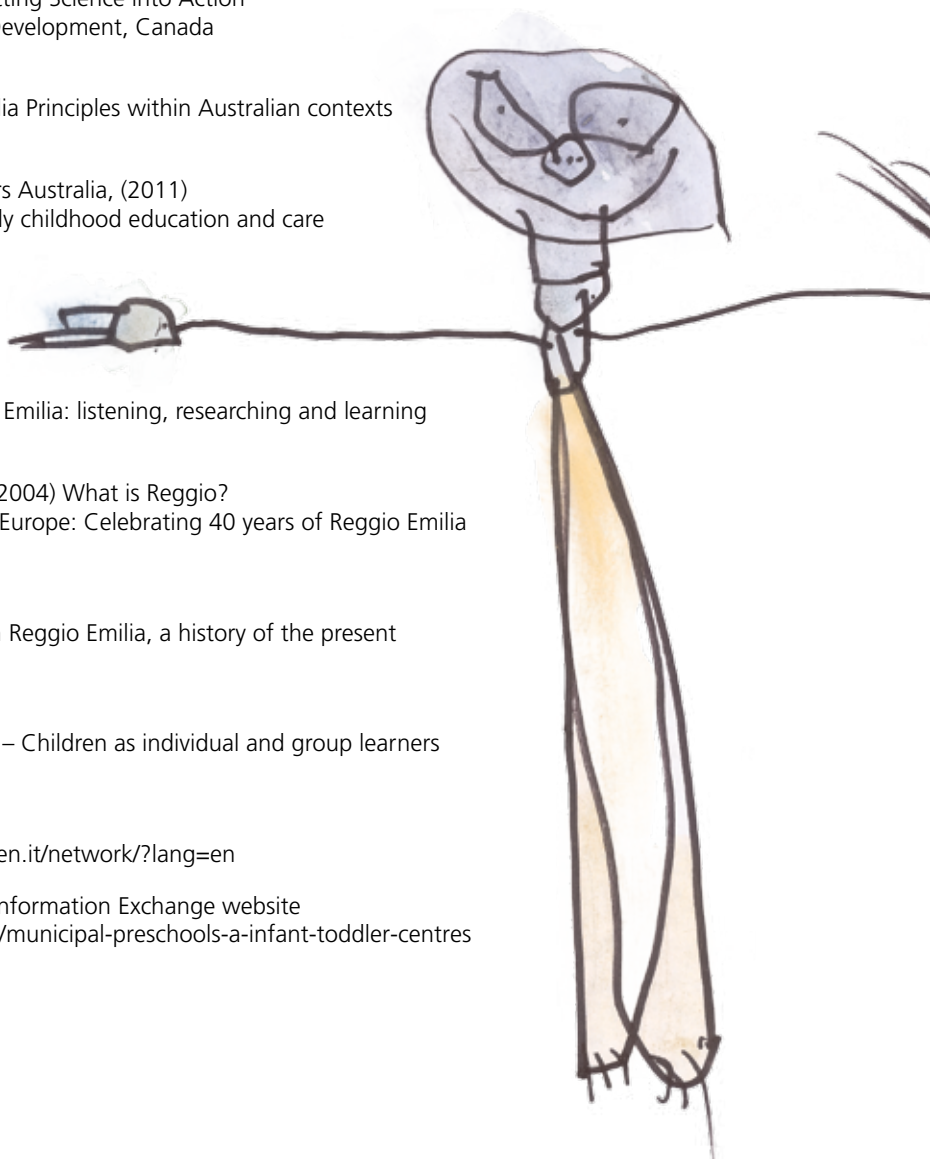
“All the pictures were nice but when we put them together they are beautiful.”

Isabella



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Acknowledgements

It is not easy to find the right words to conclude a report that has the aim to summarize and to give voice to what I have lived and experienced during the past year.

It is not easy to conclude not only a professional but also and above all, a personal experience like the one I have just lived in Adelaide, South Australia.

When I decided to accept the invitation to come to South Australia as “Thinker in Residence”, I was not aware of what I would encounter. I did not realize I was not only starting a new chapter of my life abroad, but I was also embracing a new and unexpected experience I will never forget.

I have been privileged throughout my life to often travel and to visit many different countries of the world, to encounter new cultures, different ways of approaching things, different traditions, and different people. But what I have encountered during my three visits to South Australia is a unique lifetime experience -

a perfect mix of ancient tradition and innovation towards the future, openness and very deep roots to tradition, humanity, strength, competence, passion, commitment, responsibility, enthusiasm, collaboration and collegiality.

I found at least one of these elements in all the people I have had the privilege to meet during my residency and that have significantly contributed to the make this experience like the one it has been.

First of all, I would like to mention a special thanks to the Premier of the South Australian Government, The Honourable Jay Weatherill and his Cabinet for having strongly believed and invested in this important project of the Thinkers in Residence. His vision and ideas have brought me to South Australia to make together “a firm and overt commitment to children and young people”.

Thank you to all the partners who have been able to desire, but above all to build up a new piece of our future.

It is with endless gratitude and appreciation that I would like to mention all the people of the “Thinkers team”: Gabrielle Kelly, Anne Rhodes, Tina Adamo, Trish Tranfa, Jennifer Tirrell, Deanna Howland, Amy Muscara, Margot McInnes, Mike Carroll and Todd Clappis who have significantly contributed to a “good and fruitful residency” with their endless work and strong commitment. Many, many thanks to all of you for your warmth, friendship, solidarity and for having not only supported, but strongly believed in our common shared values.

A big thank you to all the teachers in South Australia who have thought it possible to welcome a new image of the child and therefore of themselves.

A special thank you full of gratitude and affection to Jan Millikan and all the REAIE (Reggio Emilia Australian Information Exchange) for what they have done before and after my arrival into this incredible country.

Another special mention to all those who have strongly supported and believed in the possibility of hosting the Exhibit “The Hundred Languages of Children”.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking all the children of South Australia and all the children of the world. My desire and my hope is that they can take our hands and lead us in the direction we wish to explore together.

Carla Rinaldi, June 2013.

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