



## **REGGIO EMILIA—A SYNOPSIS by Vivienne Singelis**

**REGGIO EMILIA** ('In the Spirit of the Studio' - Learning from the Atelier of Reggio Emilia, Edited by Lella Gandini, Lynn Hill, Louise Cadwell & Charles Schwall, 2005).

Loris Malaguzzi (1929-1994), the founder of Reggio Emilia (a post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War educational movement) remarking on the objective of creativity: "to help children climb their own mountains. No-one can do more."

### **Brief and partial synopsis of Reggio Emilia's philosophical perspective**

- We should avoid the appeal and convenience of educating children in a linear fashion.
- We should see teaching and learning in a more circular way.
- Children aren't empty vessels waiting to be filled with a body of knowledge. They are vessels that are already full – full of questions and theories.
- When children can act on their questions and theories, they develop knowledge and most essentially, the ability to think deeply and make meaning.
- Children are biologically disposed to communicate and establish relationships. This is why we should give them plenty of opportunities to represent their mental images and share them with others.
- We should learn to listen reciprocally and become sensitive to the ideas of others – which helps to enrich our own ideas and generate group ideas.
- This reciprocity also manifests itself in the collaboration between teacher and pupil.
- Children learn through a pattern of inquiry and invention:
  - Cycle of inquiry often referred to as the 'scientific process'
  - Cycle of invention as the 'creative process'

- We're currently in an age in which our culture is driven by the creation of many good ideas, by many people, through networks of small and medium sized companies that are organized as highly collaborative systems.
- Children have opportunities to become:
  - Thinkers who listen
  - Inventors who negotiate
  - Inquirers who collaborate
  - Individuals who are confident in themselves.

### **Reggio Emilia - on 'Creativity'**

- Creativity shouldn't be regarded as a separate mental faculty, but a characteristic of our way of thinking, knowing and making choices.
- Creativity seems to emerge from multiple experiences, coupled with a well supported development of personal resources, including a sense of freedom to venture beyond the known.
- Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding.
- Creativity contributes to a sense of well-being and security in the child.
- In terms of implementing the method, emphasis is placed on:
  - keeping examples of daily work (and narratives) for the children's reference
  - constructing a portfolio for each child
  - continually observing, redeveloping and redefining
  - introducing three dimensional materials
  - paying attention to light and reflections on objects
- Reference material: should include recycled and natural objects.
- Work in the 'atelier' (or creative area) should permeate all areas of the school.