

Thinking Aloud is Allowed

Helene Oberman

Learning from Reggio- links to literacy conference provided an opportunity to explore, see and be provoked into rethinking images of children and an insight into the use of pedagogical documentation and literacy learning.

Guest speaker Helene Oberman, a practising Atelierista* from Bialik College in Melbourne drew heavily on inspirations from Reggio Emilia and demonstrated the links between these practices and the development of literacies. She focused on the importance of pedagogical documentation as a way to:

- value children's conversations
- provide memories of investigations
- use photographs for photo stories
- think about the images associated with thinking
- generate archival material and show that things do not happen in isolation
- share experiences, talents and ideas
- create journals

Helene provoked us to think about the concept of the one hundred languages (100) of children by referring us to a proverb **when the eye leaps over the wall**. That is, it is not what we actually see but what are the possibilities. Therefore, the 100 is an important attitude in thinking about the capabilities of very young children. It gets back to our expectations of children.

Teachers need to unlock the children and provide them with places to explore. Children have been "reading" for a long time before they come to centres or schools. Helene proposed that we ask ourselves why young children should be given large crayons when their hands are so small and why young children be given large brushes to paint when they are so small?

Helene prompted us to think of **multiliteracies** and to **see, think and wonder about the young child as full of curiosity**. She spoke of windows into children's thinking and the need for teachers and educators to challenge themselves by asking:

- Do I value what children say enough to document children's conversations?
- As a teacher am I really listening to children in my class?
- Am I using photographs to encourage literacy with children?
- Do I see the teacher as a researcher and a learner or as a disseminator of knowledge?
- How can I use the environment as the third teacher?

She reminded us that **Reggio is not something that can be copied** because it is a city with a history and a place where children are at the centre of life and thinking; however the philosophy of Reggio and the thinking about children that you take away from this place is a new way of thinking about a competent, intelligent child.

150 teachers and educators attended and visited a number of learning environments to see how different teachers have been inspired by Reggio Emilia. These visits included at least two from Cannon Hill State School, Bulimba State School, Redlands C&K and Paddington C&K and were truly inspirational. They provided participants with opportunities to chat with colleagues on the buses, talk to the teachers in the centres and schools and explore the wonderful examples of interpretations of



Chris Ling, Principal Cannon Hill State School, Sue McKinnon, prep teacher, Windsor State School

practices inspired by the work of the Early Childhood Centres of Reggio Emilia from the earliest years right through to Year 7. The experience provided many narratives of possibilities and powerful visual images of pedagogical documentation. We all **take away new ideas to think about that offer an impetus to experiment** with in our classrooms and places of work. *Thus, the journey of learning continues.*

The environments that we visited had some things in common

- great leaders who understand the value of listening to children, and
- professional educators who understand the importance of pedagogical documentation to make learning visible.

<http://www.reaie.org.au/>

<http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/100exhibit.htm>

<http://www.bialik.vic.edu.au>

* atelierista: a person who is appointed to work in a school or centre who has a specialization or strength in such areas as art, music, engineering, science etc. This specialized knowledge informs the children's learning experiences and supports and extends the teachers thinking about learning.