

RE-inspiration

08 Nov 2014

The inspiration of the Odyssey; the approach, the pedagogy, the curriculum and the culture, comes largely from Reggio Emilia. The spark began in 2007 during our first visit to that little town in Northern Italy. The team was inspired by their innovative ethos, their creative techniques and the dedicated way the teachers paid so much emphasis on the child-centric voice that is so intelligible, valuable and palpable. Their simple yet profound methods captured the precious declarations as the children discovered the world around them by asking questions, testing theories, interacting with materials, collaborating with others, making connections, representing outcomes and reflecting on experiences.

It is not just through words that the children express themselves but by the hundreds of languages they use to convey perspectives and opinions. The idea of the hundred languages of children had spurred us to pay honor to the many ways our children share their thoughts. From the little gestures and reactions to certain explorations; the way they look at a leaf or chase a bubble or arrange a few rocks; to the loud vibrant displays of enthusiasm like splattering paint, dancing and singing, banging on a drum, reciting poetry, twisting wires, public-speaking in front of an audience, writing a story or cycling with a friend.

What makes the Odyssey special is the way we take what we have learned from our trips to Reggio Emilia each year and translate that into the tangible, visible and experiential learning for the campus community, which includes the teachers, parents and children. The fire that burns in the Odyssey shines bright and it continues to be kept ablaze by the inspiration sparked by that initial encounter. The spark that started Odyssey The Global Preschool.

Below we share the experiences of the Odyssey team's study trip to Reggio Emilia.

The Hundred Languages of Children

by Idayu Goh, Programme Specialist



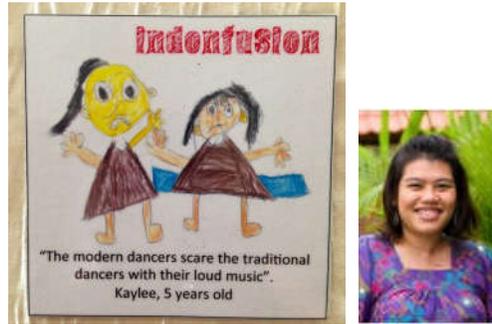
Before I went to Reggio Emilia, I was mesmerized and inspired by the poem 'The Hundred Languages of Children' by Loris Malaguzzi founder of Reggio Emilia approach.

During my trip, I observed the children exploring the environment and making connections to their learning. They did so by using different materials such as clay and recycled items to express and communicate their ideas to their peers and teachers.

The tile magnet is one of the various ways that children express their thoughts and feelings. Children draw as a means to gain better ideas. It is also a tool for drawing to learn. Therefore, I worked with a group of children to express their thoughts on the tiles, using markers and other materials as an interpretation about their experiences. They were not afraid to use new media and glue gun to create their beautiful Tile Magnet as a representation of their Language. By observing children closely, we gain insight into their thinking.

Children's voices on a magnet

by Nurliyana Muhiddin, Curriculum Specialist



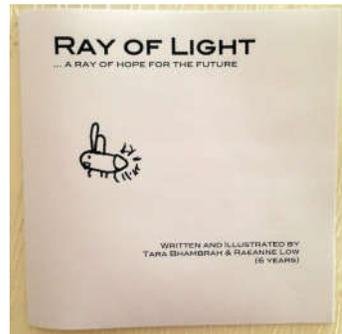
Materials have the potential to draw you in, make you want to stay a while, explore a little (or a lot), try new things, create and wonder. They also have the potential to completely turn you away. During my Reggio Emilia trip this year, I was drawn to observe a group of 5 year olds interacting with metals and magnets in their project corner. In that few minutes of observation, it made me realize how materials enhance learning and discovery when carefully selected for its potential.

Symbolic languages, including drawing, sculpting, dramatic play, writing, and paintings were visible in all the classrooms and children's voices were recorded in the process. Although I was not around earlier to witness their learning, these representations have informed me well on their thinking processes, theories, reflections and knowledge.

Putting these two together, I came up with the idea of documenting children's thoughts and experiences performing on stage on a magnet. With the hope of creating a whole new meaning to their work and made them feel appreciated of their effort, I thank my students for making my days colourful and interesting with the things they say.

Ray of Light ... A Ray of Hope for the Future

by Rebecca Han & Patrick Terence Lim, Programme Specialists



Reggio Emilia had always been the epitome of early childhood learning, where the catalyst of learning is the children themselves. They learn what they want to learn and they do what they like ... because ultimately, it is the children who will benefit most from this experience.

At the heart of Reggio Emilia is the voice of the children. When we visited that little town in Northern Italy, we were touched by the emphasis placed on capturing the very essence of the children as they explore, investigate, research, dialogue with, question, discover, experiment, interact and reflect. This very essence was expressed through the many languages that the children used to convey that message of learning. These languages of children were published into little documentation booklets, which enabled the children's voices to be perpetuated to our very own country and in our Odyssey campuses. These little documentation booklets inspired us in Reggio Emilia, so we have created these 'Ray of Light' booklets to inspire you.

Museum Comes Alive!

by Herman Bakar, Art Specialist



Childhood is a magical time, brief and full of surprises. There are 100 or more ways of spending time with your sons and daughters, and all other children. I was inspired to work with the children in both Kindy 1 and Kindy 2 classes at Odyssey Fourth Avenue to produce these badges after my visit to Centro Internazionale Loris Malaguzzi in Reggio Emilia last year. The visit led me to the poem entitled *Invece Il Cento C'e*, which was part of the '10 short stories for spending time together in a happy and creative way' showcased there.

The poem written by Professor Loris Malaguzzi, presented the idea of childhood that we have and wish to promote. Translated, it means – **No way. The hundred is there.**

The badges, from the colours and elements – in both music and art, were inspired by the artworks that accompanied the poem. Even the colourful fonts of the badges were inspired by the *Invece Il Cento C'e*. During the creation of the badges, the children represented their own stories or adaptation of the characters and each badge consists of the collaboration between 2 to 3 Kindy children. They then shared their ideas to turn into badges, hence the result 'Museum Comes Alive! Badges'.

Coasters

by Drizzle Hshieh, Curriculum Mentor



From my visit to Reggio Emilia, I was impressed by how daily tasks that children engaged in, provided learning opportunities. Children as young as Toddlers, completed tasks such as setting up their lunch area aesthetically by arranging centerpieces, cutlery, plates, serving food, and cleaning up after a meal. Food is a very important matter to children and these activities reinforce the value of enjoying the meal, taking time to appreciate the place you are eating at, and sharing responsibility across all age groups.

By believing that children are capable beings and have many ways of showing their intelligence and understanding of the world, we can help them take charge of their own learning environment. Children bring in their prior understanding from previous dining experiences to share their knowledge on the functions and uses of each piece of tableware, for example, a coaster. By listening to the children's voices, we can add their ideas into their everyday life and motivate them further as they acquire new knowledge.

'A love for the unknown that each day brings, and the love that you feel when you belong, when you're connected to what you do and the world around you.'

Bookmarks

by Fadly Asis, Senior Art Specialist



Books are sources of knowledge and children right from an early age experience reading one way or another. Books are my sources of inspirations for illustrations and creative ideas.

I was inspired by illustrations created by the children of Reggio Emilia. I also love the bookmarks I received as parting gifts from the various schools in Reggio Emilia I visited. These bookmarks not only depict the children's illustrations but also words by them, describing their illustrations and their unique perspective of the world.

The bookmark series are my tribute to the wonderful, creative and awesome children of the Odyssey. They too, like Reggio's and children around the world have unique and creative ideas!

What Do You See?

by Raudha Robu, Curriculum Specialist



“What Do You See?” is an art book with text. Much of what you see in this book depicts the work of the five-year-old children I am teaching this year. It includes drawings, 2-dimensional models, clay-animation and artistic forms of collage. These works are inspired by what I saw from the trip to Reggio Emilia International Study Tour in April 2014.

Aside from art, which is the chosen medium in Reggio schools to present children’s thinking, the concept of this book centers on one of the most important beliefs that are practiced by pedagogists in Reggio Emilia, which is known as the Hundred Languages of Children. Children use hundred different ways to express their thoughts, creativity and what they understood; and that each of these Hundred Languages should be respected and nurtured.

“What Do You See?” is a publication dedicated to the community of Reggio-inspired Odyssey The Global Preschool.

The Self-Portrait Postcards

by Faeizah Ali, Senior Curriculum Specialist



The most important of the Reggio Emilia principles is the belief and practice that **ALL** children feel relevant and respected as learners, researchers, and equal members of the community. We celebrate uniqueness and individuality of children at work, at play, and on the go. The Reggio Emilia philosophy believes that children should have control over their learning and how they choose to represent their learning.

These self-portrait postcards provide you with a special glimpse into just this. They remind all of us that it is each child, along with his or her strengths, successes and accomplishments, which adds to the beauty of the world they live in. We build a community of unique individuals who will learn to soar, succeed and shine together as unique individuals to great heights.

Jeweled Webs

by Yvette Lee, Senior Programme Specialist



It has been a dream of mine to visit the schools of Reggio Emilia ever since I first learned about this approach. I was impressed and intrigued by the idea of the 'Hundred Languages of Children'. In 2009, my dream came true. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend International Study tour in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Art is the medium which the educators in Reggio Emilia used as a language for the children to communicate their thoughts and views. It is also a medium which the teacher used listen to children and to capture these precious jewels that come only from the children. During my visit to Reggio schools, I am very amazed and impressed by the many forms of 'graphic language' used in Reggio classroom, especially wire sculpture.

This project has given me an opportunity to work with children on wire sculpture, and observed how the child used it as tool to express her thinking.

The Bag Do anything you want with it!

by Candy Low, Curriculum Mentor



Having visited Reggio, I was inspired by their culture of inclusivity of children's ideas and interest. Children in Reggio had a voice, a very visible voice. It had also opened my eyes and thoughts to feel the difference in atmosphere when parents, community and children work together as one.

Being in awe of how the Remida works with community members actively donating materials and how teachers resourcefully used them in class has instilled a new respect when looking at raw and loose materials around our environment.

Here, I have created a simple bag, designed by inspirations of different elements I took home from Reggio. These bags' design includes one of children's most loved literature – 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle, creative arts using simple colours and lines, spruced up with recycled materials and children's words.