

NEWSLETTER

Issue 3: December 2009

Reggio Emilia Aotearoa New Zealand



The REANZ Committee/Trust Members (from left) Julianne Exton, Lesley Pohio, Helen Aitken, Glenys Waller, Wendy Larmer, Diti Hill, Chris Bayes, Therese Visser, Lorraine Manuela, Denise Heald, Prue Crarer

SEASON'S GREETINGS & THANK YOU



We want to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals, centres and organisations who have supported us since we established REANZ earlier this year – it is much appreciated. Your response to the many events offered throughout 2009 has been tremendous and we have enjoyed these events as much as your feedback indicates you have.

This year we were able to organise and promote the following professional learning events: The launch of REANZ (with guest Jan Milikan); Conversation groups; Melbourne Study tour; Centre visits; Waikato Seminar day; Margie Carter Evening & Workshop day; and the establishment of our REANZ website and library.

As a charitable trust, we are committed to make sure that any profit made is used for the ongoing promotion of the Trust's purpose and aims: 'to share information about the educational practice of Reggio Emilia with teachers'. Thank you for enabling us to continue to do this - Your contribution, enthusiasm and engagement in our events and communications continue to motivate all of us to organise and plan further events (more information about that to follow!).

A Snapshot of 2010 REANZ Events:

Next year we expect to continue to be busy and the calendar is already filling with professional learning opportunities & events:

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| April | Reggio Emilia Italy Study Tour | |
| April | Symposium | Dunedin |
| April | 2 day Symposium | Auckland |
| May | Melbourne Study Tour 1 | |
| TBA | Centre Visits | |
| TBA | Conversation series | Auckland & Waikato |
| Sept | Melbourne Study Tour 2 (limited spaces available) | |

Our First Big Event in 2010...

Plans are well underway for our events being held in Auckland and Dunedin in April.

‘Embracing educational change: The power of pedagogy and teaching in the early years’

“We have the knowledge and the wisdom to change; early years teachers can take the lead”

We are delighted to announce that **Janet Robertson, Associate Professor Alma Fleet, Anthony Semann, Wendy Shepherd and Toby Honig**, presenters from the ‘Unpacking Conference’ held in Sydney each year, will be joining us for this wonderful professional learning opportunity

Dunedin (In friendship with University of Otago)

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|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Monday 12th April: | One day registration | 2.00pm – 8.30pm | Cost: \$175.00 |
| | Half day registration | 6.00pm – 8.30pm | Cost \$75.00 |
| | Venue: Faculty of Education, University of Otago | | |

Auckland

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|---|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Friday 16th April: | 9.00 – 6.30pm | |
| Saturday 17th April: | 9.00 – 3.30pm | Cost: \$365 (2 day registration) |
| Venue: Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Akoranga Drive, Northcote | | |

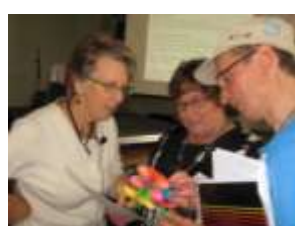
Information has already been sent to our friends and registration will be opening soon on our website (www.reanz.org). Spaces will be limited - we urge you to register early before we advertise it more widely in the new year.

Melbourne Study Tours 2010 Information

The Melbourne study tour for May 2010 is full and plans are well underway - there are a few places still available on the September tour – so please register your interest now by contacting Chris Bayes on chris.bayes@xtra.co.nz

The week’s study tour will involve: visiting six centres in Melbourne where teachers are engaged in innovative practice; engage in facilitated professional discussions; and of course dabble in a little sightseeing and shopping. The cost is currently \$1990 - this covers air travel, accommodation, study tour, transfers in Melbourne and insurance. The study tour guides from REANZ are experienced and know how to look after you.

Review and reflections from two participants at Margie Carter's Seminar: 'Creating a reflective culture that transforms pedagogy' – Saturday 3rd October 2009



Review written by: Michelle Hughes (above), Team Leader, Centre One, *Kids' Domain*, Auckland

The warm and welcoming environment I arrived into was the perfect antidote to the cold and wet day outside. The hall had been beautifully prepared for us with individually decorated tables, displays and resources to look at. Margie introduced herself and told us a bit about where she comes from. I really appreciated her sharing of this information and hearing of the links with the aboriginal people of her area.

Firstly we were encouraged to become students of our own teaching. Teachers are learners too and we need to constantly seek to improve on our own practices and ways of thinking. Part of this process involves regular critical reflection. By working closely with others in a collaborative way we can expand our perspectives, gain insight into different ways of thinking and challenge our own beliefs and practices.

Margie shared some examples of stories of children's learning written by teachers who used a reflective and collaborative process to gain broader perspectives and understandings not only of the child's learning but of their own learning. We then were given an opportunity to share our thoughts and perspectives within our groups at each table. It was very useful to take the time to share our knowledge with each other and to dialogue and reflect on our own practice, seeking "to co-create new knowledge through our collaboration".

We can create a culture of inquiry with children by using a Thinking Lens for Reflection and Inquiry. The key elements of this process are: know yourself; examine the physical/social/emotional environment; find the details that capture your heart and mind; take the child's point of view; collaborate with others to expand perspectives; reflect and take action. Also, use a protocol of re-visiting activities and re-presenting ideas to 'get smarter' (that's what they say in America). For infants and toddlers this can be done with photos. We were reminded to make documentation available to children.

Teachers were reminded to: continue to learn about 'learning to be good teachers'; to move from individual representations towards collaborative representations; to provoke children's thinking; to allow children to see themselves as teachers by making their learning visible.

After lunch we had the opportunity to experiment with and explore an object that we hadn't seen before. This certainly created a buzz in the room and a sense of wonder and joy on people's faces! What fun to interpret and discover new and different ways to utilise and manipulate an object. This was a great reminder for me of what it must be like for a child to discover and experiment with something that they have never seen before.

We can become theory makers too! We can contribute to a body of knowledge – in our own context through critical inquiry. This informs us as we engage children's thinking and their excitement about possibilities as they enter a process of inquiry too. This distributes the power of knowledge.

Margie also encouraged us to look at learning stories not just as a portfolio entry but as a pedagogical tool to help us learn about learning. Something that stood out for me was the statement "a programme has intellectual vitality if the teachers' individual and group interactions are mainly about what the children are learning, planning and thinking about, plus their interest in each other, and only minimally about the rules and routines".

The chocolate bars at 3pm couldn't have been timed better! To the REANZ team, thanks for the sugar boost and a well-organised day.



Overview written by: Trish Searle (above), Lecturer, Bachelor of Teaching (ECE), Waikato Institute of Technology

Margie Carter and REANZ certainly practice what they teach. At the recent REANZ 'Provoking Encounters' Seminar, with Margie Carter, in Auckland they 'created a reflective culture that transformed my pedagogy'.

The environment for the 'provocation' had been set up in an aesthetically pleasing way. Tables and chairs were set in groups with centre pieces on the tables designed for exploration and delight, using natural resources, fabrics and colours. I chose where I sat by the display on the tables and the people already seated.

Margie encouraged us to practice 'learning communities', to ask questions of ourselves and others, to create a culture of inquiry, and to explore and examine responses as individuals and teachers. Among other topics Margie spoke of using a 'thinking lense', which is to be aware of what is engaging our hearts and minds, and to seek the child's point of view and reflect critically on documentation. We examined open-ended resources and were challenged to represent on paper how we thought they worked. This was to deepen the understanding of the process we put children through when they are asked to represent their ideas.

I came away from the encounter suitably provoked, with the message that the journey of learning is equally as important to cultivate for teachers as it is for children. It is a journey to be taken in a collaborative way within a learning community, one where an aesthetically pleasing environment can be a third teacher for adults as well as children.

A quote for Inspiration

"We have always maintained that children have their own questions and theories, and that they negotiate the theories with others. Our duty as teachers is to listen to the children, just as we ask them to listen to one another. Listening means giving value to others, being open to them and what they have to say. Listening legitimizes the other person's point of view, thereby enriching both listener and speaker. What teachers are asked to do is to create contexts where such listening can take place".

Carlina Rinaldi, cited in Edwards, Gandini & Forman (1998), p. 120.

Library Update – do you want some Christmas holiday reading?

A library is now established and we continue to grow this as resources allow. If you or your organization would like to donate a book for the library, please contact Chris at chris.bayes@xtra.co.nz. We will acknowledge all donations on the inside cover.