

Farewell Notes Reggio Emilia Study Tour 2011

Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou Katou
Buona Sera, Mi Chiamo Wendy Larmer
Greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand

Thank you, Bene, Grazie to Reggio Children
- Friends of Reggio
- The Infant and Toddler and Preschools of Reggio Emilia.

As a friend of Reggio Children International Association, New Zealand is delighted to have participated in this study tour, during this important year that celebrates 150 years of the Italian Flag.

It is only 5 days since the Mayor, Graziano Delrio, welcomed us to the city of Reggio Emilia, world famous for its Preschools. He encouraged us all to write to our Mayors to invest in our own cities youngest citizens.

New Zealand has invested in its youngest citizens over the last 20 years, through financial subsidies, developing a National Early Childhood Curriculum “Te Whariki” and investing in Teacher Education BUT we realize we must remain politically active to keep our citizens of tomorrow to the front of our future directions. We need to invest in their futures through research, knowledge and education.

We relate to Reggio Emilia in many ways - currently we are looking to rebuild our 2nd largest city. Christchurch, so badly damaged in a 2nd earthquake only six weeks ago - we are wearing Canterbury colours, red and black, symbolic to the city. We take heart from your story “Brick by Brick” on the building of the 1st Reggio Emilia preschool after the 2nd World War. We have many preschools which need to be rebuilt, brick by brick, after the earthquakes.

You told us to understand the Infant and Toddler centres and preschools – we must first understand the city and community.

We have immersed ourselves in the treasures and experiences of your city, delighted in the landscapes, the people, the food and the language. We have sampled the cheeses, hams and balsamic vinegar! Bellissimo!!

Then we visited the Infant and Toddler centres and preschools. What joys we have seen and heard.

We have gained many more threads to weave into our own Whariki. NZ’s national early childhood curriculum is symbolised by a woven mat, a Whariki and through the conversations and discussions our participants have collected a bountiful supply of threads to weave, including:-

- To re-build
- Celebrate with Joy
- Learn by doing (my old primary school motto)
- The value of time – time to prepare
- Time is a friend not an enemy
- Listen to children
- Space
- Special Rights of Children
- Imagine

Balance Theory and Praxis
Citizenship and importance of community
Generosity
Pay attention to detail
Aesthetics
“Nothing without Joy”

At the beginning of the week we heard about the “Image of the Child” from Maddelena and Daniela – we saw it by example on the Preschools visited. WE rejoiced in the attention to detail in all the environments we visited. We were filled with *desire*, to see the *stars on the dark night*, to *keep the monsters in the vortex* and to *smell the perfume* of the projects.

As we heard about the research at Parma University on “Mirror Neurons” for children’s capacity to learn through experience we felt stimulated, to have our own experiences embedded and assimilated through “mirror neurons” having come to your city, experienced the rich tapestry of history, culture, learning and challengers – we know we will leave the richer for this week.

Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou, Tena tatou katoa

New Zealanders will join me for a Waiata “ Te Aroha”



Reflections through emails shared with the participants of the Reggio Emilia 2011 Tour

I am still doing a lot of pondering and introducing Reggio little by little. There is a lot of interest out there and I guess it is up to us to promote

and demonstrate the wonderful world of Reggio to others. We had a lovely planting at our local reserve on Monday and we are now Kaitiaki in conjunction with the Hamilton City Council. I am amazed at how citizenship has really impacted on me and the importance of the children being seen and part of Hamilton City. Isn't it great to be so excited by 7 days of enthusiasm in Reggio?
Arohanui Jennifer

I have got some amazing investigations happening after Reggio. We are looking at printing our first book made by the children, for them to take home and I am trying to get a big canvas that my three year olds have made displayed in an art gallery. From Gina

I got back on Monday from an INCREDIBLE adventure! It is amazing how being in other countries really highlighted my sense of belonging to Aotearoa. I think that is what Carla Rinaldi was talking about when referring to 'other' - I think I'm getting it or rather some of it (reflection takes time!)

What a coincidence - I sat next to Lucinda on the plane to London. Lucinda is from Australia and was at Reggio! All we did was talk the whole time and you can guess what we talked about. Magla, Lucinda was like you - she thoroughly enjoyed the presentation about family involvement and was moved to tears. She also cried during our waiata - I am sure that you all agree that it was a special moment for all of us even more special because you were there Sue. An American woman that I made contact with began her e-mail with how she also was moved to tears. Thank you and congratulations Wendy - you did a fantastic speech and represented us so well - you are a great Matriarch! I really enjoyed the photos you sent Wendy - not only a magnificent Matriarch but also an amazing photographer.

Prue I hope your back is better now and that you really did listen to the advice to rest - even if it goes against your grain! Thank you both for such a wonderful experience and yes I do think we should do it again.

Lots of love
Karanne

I was straight back into school on Monday with 14 new girls all very excited at the prospect of starting school - certainly a good way of avoiding jetlag. As in the past I have come back from Reggio and from my visits to schools in England inspired and full of ideas to share with my colleagues. I now just need the time to read my notes, reflect and decide just what to work on first. Liz and I will be organising some PD with the staff later in the term. Thank you Wendy and Prue not just for your leadership while we were away

but for all the work that went in prior to the trip so that everything ran so smoothly. It was lovely to spend time with people I had met previously and also to meet new people in such a wonderful environment. Hopefully we will have a chance to meet and reminisce about Reggio sometime in the future
Glenys

*I'm finally back home in NZ... Thank you all for a wonderful experience. The friendships made, the laughter (and tears...), sharing of experiences and most of all the opportunity to be there with such a great group of passionate teachers. I am still reflecting and digesting it bit by bit. Thanks Wendy and Prue all your hard work and looking after us so well.
Jo*

Bo journo!

The journey has been eventful to, within, from and since Reggio. I think most people have already heard my excited rambling more than once and tolerated DVD and CD watching etc! Even the children in the Holiday Programme were totally absorbed with the story from the "Parent Participation" session.

It was a great opportunity to meet other NZ ers also and be able to recommend a family to contact a new found Reggio colleague from their neighbourhood on the basis of our shared experience.

Many thanks my friends for leading the way!

Arohanui Helen

Hi, fellow Reggio Emilia traveler's

Hard to believe that we are all back. I have come back home convinced that to 'know' the Reggio approach you really need to have lived and breathed the city of Reggio Emilia as we did, particularly the beautiful quarters in which we lived for over a week. Hotel Posta will be forever etched in my mind. I came away thinking about what education means in general not just applicable to my setting and questioning how we as a community can take greater responsibility for the education of everybody in our community. I really like the way everyone was visible in the Reggio community on a daily basis in the piazzas from the young children on the bikes with their parents to the elderly men sitting together in groups sipping espressos. The challenge now I'm back home will be to see what difference I can make -difference for myself and those I work and play with. Best wishes, Julie.

Kia ora koutou

It has been great to hear from everyone. What an adventure it has been and it was wonderful meeting you all. I also extend thanks to Wendy and Prue for leading the tour, sharing your expertise and for encouraging ongoing discussions. Hopefully these will continue.

I was starting to think the Reggio part of our trip was becoming blurred by all the other wonderful experiences but today I have been preparing for a class and using some of the literature and ideas I gathered. This has me refocus and reflect on some of the experiences. I just hope I can do it justice and am able to inspire our students by sharing some of these ideas.

Nga mihi nui
Helen

Hi all,

It's great to be hearing from everyone. I got back and already I'm quietly reminiscing on what was a fantastic learning experience and adventure. Thanks very much Wendy and Prue for all your hard work making the trip such a huge success. It was wonderful to meet everyone and I look forward to sharing our reflections and thoughts. Before then I'll try and share my new understandings of Reggio Emilia with my colleagues and families. This seems challenging as the trip has left such a deep impression on me that it feels almost too intangible to express. No doubt I'll find a way!!

Kind regards
Bridgette

Hi Everyone,

I hope everyone has made it home safely and getting settled back into work. I really enjoyed meeting you all and wanted to thank you for making me feel so welcome in the group! It was great to talk to you all about education in NZ and it made me feel quite homesick.

My school is quite excited about the Reggio philosophy and I look forward to sharing some of my reflections soon.

Thanks,

Sarah

ECC/ Grade 1 Art

ES Service Learning Coordinator

United Nations International School, Hanoi

Hi Everyone

Well were do I start I had the most amazing time and I so enjoyed all the lovely people I met. Thank you all for the support and friendship you all helped me through a tough time and I have come back a lot more positive and with a better state of mind. (*Following the earthquakes in Christchurch*) What awesome tour leaders you are Wendy and Prue as well as great company. I hope everyone is well and enjoying being back.
Love Sue -Christchurch

Hi Wendy, Prue and all the amazing teaches that I met.
Thank you to everyone for making the Reggio trip an amazing experience
Thanks Wendy and Prue for organizing the tour.
I appreciated all of your contributions and discussions that we had. You were
all an inspiration and thank you for sharing your passion
All the best
Sharmini

Dear all.
I really loved the experiences in Reggio Emilia and look
forward to continuing the rich conversations with Bridgette
and others who visited before. Best regards and thanks
Wendy and Prue for all the effort to make it successful.
Julianne

Thanks Wendy and Prue for all your hard work to make it such
an enjoyable trip. I am home, but look forward to catching up
again soon.
Best wishes to everyone on the Reggio trip.
Warm regards
Liz

Hi All,
What a great group you all were and what fun it was to meet you all and share
the special time of being in Reggio together. So much to absorb and reflect
upon. The trip to Cinque Terre was amazing and it was a wonderful way to
unwind. I am sure that many of you will return to Italy and really those villages
are a must, interesting and full of beauty. It is lovely to be home and enjoying
lots of home grown veggies! We are looking forward to photos and some of
your finer moments, especially reflections etc. keep well, and I look forward to
hearing your news. Ciao Bella, Prue

Kia ora my fellow travelers and good companions!

Its great to hear from you Sharmini, Wendy & Prue thanks – I too would like to say once again
how much I appreciated all the support, time and effort you put into an inspiring and
successful trip.

I am holding on to my wonderful experience in Reggio with all my new found friends who are
all magnificent in many different and rich ways. I appreciate all of you and our conversation
and discussions. The conference recordings I taped I have listened to again in order to
reclaim the experience and my photos although minimal due to camera failure are a help

Miss you
Arohanui
Magla



International Study Group
Reggio Emilia Italy
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