

## **EXPLORING THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH**

### **The Primary Pillar attended the Reggio Emilia Conference August 6 – 8 2008.**

It was a wonderful conference and the Primary Pillar was very grateful for the support received from the Catholic Primary Principal Association.

Given the major changes that are presently occurring in Catholic Primary schools in Western Australia, the conference supported the Primary Pillar to better understand the principles of the Reggio approach and how to emulate a Reggio inspired approach in our schools.

### **The focus was on the School As A System Of Relations, Knowledge And Organisation**

It is important to understand that the Reggio Emilio approach is founded on theoretical inspiration which gives priority to the constructive and interpretative potentials of the human being.

It is based on learning as the process through which we share culture. It emphasises the role of discovery and invention, but also of comparison and co-participation.

### **The school is build in the image of the child**

The child is welcomed as a 'holistic' human being and is seen as being full of potential, intelligent and competent.

The Core principles of the Reggio Emilia approach are to have an understanding:

- Of the image of each child in our minds and hearts.
- That the Reggio approach is not a set curriculum, but a way of thinking about the child.
- About the importance of the child's life experiences.
- That the teacher needs to join the child in the journey of learning and that learning is flexible according to the needs of the child.
- That the role of the teacher is as a partner, nurturer and guide.
- That the environment is a learning tool which stimulates and provokes interest and is the third teacher.
- That lighting, sound and colour create the environment.
- That the learning environment is the child's world. The approach emphasis the need to bring the outside inside and that the outdoor space offers diverse physical experiences. It encourages the child to be related to what is around and to become engaged with the environment.
- That Reggio is a way of working and thinking with children.
- That the curriculum is child originated (not child centred) and teacher framed bearing in mind the interests of the child. It encourages the child to look at things differently, look beyond the obvious, don't stay with conformity, be open to new thought and to look from a different point of view.

With this in mind, the approach emphasis the need for interest areas to be set up, which are teacher framed and linked to the curriculum and which initiate provocation that create the child's interest (a motivation). This then stimulates the interest and the desire to learn.

One key aspect of the Approach is its reliance on the Documentation process. This process is considered because of the following benefits. These benefits allow:

- Children to take ownership of their own learning.
- Validation of children's worth and works.
- A deepening understanding of the child's learning and skills acquisition
- The teacher to plan for extension.
- The teacher to identify and correct misunderstandings.
- For authentic assessment to be gathered for each child.
- For continuous improvement from a teaching and learning perspective.

It is important to emphasize that the only place the Reggio Approach can be adopted in its entirety is in Reggio Emilia Italy. Schools in Western Australia cannot implement a Reggio program in their schools. All schools can hope to do is to implement a Reggio inspired approach.

## **The Reggio Emilia View of the Child**

### **The Child Is Made Of One Hundred.....**

The child has a hundred languages  
a hundred hands  
a hundred thoughts  
a hundred ways of thinking of playing and of speaking.

A hundred, always a hundred ways of listening,  
of marvelling and of loving.

A hundred joys for singing and understanding.

A hundred worlds to discover,

A hundred worlds to invent and to dream.

The child has a hundred languages  
(and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)  
**but they steal ninety-nine.**

### **The school and the culture separate the head from the body.**

They tell the child to think without hands  
to do without head  
to listen and not to speak  
to understand without joy  
to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child:  
to discover the world already there  
and of the hundred they steal ninety nine  
forcing thought without a body and action without a  
mind.

They tell the child:  
that work and play,  
reality and fantasy,  
science and imagination,  
sky and earth,  
reason and dream  
are things that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child that the hundred is not there.

**BUT.....The child knows the hundred is there.....**

