



# GARDEN SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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## Thoughts for the Week

By Richard Marotta, Ph.D., Headmaster



One of the most interesting developments in early childhood education took place in Italy after the end of World War II. In a town in Emilia Romagna, a group of educators led by Loris Malaguzzi, developed and designed an early childhood program now known as Reggio Emilia. Building on the work of earlier educators, while both accepting and rejecting some of these earlier ideas, Malaguzzi created a program that used "relationship-driven learning environments" as its basic tenet.

In an article for the NYAEYU, Mary Ann Biermeier examines how these ideas have spread throughout the early childhood community and have in part or in whole been adapted, modified and made a part of a number of early educational structures.

The idea of group-cooperative or group-shared learning can have a profound effect on an early childhood curriculum since it works with the idea the collaborative learning and actually corresponds with the development of the child's mind during these early stages of development. Instead of the Piagetian idea that development is "largely internal", the Reggio Emilia approach is that development is primarily communal. Now this, of course, comes from the first practice of this program in a small town, which actually became a part of the learning environment.

As we move into our Character Education Program value of inclusiveness, it is interesting to note that among the characteristics and strengths of this program are fostering self-identity, forming respectful relationships, supporting collaborative learning experiences and engaging in discovery and investigation (Biermeier, p. 78). Of course these are values that are a part of many early childhood programs, including our own at Garden. Indeed, these same values can be and should be part of all school programs including right to the end of high school.

We know that the importance of identity has value in developing a learner's 'ownership' of ideas. Respectful relationships enhance the quality of communication in our lives and work. Collaboration is something we do every day in our professional lives. And finally, investigation and discovery are the driving forces behind our primordial human impulse to learn and create. Our role as educators and learners revolves around the idea of our openness to experience and to being able to take from the collective world of learning those things that advance our mission to teach and learn together.

Have a wonderful winter break and see you all on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February.

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