From: Cecilia Waddey, Leigh Anne Strawn, Takisha Johnson, Jenny Lawsky and Bayless Fleming, and Elizabeth Zorn.

Attached are reactions to our summer Professional Development Experience at The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance Conference. Many thanks to the Professional Development Committee and to the monetary donor who encouraged us to find ways to enhance the art and science of our teaching.

Also attached are some photos - mostly of the Mid-Pacific Institute, an independent school that is next door to The University of Hawaii.

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**North American Reggio Emilia Alliance – NAREA - Summer Conference:**
**Mid-Pacific Institute, Honolulu, Hawaii**

Dialogues for Quality in Education - Dialogue Across the Pacific: Honoring the Child as Learner, Collaborator and Citizen

**Cecilia Waddey and Leigh Anne Strawn:**

**Some of the main things you learned from the conference.**

- The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) mission is to build a diverse community of advocates and educators to promote and defend the rights of children, families and teachers of all cultures through a collaboration of colleagues inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

- NAREA brings together educators with the aim of supporting and strengthening those who are interested in the experiences and ongoing educational research of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

- NAREA encourages teachers of programs for young children to invest in an ongoing approach that includes permanent study, research, collaboration, innovation, transparency, and exchange.

- Much of the Reggio Emilia philosophy is based on protecting children from being subjected too early to institutionalized doctrines, which often make learning a chore rather than an extension of natural curiosity.

- On a social and political level Reggio Emilia believes in the important roles of wonder, imagination, discovery, and play in early childhood learning

- The message of Reggio Emilia is based on research and innovation, rather than prescribed dogma.
• A key phrase was “the child is a researcher”. The teacher must be a researcher along side the children, not a follower of curriculum. The adult supports children to make their research more interesting. Adults must learn to listen to the children and support their research, questions without leading them on and suggesting adult ideas. Research is not something separate, it should be done daily with children.

• Balance between the adult and the child so an adult supports the motivations and creativity of each individual child.

• Children must have beauty around them. All the examples of Reggio schools were beautiful, engaging, flexible, child centered spaces. They seemed to share an openness and design that allowed children independence. Quality people and materials are a priority. Very young children used great electronic equipment such as cameras, smart boards, and computers. The art supplies are high quality because they “allow children to give shape to their ideas”.

• Regarding parents: Parent involvement may be different than we are used to. They may not be involved in the classroom. The goal would be to guide parents so they help teachers follow the lead and interests of the children. They suggest making parents visible in the “documentation” and get their help with the “documentation”, such as photographs, videos and recording children’s comments.

2. How will you apply those things that you have learned back in your classroom or in a project?

Ways to apply what has been learned:

Goals are to be an encouraged, encouraging children to...
• Be playful
• Think with their hands
• Speak (and teachers will listen)
• Be joyful
• Love
• Marvel
• Wonder
• Observe
• Hypothesize
• Discuss
• Take responsibility
• Show independence
• Be creative
Other goals are to let the following not be separated, but exist together...
  • Reality and fantasy
  • Work and play
  • Science and imagination
  • Reason and dream
  • Additional goals to base teaching on...
  • Giving respect
  • Allowing discovery
  • Showing true interest in each child
  • Encouraging questioning

3. **Will the experience change the way you are teaching? How or why not?**

The experience at this NAREA Conference validates much of Galloway teachers’ teaching style and it will also extend our abilities to be a better teachers. Things to remember:

• Children are filled with their own curiosity and creativity. They are not vessels to be filled with an adult’s knowledge.

• The curriculum must be flexible and a large part of it needs to come from children’s thoughts, ideas, and observations. Try to think of ways to help our children be active researchers and work to be a researcher along with them.

• Be a partner, nurturer, and guide to each child.

• The child is a teacher, the teacher is a teacher, and the environment is the “third teacher.”

• Continue encouraging children to be lifelong learners and to have a passion for exploration and learning.

4. **Would you recommend your experience to other Galloway teachers? Rank your experience from 1 to 10.**

This experience is recommended to other Galloway teachers, especially those who teach Pre-School through First Grade. To explore this area further, it would be great for one or more Galloway teachers to go to Italy to see the actual Reggio schools.

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The two speakers for the Reggio Conference were Claudia Giudici and Emanuela Vercalli. Both ladies had attended the Reggio Emilia school in Italy and now they work at the Infant-Toddler Centers, Insituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. The conference centered around two concepts: Dialogues for Quality in Education and Dialogue Across the Pacific: Honoring the Child as a Learner and Collaborator and Citizen. The lectures were broken down into categories that focused on: responding to the right of education for all children, “education is a responsibility of the community,” etc. “Education is a Right” which requires the administration and the government to invest in education. We watched some videos of teacher and child interactions at the Infant/Toddler Centers. One of the videos the teacher pretended to have a ball that she tossed to the infants it was amazing to see how catching the ball was real to each infant. There were moments when the infants didn’t want to throw the ball back then there were moments when the infants shared the ball with a friend. The infants were learning so much through real and imaginative play. Claudia posed a great question “How do we define quality?”

Day two we got the opportunity to meet in small groups and one of the biggest questions asked was “How do we document what the children are learning?” Many of us voiced our concern for being able to show documentation of the philosophy to the parents and administration. There were many suggestions of how to do this including how we document what’s going on in our classrooms at Galloway using newsletters and photos. One of my favorite parts of the conference was the ateliers at the gardens. We walked around the gardens first then came back and reported what we felt about the gardens. Harmony is what was mostly reported then we got into groups and created our own scenery. Back at the institute we visited the classrooms but was asked to not take pictures, however, the teachers didn’t mind as long as we didn’t capture the students face. The conference was filled with a lot of information; however, it wasn’t what I expected it to be.

This was a very different Reggio experience for me than the one I attended last year in Portland, OR. Having seen several “pure Reggio” schools last year, I came to this conference expecting to see similar classrooms. Mid-Pacific Institute turned out to be a very different kind of school and became an excellent opportunity to see how schools can tweak the philosophy to fit their school’s mission statement and curriculum. I was particularly interested in seeing how a pre-K-12 school implemented this pre-k philosophy as the student progressed through school. I also especially enjoyed our afternoon group discussion with teachers from around the world, as we all shared ways we implemented the Reggio philosophy in our schools. All in all, it was a worthwhile,
intense conference and I am glad (and grateful) that I had this opportunity.

**Bayless Fleming:**
The conference provided an opportunity to see how we can be Reggio inspired and fit it into our already well established Galloway philosophy. After studying Reggio in grad school, I found it very interesting to see it all in practice and visit the school. I found the school visit much more beneficial. The other most beneficial part to me was discussing with other teachers from Reggio schools around the world. Being a teacher of a slightly older Reggio aged child I was fortunate to have quality time with the Mid Pacific first grade teacher (most other teachers were in the Pre-K and K classrooms). I enjoyed making a connection with her and hearing more about her day-to-day class and how the Reggio approach is weaved in with her curriculum. It was a great experience to see in person how the philosophy plays out in the classroom (versus simply reading about it from the books written on Reggio). July 26, 2013

**Elizabeth Zorn:**

Emilia Reggio Conference Hawaii 2013

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