



## **KATHLEEN DOOLEY- MT RICHMOND SPECIAL SCHOOL, OTAHUHU, AUCKLAND**

### **2017 TERM 4 - SABBATICAL REPORT**

#### **Acknowledgements:**

I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for providing opportunities for principals to have a sabbatical in order to spend time away from the busy life at school in order to explore an area of interest which will enhance the school's provision of teaching and learning, the Mt Richmond Board of Trustees who approved my application for a sabbatical and the Mt Richmond Leadership Team and staff led by Deputy Principal Pauline Long who ran the school in my absence.

#### **Professional Learning Activity**

To visit pre-schools, schools and facilities in New Zealand and overseas that use the Reggio Emilia philosophy in their teaching and learning programmes to facilitate their students' learning in Innovative Learning Environments.

#### **Purpose of Sabbatical**

I wanted to explore the link between the Reggio Emilia and the Circle of Courage Framework that is embedded at Mt Richmond Special School, through all aspects of our individualised teaching and planning, as well as the conversations with our Board of Trustees and Whanau around our students and our strategic planning for their ongoing achievement. A number of our students with intellectual disability present with the challenges of Autism and Complex Learning impairments (ORS students). The Innovative Learning Environment provides an opportunity to consider how these most profoundly affected students can flourish in open and flexible learning spaces within a mainstream school, supported through the work of our teachers, therapists and teacher aides using the CLDD learning process strengthened by the principles of Reggio Emilia.

This will be a spiral inquiry with investigative questions that lead to the development of hypotheses about how the three factors –Reggio Emilia, the Circle of Courage and ILE will fit together at Mt Richmond. Then I want to trial a diagrammatic model (PATH) which can be the focus of a discussion with staff and colleagues from Mt Richmond and our host schools as we set up Flexible (Innovative) Learning spaces in our satellite classes and at our base school in Otahuhu.

#### **Introduction:**

Early in 2017, I read an article in SET (2-2016) called "Creating Collaborative Effectiveness" by Sarah Martin and Chris Bradbeer. Two key points were:

- For teachers shifting into innovative learning environments, the time spent developing an understanding of effective collaboration, and what is important to work on together, is time well spent.
- Developing a collective understanding of what we are aiming for in "synergetic teams" helps to identify areas for team and individual growth.

Quotes in the article from Michael Fullan (2002) and DuFour and Mattos (2013) stressed the importance of relationships within schools, and between teachers, are critical for positive school-wide change. As a result of their research Stonefield School decided to explore the nature of highly effective teams, and design frameworks to support the growth of collaborative capacity. This article gave me a lot of ideas for developing an action plan together with the staff, Board of Trustees, whanau and host school leaders in preparation for the completion of one of our satellite projects later in 2017. Our other two satellite projects will be completed in Term 1 2019. This action plan will inform and guide the integration of our staff and students into three very modern school settings. The review of our actions will guide us in the development of our innovative flexible classroom environments and the implementation of a Reggio Approach across our whole school over time. I realised there were many more matters to be considered other than the learning environment itself. The Reggio approach identifies the environment as the "third teacher" along with the students and adults it has a beneficial effect on student's learning outcomes, their willingness to perform and their wellbeing. In February 2017 three senior staff and I attended a Reggio "Primary Provocations" Seminar in Auckland which gave us a very good introduction to the implementation of Reggio pedagogy in Rolleston School Christchurch

## REGGIO EMILIA STUDY TOUR 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL TO 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL



On the morning of Day 1 of the tour, our Mt Richmond Reggio Facilitator, Christelle Daniels who had been working for two years in our Complex Learning & Developmental Disabilities programme at Mt Richmond, and I, went to visit the CERVI Museum which was just outside of Reggio Emilia. This was a great introduction to the history of the area and gave us insight into the reasons for the development of the Reggio Emilia approach to education which occurred after World War 2. This family were farmers, anti-fascists and their father was in the Communist Party. Papa Alcide Cervi and his sons were resistance fighters and many Allied airmen were saved and hidden at the farmhouse until they could be moved on to safety. On December 28, 1943 after their house was destroyed, they were shot by the fascists. Their father, mother and two sisters were left to raise the children and run the farm and rebuild their home. After the war with a desire to make changes so that such things would never happen again the Reggio approach to education was developed as a programme based on the principles of self-respect, responsibility and community through exploration and discovery using a student led curriculum.



In the afternoon we walked the 2.5 km with our new Auckland Based Reggio friends to the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre to begin what proved to be a mind-changing professional development experience, which affirmed many of the things we value at Mt Richmond, with its holistic approach to students, beliefs about what is important for our students to learn, in order to participate in life as adults, collaborative teams of staff and involvement with our families. Over the week we began to learn through the stories of teaching and student learning that we were told, the visits to the Early Childhood and School centres, the carefully structured and set out classroom environments, and the collaboration between staff and families, that the Reggio approach would strengthen our teachers and staff abilities to observe their students closely, implement programmes based on the students' interests and to document this in a way that makes the learning visible to the students themselves, the Mt Richmond staff and family/whanau.



## DAY ONE - Sunday, April 2

- Paola Strozzi gave us a brief speech about the overall organisation of the Study Tour
- Caludia Giudici welcomed us and described the values and organisation of Reggio Emilia.
  - *Children are citizens of the future – Loris Malaguzzi said we should start with the children as history can be changed if we start with them first.*
  - *Women’s groups were involved and they did fundraising –the metaphor was “reconstruction starting from children”*
  - *Education is a right and is the responsibility of the Community.*

Reggio Children was set up as an umbrella organisation to manage future activities, and the revenue has supported the running of the schools, and early childhood Centres. There are also state schools and religious schools. Reggio has a set of Quality Criteria called “Indications of the Pre-schools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia

- *Later in the week on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April while we were in Reggio Emilia a law was being passed in the city to approve all the various Reggio centres as part of an integrated public system of schooling. This is similar to New Zealand. The Municipality is responsible for the buildings and contributes money for staff development.*



Christelle standing in the underground walkway which has drawings and documentation from the children and teachers of Reggio Emilia.

## DAY TWO – Monday , April 3

- **Paolo Strazzi** and Ivana Soncini – talked about making learning visible.
  - *Making visible the educational contexts of children and growing the processes of children that include and value differences. All photographs and videos are done by teachers as they are working. All the documentation is done as the work unfolds over the day. They think about learning theory and their practice in the classroom as they work.*
  - *Documentation is the strategy for the teachers to understand what is happening in their working day. Children are interactive and encounter the world and make meaning of it. Learning is a construction and takes place at an individual level and a social level. The building of a map of meaning that helps us make sense of the world. **Neuropsychology has shown us how the brain works in interconnected ways. If we know this then why do we separate the hours of instruction at school into separate curriculum areas.***
  - *Loris Malaguzzi said” We need to be professional windows”*
- Ivana Soncini (psychologist) works with students with special rights.
  - *What is universal – everything (emotions, physical etc.) are all totally integrated into the human mind. There is no learning without motivation, and curiosity is essential so we need to create situations in the classroom that make children curious. Pedagogy has shifted from “what do we know” to How do we know” **The shift of WHAT to HOW is the genesis of the Reggio Approach.** We need to make a hypothesis about*

the learning and then check that it created the learning context. Ivana showed some short videos and talked about using shadows / drawing / photography and modelling with clay. **Children learn about concepts from doing.** ie. Trying to build a tower out of triangular shapes. We have to make the learning more interesting for children with special rights. We know that empathy & friendship between children is important for developing skills.

**KATHY'S QUESTION – COULD WE INTEGRATE OUR SENIOR STUDENTS WITH CLDD(COMPLEX LEARNING NEEDS & DISABILITIES) WITH THE OTHER MORE CAPABLE STUDENTS TO UTILISE THE CAPACITIES OF THEIR PEERS AS SUPPORTERS AND THUS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS WITH ORS TO EXPERIENCE BEING GENEROUS (CxC)**

- Ivana said that children take you to the point of where they are and when they fail they are understood.
- Paolo Strazzi then talked about Reggio being an approach and not a model. Children are active participants in their own growth & development. Loris Malaguzzi said : **“A group is a cultural context that includes a vitality and an endless network of possibilities”** Collaboration amongst staff is sharing the responsibility.

**KATHY'S QUESTION > COULD WE ACCESS AN ART TEACHER – TO GUIDE STAFF WITH THE VISUAL ARTS?**

At 4.30pm we all went by bus to visit various infant-Toddler centres. I went to Nilde lotti.



Nilde lotti was two storied. There were larger Classrooms with mini-ateliers attached where the students could find a space & try things out. The classrooms had an outside area that was covered .There was an open Piazza or shared space that ran the length of the building. There was a kitchen and sleeping areas where the children could have a sleep. Lots of storage type furniture where they could access natural materials. Learning documentation on the walls. **“Observation produces the documentation”**

## DAY THREE – Tuesday , April 4

Someone asked the question about how do they train the staff? It seems to be on the job. They have time to talk together and reflect. They try to keep things as un-bureaucratic as possible. How do they measure progress and success? They tend to do research to decide how the students are getting on rather than follow national standards

**Laura Rubizzi** – spent 38 years in the same school -they are not interested in quantitative but qualitative education.

- *Constant observations of the children and themselves tells them how the learning takes place. Children also constantly self-evaluate what is around them Daily contact with parents-writings/photos and notes are not only about achievement but about how they spend the day. As the children move from the Infant school to the school, teachers and parents tell their stories to the next teachers.*
- *The question of programming v. Thinking of Education design*  
-programme sets out everything a teacher needs to know to work with their students-deciding beforehand what we are going to do – this is not in line with what we know about the working of the mind  
- Thinking of Education design > Progettazione – the act of throwing forward – a hypothesis – this is developed in the light of changing circumstances so we can change the objectives as we go.
- **Observation is not static and occurs as the teachers are working with the children**
- **Observation produces documentation –words-drawings-videos-photographs. As the teacher observes the documentation it can change the starting hypothesis.**
- **Interpretation-while the teacher is observing he/she interprets to his/her own point of view. In discussion this can change**
- **Relaunch –all these observations and documentations help teachers move forward.**

**Laurella Transcossi, Laura Pedroni, and Maddalena Tedeschi** –talked about the Ateliers and the Exhibitions, the Remida Recycling Centre and the preschool & primary school at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre.

**Diana Prescitoa** - talked about the preschool & the School >The staff thought about how they are welcoming to new students.-they have a three week process - The staff rethink the school environment and the activities based on the assimilation of new entrants in the previous year. **Over time, the children reposition the spaces themselves.** There are large windows between the classes and the garden.

- The school has a piazza area. Harmonious colours-green plants are important. Photos are chosen carefully as the children take a lot of notice of themselves. They look at their documentation from the previous year. They use an MP3 player with recorded conversations and photos to communicate with the parents. The classroom door has the students' names on it. Every student has their own space where they can bring an object from home and take it home at the end of the day. They let the children sort out their own conflicts to the point where they need to intervene. Rooms are divided with cupboards that are not too high so that every child feels they are visible to the adults. **Diana told us a story about the children building a racetrack for toy cars across the classroom floor – each day this was relaunched and it emerged with new ideas.** The ateliers( small spaces with learning materials on display) in the school represent a metaphor of the research done with children and the listening to the children's approach to learning and their research. The ateliers **are the outputs of the classes at the school.**

**KATHY'S QUESTION >COULD WE SET UP AN ATELIER IN THE WHARENUI AT THE BASE? THE WAKA ROOM WHEN THE CLASS HAS MOVED ON? COULD WE SET UP A REMIDA IN THE SCHOOL? CAN OUR SENIOR SATELLITE UNIT BE CHANGED TO AN ILES – THIS WOULD NEED COLLABORATION WITH THE HOST SCHOOL?**

## DAY FOUR – Wednesday , April 5<sup>th</sup>

**The Diana School visit** -Loris wanted the school to be in the heart of the city. It has been refurbished and modernised as a result of the 2012 earthquakes. They kept the internal gardens and each one has a big glass wall so the outside is seen from the inside and vice versa. The children monitor the changes in the trees over the seasons. They have installed 3 measurements for light, temperature & humidity.



**KATHY'S QUESTION>HOW DO WE GET OUR RM 5 TO BE A MORE SENSORY AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT? THE STUDENTS HAVE SEVERE AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY AND NEED A CALMING STRUCTURED ENVIRONMENT.**

"The children like manipulating things and personalising them." The sensors may monitor the environment but it doesn't show its beauty. A few years ago the teachers decided never to offer the children one thing at a time. This gives them a choice of activities and they decide who does what. All things can be done on the table- clay, paint, pens, materials. Some documentation that has a beginning and an end is taken down. Other documentations that show who the school is, stay up longer. Each atelier has a piece of documentation that acts like a compass from the previous year.

**KATHY'S QUESTION> HOW DO WE CREATE THIS CALM AND PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT THAT OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY OF MATERIALS FOR EXPLORATION THAT ARE SO ACCESSIBLE FOR THE STUDENTS TO CHOOSE? THIS WILL HAVE TO BE GIVEN QUITE A BIT OF THOUGHT.**

In the afternoon there was a choice of visiting the Centre Ateliers or Remida. I chose to go to Remida. There was an astonishing array of bits and pieces that could be used in classrooms.



## DAY FIVE – THURSDAY, April 6<sup>th</sup>

Lucia Colla, Alessia Forghieri and Elena Corte “ Researches between nature & digital.” Introduction to the exhibition “Border Crossing”.

The teachers thought that digital would enrich learning opportunities but they didn’t want to end up with the ideas of a computer lab. They wanted to bring digital and nature together in an interdisciplinary way. ie. projector beaming up the back of trees and students breaking the beam so they appear to be standing in front.

- *Wanted to recoup a sense of listening to nature – we as humans can formulate a hypothesis about nature. But today we can’t decide how nature will unfold. They tried to make digital technology work in an artisan way. The children can make journeys back and forth between the real, the imagined and the virtual. They came up with a project about investigating the possible Worlds.*

### KATHY’S QUESTION > HOW DO WE SAFELY INCLUDE PLANTS IN OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS & WEAVE IN NATURE WITH DIGITAL SUPPORT?

The speakers gave examples from the Rodari School and the Girotondo preschool. A webcam threw a picture of a stone surrounded by other stones up on the wall of the classroom. The boys went outside to find the stone. One boy brought the stone in and pressed it against the photo on the wall. They saw a little girl playing amongst the stones. They ran outside to bring her in to see herself on the wall – of course she was no longer in the picture. The children are the author of their own experience. The game is in their hands. The teacher has to stay with the children and gives solidarity with the children’s exploration. At the Girotondo preschool, the children built a tower trying out agglomerations of materials that came crashing down. Then they started a project of building in the air. Parents helped with a wire mesh. This led to a discussion around flight and trajectories, photographing mosquitoes and bees- drawing etc. Lots of different discussions went on about aeroplasty and construction and the project went on for 3 years.

In Italy the teachers can interpret the curriculum. This is also the case in Australia and New Zealand. If we work in a system where government assesses us every year, we would be less occupied looking at the values such as children learn easily when they are motivated and curious.

**In the afternoon at 4.30pm we were taken to visit the Rodari School.**



This was a very attractive school on a property with lots of trees. There were inside and outside spaces which had a lovely effect with the dappled light falling on them. Part of it was two storied .There were Piazzas and ateliers.

## DAY SIX – FRIDAY, April 7<sup>th</sup>

**The morning session was held at the Municipal Theatre R.Valli**

The whole morning was taken up with the story of the Theatre Curtain, “The ring of transformations” and was presented by the much loved **Vea Vecchi**. This was a long process based on the unfolding of an idea. The children of Reggio Emilia would design the theatre curtain. They had to get to know the theatre and the understanding of the size and scale of the project .They lay on the floor and looked up at the ceiling. They began to think that the design could be done in pieces. One child said “ **The theatre curtain is so big it will take many children’s ideas**” They decided to have beautiful things, flowers trees and birds on it .No scorpions, frogs or scribbling. They wondered how they could connect up all the pictures. They decided to scan the drawings into the computer and make them bigger and bigger. They taped the story of what

they were doing as they moved the pictures around. They gradually got to a final preparatory drawing. This was the source of the painting on the curtains.



At the end of this session tributes were made to Veia Vecchi, for her long commitment to the Reggio approach. Groups of participants from each country that attended were invited up to the stage to make a statement about what the study tour had meant to them and what they had gained from the experience. The two Auckland groups got up and sang Te Aroha. I think I said something about how the words of the song embodied the values, and the relationships that all of us had shared through this amazing experience of coming to Reggio Emilia.



The Auckland group farewell to the Reggio Emilia workshop participants and all the facilitators.



**OUR NEW AUCKLAND REGGIO FRIENDS**

We were so privileged to hear the stories of Reggio Emilia and learn about the wonderful approach to pedagogy and children's learning, and to see the compelling environments in which learning took place.

We truly understood the "children have 100 voices", and that we, as teachers must learn the art of intense observation with our students at Mt Richmond so that we can capture every moment of their responses, and use that to guide our "progettazione" and our staff and students' exploration and implementation of learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to each student.

## **Implementation of the Reggio approach at Mt Richmond School over the 2017 school year**

I decided that Christelle and I would use the Six Box Organisational Framework © Carl Binder, to guide us through this process. When there are a number of focus areas that are closely interwoven. It would be easy to lose sight of key aspects as we work through our development plan. We decided to concentrate on 3 of the Boxes so that change would be incremental, responsive and capacity building.

### **Box 2: Tools and Resources.**

- Reggio Resources will be displayed in the staff library in the staffroom
- The three pictorial charts that show important elements of the Reggio environment & furniture that guided the collaboration around the purchase of new furniture will be displayed in the staffroom
- We will look for old projectors for our classrooms and Mt Richmond will budget to provide more digital equipment for staff use.
- We will purchase natural wood based furniture rather than plastic and have a soft colour palate in our new classrooms

### **Box 3: Skills and Knowledge.**

- Christelle and I will add the links between the Reggio approach and the Circle of Courage (CxC) and the New Zealand Curriculum as part of staff discussions.
- Readings about Reggio will go out to staff from time to time and be kept in a folder in the classrooms.
- We will advocate for the Reggio approach in Curriculum planning discussions.
- We will do more reading about the Reggio style of documentation, attend more workshops and talk to other providers about documentation. This will be trialled in our first two new classes.
- Christelle will work intensively at the Flatbush unit for as much time as possible to support the Reggio approach

### **Box 4: Capacity.**

- Prior to the opening of the new classes at Flatbush Kathy will facilitate a PATH discussion with the Mt Richmond staff, Flatbush principal and deputy principal and parents of Mt Richmond students coming to the unit. This discussion will be focused around the four quadrants of the Circle of Courage: **BELONGING, MASTERY, INDEPENDENCE and GENEROSITY** and the support from each school needed to promote the well-being of our students and staff in this mainstream location. The questions that promote the discussion will be based on the reflections from the Stonefield experience around creating collaborative effectiveness and the building of relationships that will promote the change in environment and the development of a Reggio approach
- The unit staff will be involved in the Mt Richmond MOE funded PLD project for 2017 involving Jacqui Sharpe and the integration of digital enrichment into our classrooms.
- Staff will have opportunities to attend Reggio workshops in Auckland even if they are not actively involved at this stage.
- Christelle and I will have an ongoing whole school focus on making learning visible on corridor display boards and classroom walls. This will involve getting staff to evaluate in pairs their own and others display boards against a list of criteria, and Christelle producing an exemplar Reggio display board each term as the corridor displays are changed

### **Progress to December 2017**

- The PATH meeting was held and the ideas recorded as a checklist for staff to work through to support the relationship building and Mt Richmond student and staff integration. This will be checked termly
- The two classrooms were set up at Flatbush with a variety of Reggio inspired furniture and teaching and learning resources like mats / baskets/trays/lamps/natural objects (loose parts) ,Garden to Table programme gardens

which were planted up – some adaptations have to be made to flooring to allow for larger spaces for messy projects.

- All staff have Reggio readings folders
- Staff library has a number of Reggio inspired books
- Christelle introduced the unit support staff to the Reggio approach
- We purchased a set of the Discovery Time books for staff to provide us with ideas for aligning the NZ key Competencies with Reggio style planning. A copy of this book was also given to Flatbush School and Te Uho o Te Nikau school where we are getting a new satellite unit.
- Staff evaluated Display Boards and got ideas for making learning visible.
- Ten staff attended two REANZ workshops on Documentation and “the Cup” project which showed what student directed learning looked like.
- Leadership meetings were changed to Thursday afternoons after school so that Christelle could attend and keep the Leadership team updated.
- Kathy spent her sabbatical evaluating progress, reading and ascertaining staff understanding of Reggio through two surveys of staff in order to plan for further implementation of the project in the ensuing years

## CONCLUSION

The Reggio approach to teaching and learning and the provision of classroom environments and resources to facilitate this, will allow teachers to be much more creative and enrich their lessons such that our students increase their engagement in the learning process. The documentation is less restrictive and has a focus on observation of student’s responses in the learning activities and allows for student directed learning which we have found to be more motivating for our intellectually disabled students who need a lot of generalisation of skill development in order to make progress. Reggio provides an evolving process which runs with the students’ interests which increases their engagement as they are more motivated. Teachers provide activities which support a developing and enriched vocabulary in a meaningful way that is relevant to each student. Reggio programmes involve movement, space, colour, light and multi-sensory experiences which are very suitable for students with intellectual disabilities functioning within Level 1 of the NZ Curriculum throughout their time at school. The project based approach, thoughtfully planned around observations of students’ responses and well resourced, with a wide variety of natural materials that stimulate students’ interests and creativity provides many opportunities for the integration of all of the key competencies in the learning programme. The importance of caring for the classrooms, working on projects, movement within the spaces, preparing food and eating meals together, having experiences in the wider community, help our students to develop a number of personal and social skills which equip them for adult life. The focus on involvement with parents and whanau fits in with the Mt Richmond ethos about working together with our families and whanau, and supports our goals for Ka Hikitia and Tapasa and is culturally appropriate for our community.

We did not see or hear about many students with severe intellectual disability in the Reggio schools and pre-schools, but as we have developed a greater understanding of the approach and the opportunities that flexible learning environments offer our students, we believe that all the fundamentals of the Reggio approach combined with the special education skills and knowledge that Mt Richmond staff bring to their classrooms, with support by our team of therapists and specialist staff, will enable us to offer the opportunity for all our school aged students to go to school in satellite classes alongside regular students, not just those with High Needs ORS funding. Students with Very High Needs ORS funding and Complex Disabilities must have these opportunities as well and it is up to us to find a way for them to be successful. A team of teachers will be attending the Richard Hirstwood Sensory Classrooms workshop in 2018.

We hope that we will be able to interest other primary schools in our catchment area, to consider this Reggio approach as it will help support and enrich the language development and learning experiences for all students in our low-decile community who often miss out on early childhood education. The Discovery Time programme was introduced in Porirua East schools by Brenda Martin and Gay Hay (2008) in response to a need to “ create a balance between the skill and knowledge demands of the curriculum and the activity-based, student directed focus that many teachers believed in. Teachers reaffirmed their belief in the socio-cultural theory of learning, rediscovered their passion for play as a vehicle for learning, and enhanced their skills as facilitators of learning.’

The State of Play Survey from AUT University reminds us of “the importance of play experiences for children’s physical, social, and emotional development.” The survey found “that most NZ parents recognise the potential development benefits of real play”, but “these parental beliefs do not necessarily translate into actual real play practices.” A reasonable proportion of children do not engage in real play at all” For example “ a relatively small proportion of parents regularly allow their children to play outside when it is raining. Playing in the rain is an excellent opportunity for children

to connect with natural elements –water, wind, mud- and builds a resilience in children that can be beneficial as they age” The report stresses the importance of playing with natural materials rather than “brightly coloured play and highly structured play spaces, whereas it appears that children prefer to play in natural outdoor environments” This survey’s conclusions confirm that the Reggio approach with its emphasis on the natural and the outdoors is even more valid today in our modern rapidly changing highly digital world. If we want our children to reach their full potential we must relook at the possibilities and opportunities for exploration and play that we give them at home and at school.

Implementing the Reggio approach initially in a Mt Richmond satellite unit at Flatbush Primary allows us to trial the ILE framework and its three components- “the pedagogical core”, “the formative cycle’ and “partnerships” .The Ministry of Education requires all Boards of Trustees to plan to implement MLE environments in their 5YP property plans. We need to consider and trial these innovative learning environments so that we can cater for all our students no matter their degree of disability or the nature of that disability. Observation of student responding, feedback and reflection is deliberate and the process expects a wider partnership with the local community, the host school and the parents (whanau). Learning is personalised and visible and takes place in an environment of collaboration where teachers, support staff, therapists, parents (whanau) and students are deeply engaged in the learning process through teachers responding to their interests, and assessment is formative with achievement visible to all.

The Reggio approach is going to take Mt Richmond School on a journey over a number of years as we open new satellite units with flexible spaces in our wider school community, as well as refurbish our base school. We are very fortunate to have an active Auckland branch of REANZ (Reggio Emilia Aotearoa New Zealand) and the Reggio Emilia Provocations NZ group to support us with interesting and informative workshops, and we will be able to start more visits to other schools and providers, to observe and get more ideas as funding permits during 2018. All staff are gradually being introduced to the thinking around these new learning environments even though at this stage they are not actively involved. Many staff have been involved in our Complex Learning & Developmental Disabilities Project where the close observation of student responses informs the teachers planning for their learning. This project aligns very well with the Reggio Approach.

We must also give ourselves permission to set aside time consuming and non-productive compliance based planning in order to create our documentation that reflects the staff and student inquiry, and the learning that comes from this approach that is real and true for all who have taken part in the learning journey. Our students’ learning must be visible.

***“Neuropsychology has shown us how the brain works in interconnected ways. If we know this then why do we separate the hours of instruction at school into separate curriculum areas.”***

***Paolo Strazzi, Reggio Emilia Study Tour April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017***

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***Our students will be all they can be.***

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