

SHOULD MORE AMERICAN PRESCHOOLS TAKE A LESSON FROM GOOGLE? AN ANALYSIS OF  
REGGIO EMILIA PRESCHOOLS AND THEIR IMPACT ON A CHILD'S LIFE

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Our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not only see them as engaged in action with objects, does not emphasize only the cognitive aspects, does not belittle feelings or what is not logical and does not consider ambiguity the role of the reflective domain. Instead our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and children.<sup>1</sup>

Google educates young children using a method of preschool called the Reggio Emilia approach.<sup>2</sup> Should more schools be following their lead? After all, they are one of the most innovative and successful corporations that our country has seen in the past ten years.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I will argue that more American preschools should adopt the Reggio Emilia model because it is the best type of preschool for a child's future success. The article will look at the comparison between Reggio Emilia and two other preschool methodologies as well as review the hurdles American educators would have to move past in order for Reggio Emilia to be fully implemented in America.

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<sup>1</sup> LEARNING AND TEACHING SCOTLAND, THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION 7 (2006), available at [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/images/ReggioAug06\\_tcm4-393250.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/images/ReggioAug06_tcm4-393250.pdf) (citing PENN. H., COMPARING NURSERIES: STAFF AND CHILDREN IN ITALY, SPAIN AND THE UK 117 (Paul Chapman Pub. 1997)) (quoting Loris Malaguzzi, founder of Reggio Emilia).

<sup>2</sup> Joe Nocera, *More on Google and Day Care*, N.Y. TIMES (Jul. 11, 2008), <http://executivesuite.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/more-on-google-and-day-care/> (stating that Google has now set a much higher price for Reggio Emilia teachers, because there are not a huge supply of them and they are in greater demand with more people wanting to follow the model that Google has taken). *The Reggio Emilia Approach*, CHEVY CHASE REGGIO (last visited Mar. 28, 2012), <http://www.chevychasereggio.com/reggio%20emilia%20approach.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See Shelton Academy, *a New, State-of-the-Art Preparatory School of the First in Florida to Fuse the "Reggio Emilia" Philosophy with the 21st Century Approach for Grades K-8*, PR NEWSWIRE (Feb. 6, 2012), <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/shelton-academy-a-new-state-of-the-art-preparatory-school-is-one-of-the-first-in-florida-to-fuse-the-reggio-emilia-philosophy-with-the-21st-century-approach-for-grades-k-8-138767299.html> (stating that a school in Florida has followed Google's lead in adopting a Reggio type school).

The development of a child begins within the first days and months of his or her life.<sup>4</sup> However, many of a child's most important tools for educational, occupational, and societal success in their lifetime begins to take shape between three and five years old, what many call "the pre-school years."<sup>5</sup> Over the past few years, the importance of preschool has become widely known, and in 2007 about two-thirds of children in the United States attended preschool.<sup>6</sup> As a result, it is vital that children are being educated by the most efficient and promising methodology for their future success. Part I of this paper will describe a few of the various approaches to preschool methodology. Part II will give a history of the Reggio Emilia approach and the four qualities that define Reggio schools. Finally, Part III will summarize why the Reggio approach is better than the other dominant forms of preschool and discuss what challenges American educators must overcome in order to adopt this approach.

### I. Types of Preschools

There are various approaches to how preschool should be conducted in order to best prepare a child for their future. Three of the most well known types of preschools are: 1) play-based "developmental" preschools, 2) Montessori preschools, and 3) Reggio Emilia preschools.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Bruce D. Perry, *Emotional Development: Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom*, SCHOLASTIC (last visited Mar. 28, 2012), <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/emotional-development-creating-emotionally-safe-classroom> ("Life is discovery. From the moment of birth we are exposed to a continuous flow of sensory experience-sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.").

<sup>5</sup> Beth Kanter, *Why Preschool Matters*, PARENTS.COM (Aug. 25, 2011), <http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/starting-preschool/curriculum/why-preschool-matters/> (stating that Kathleen McCartney, dean of Harvard Graduate School of Education has said preschool is so important because children "become exposed to numbers, letters, shapes . . . [a]nd more important, they learn how to socialize . . ."). See also *New Jersey Leads the Nation in Preschool Programs*, ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY (last visited Feb. 17, 2011), <http://www.acnj.org/main.asp?uri=1003&di=1723> (stating that children who attend preschool have a much greater chance of succeeding in school and life).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Lester, *The National Preschool Debate Intensifies*, EDUTOPIA (Nov. 29, 2007), <http://www.edutopia.org/preschool-early-childhood-education>. Preschool is especially important for children who come from low income and disadvantaged families. Lindsey Tanner, *Low-income Kids Who go to Preschool do better as Adults*, MSNBC.COM (Jun. 9, 2011), [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43345259/ns/health-childrens\\_health/t/low-income-kids-who-go-preschool-do-better-adults/#.Tz6vbJi4KDK](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43345259/ns/health-childrens_health/t/low-income-kids-who-go-preschool-do-better-adults/#.Tz6vbJi4KDK).

<sup>7</sup> Debbie Dragon, *Different Types of Preschools*, PARENTING SQUAD (Jan. 26, 2010), <http://parentingsquad.com/different-types-of-preschools>. See also *Early Child Care and Education Philosophies*,

The most common type of preschool in the United States is the play based or developmental preschool, which focuses on group activities that allow children to play together, as well as develop their communication and group skills.<sup>8</sup> Activities are lead by a singular teacher, and there are a combination of group projects and individual projects.<sup>9</sup> The approach is more focused on children’s enjoyment of playing with each other than essential development of learning skills such as critical thinking and analysis.<sup>10</sup> The second type of preschool that makes up about 5,000 preschools in the United States is the Montessori approach, named for Maria Montessori—Italy’s first woman physician.<sup>11</sup> Montessori schools focus on a child’s individual learning experience and how they become aware of their own senses and skills, as opposed to focusing on the group.<sup>12</sup> The Montessori environment has been characterized as a peaceful place, where each child is given a task to complete on their own.<sup>13</sup> This approach is based on Dr. Montessori’s desire to “focus on the whole child.”<sup>14</sup> The third type of preschool, which has been gaining greater recognition in the United States as of late, is the Reggio Emilia approach. In fact, in 1991, one of the Reggio Emilia schools in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy, was named as one of the top schools in the world.<sup>15</sup> To gain a better understanding of the Reggio Emilia methodology and why it is the best model for a child’s future success, it is important to next describe the background behind how the approach developed and what methods it implores.

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY WORK, LIFE (last visited Mar. 28, 2012), [http://worklife.columbia.edu/files\\_worklife/public/Early\\_Child\\_Care\\_Philosophies\\_8\\_25\\_11.pdf](http://worklife.columbia.edu/files_worklife/public/Early_Child_Care_Philosophies_8_25_11.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Early Child Care and Education Philosophies*, *supra* note 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Preschool Educational Philosophies*, EDUPROFILE (last visited Apr. 6, 2012), <http://eduprofile.com/node/75791> (stating that developmental preschools are more focused on active play).

<sup>11</sup> CAROLYN P. EDWARDS, *THREE APPROACHES FROM EUROPE: WALDORF, MONTESSORI, AND REGGIO EMILIA* 4 (2002).

<sup>12</sup> *Early Child Care and Education Philosophies*, *supra* note 7.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Seldin, *Basic Elements of the Montessori Approach* (last visited Mar. 6, 2012), [http://www.spellwellmontessori.com/docs/montessori\\_basics.pdf](http://www.spellwellmontessori.com/docs/montessori_basics.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca S. New, *Reggio Emilia As Cultural Activity Theory in Practice*, 46(1) *THEORY INTO PRACTICE* 5, 6 (2007).

## II. Background Information

The origins of Reggio Emilia began to develop in the 1940's when parents started to enact city run schools in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy.<sup>16</sup> At the time the Reggio concept was being formulated, World War II was ending and Italy had just begun to undergo a major transformation, specifically, freedom from fascism and oppression.<sup>17</sup> This model was then furthered by the Reggio Emilia founder and creator Loris Malaguzzi when he went to study psychology in Rome, and began assisting children who were having troubles in their schooling.<sup>18</sup> During his studies, he spent half the day helping out in parent run Reggio type schools where he began to note how this was a great environment for a child's learning and development.<sup>19</sup> With Malaguzzi's assistance, the town of Reggio Emilia created and officially opened the "city's first municipal preschool in 1963 and played a leadership role in the establishment, in 1968, of Italy's national system of early childhood services."<sup>20</sup> Today in Italy there are currently more than three-dozen *scuole*, which are pre-primary schools, and *nidi*, which are infant-toddler centers.<sup>21</sup>

The Reggio environment is characterized by student's interactions with each other, the development of relationships, and a shared learning environment absent from discrimination of a

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<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 6 (stating that the Reggio approach is "deeply rooted in the town's [of Reggio Emilia] long history of resistance to social injustice and its alliances with Italy's socialist and communist parties. The more obvious origins can be traced back to a time shortly after World War II when working parents claimed abandoned buildings and petitioned the city to help them build new schools for their young children."). See also *A Look at the Reggio Approach*, REGGIO KIDS CHILDCARE CENTERS (last visited Mar. 28, 2012), [http://www.reggiokids.com/about/about\\_approach.php](http://www.reggiokids.com/about/about_approach.php) (stating that the Reggio approach was at first an movement to return women to the workforce, and has been cultivated into what it is today over the past fifty years).

<sup>17</sup> Lella Gandini, *A History of the Experience of the Reggio Emilia Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools*, NORTH AMERICAN REGGIO EMILIA ALLIANCE (last visited Mar. 8, 2012), [http://www.reggioalliance.org/reggio\\_emilia\\_italy/history.php](http://www.reggioalliance.org/reggio_emilia_italy/history.php).

<sup>18</sup> *The Reggio Approach in Young Children Classroom 1-2* (last visited Mar. 8 2012), available at [http://www.worldedreform.com/pub/reggio\\_approach.pdf](http://www.worldedreform.com/pub/reggio_approach.pdf). See also Marjorie Schiller, *A Focus on Emergent Curriculum and Art*, 48 ART ED. 45, 46 (1995) (noting that Reggio schools "are not private schools, but city run centers that were initiated by parents . . .").

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* (stating that "Malaguzzi praised the teachers in these small [Reggio Emilia type] schools for their ultimate resourcefulness, boundless energy, and high motivation"). These characteristics that Malaguzzi found so incredible became the standard and ideal behind the development of Reggio Emilia type schools. *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 6

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

single student because they learn at a different pace than their peers.<sup>22</sup> Lillian Katz as has summarized the importance of this type of environment by stating:

I cannot recall having seen anywhere before preschool children's work of such high quality as in Reggio Emilia . . . But most important, teachers do not underestimate children's capacities for sustained effort in achieving understanding of what they are exploring nor do they underestimate children's abilities to capture and depict these understandings through a variety of art.

Lillian G. Katz, *Impressions of Reggio Emilia Preschools*, 47 *YOUNG CHILDREN* 11, 11 (1990).

The incredible thing about the Reggio Emilia approach is that this observation by Katz has become quite common among educators, art professors, innovators, and the like.<sup>23</sup> Part A will next discuss the specific qualities that Reggio schools offer children and why these qualities are so instrumental in preparing children for successful lives.

#### A. The Qualities that Reggio Schools Impart Upon Children

There are four essential qualities that make Reggio schools so successful in assisting children in their development and future success: 1) collaboration and diversity, 2) the concept of time, 3) the autonomy and independence of the child, and 4) the role of parents and teachers in student's learning.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Id.* Schiller, *supra* note 18, at 45 ("Embedded in the Reggio Emilia philosophy is the notion that children's interactions and relationships with other children and adults are a vital component of their learning.").

<sup>23</sup> Donna E. Davilla & Susan M. Koenig, *Bringing the Reggio Concept to American Educators*, 51 *WINDOWS ON THE WORLD*, 18, 18 (1998) (stating that so many American educators have been travelling to Northern Italy to get a better idea of why the Reggio Emilia schooling methodology has been so successful).

<sup>24</sup> Valarie Mercillott Hewett, *Examining the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*, 29 *EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION J.* 95, 96-97 (2001) (expressing that some of the central qualities in Reggio schools are that the "child [acts] as an active constructor of knowledge", "the child as a social being", "the child as a researcher", and "the child as having rights"). *See also* New, *supra* note 15, at 6-10 (describing and explaining how qualities such as collaboration and the rights of the child).

## 1. Collaboration and Diversity

The central quality at play in Reggio Schools is the child's participation in their learning through collaboration.<sup>25</sup> In Reggio schools, the projects that children embark upon come from group participation.<sup>26</sup> This departs from the methodology used by other schools, which puts an emphasis on a structured lesson plan and shifting of projects throughout the day.<sup>27</sup> If one thinks back to their early school years they can probably remember a very chopped up day including an hour devoted to art, an hour devoted to reading, an hour for play, and so on.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, Reggio schools live by the motto that "repetition is the enemy, soon bringing apathy and boredom."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Reggio schools emphasize collaboration to decide what is going to happen in class that day.<sup>30</sup> Many scholars that have visited Reggio schools have observed that the day sometimes begins with what is called a "town meeting" to make such a decision.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Alice Wexler, *A Theory for Living: Walking With Reggio Emilia*, 57 ART EDUCATION 13, 13-16 (2004). See also Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96-97 (stating that Reggio schools "place[] a strong emphasis on children's social construction of knowledge through their relationships within the context of collaboration, dialogue, conflict negotiation, and cooperation with peers and adults"); New, *supra* note 15, at 8.

<sup>26</sup> See *Reggio Emilia Philosophy*, COLLIER CHILD CARE RESOURCES, INC. (last visited Mar. 29, 2012), <http://collierchildcare.org/collier-child-care-programs-services/reggio-emilia-philosophy> (stating that in Reggio schools "[c]ollaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development"). See also *Preschool Philosophy 101*, SCHOLASTIC (last visited Mar. 30, 2012), <http://www.scholastic.com/resources/article/preschool-philosophy-101> (noting that collaboration is the cornerstone of the Reggio Emilia approach).

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn P. Edwards, "Fine Designs" from Italy: Montessori Education and the Reggio Approach, FACULTY PUBLICATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY STUDIES, 34, 35 (2003), available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=famconfacpub&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3Dreggio%2520emilia%2520vs%2520montessori%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D28%26ved%3D0CGYQFjAHOBQ%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fdigitalcommons.unl.edu%252Fcgi%252Fviewcontent.cgi%253Farticle%253D1019%2526context%253Dfamconfacpub%26ei%3DEQ52T4fqDcf30gHJlrW2DQ%26usq%3DAFQjCNHzHtdy5J7eX82o69Nu4WeSLACorA#search=%22reggio%20emilia%20vs%20montessori%22>.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g., RESTRUCTURING AND EXTENDING THE SCHOOL DAY, NAT'L HIGH SCHOOL CENTER 153, available at [http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/8\\_A\\_Restructuring\\_School\\_Day.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/8_A_Restructuring_School_Day.pdf) (stating that the traditional model of school scheduling is block schedules).

<sup>29</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Research into Practice: Reggio Emilia*, UBC (last visited Mar. 30, 2012), <http://earlychildhood.educ.ubc.ca/community/research-practice-reggio-emilia>.

<sup>31</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (stating that the town meeting is a method sometimes picked to start the day, but it is not always used because of Reggio Emilia's negativity towards repetition).

Collaboration in Reggio Emilia is so important because it develops numerous skills for a child's lifelong success, such as diversity in thought process, the ability to work on a team, and the ability to critically analyze and understand other's points of view.<sup>32</sup> It also keeps things interesting and fun so children remain actively engaged. Reggio schools make the classroom environment a familial one so a child is comfortable participating with others from the start.<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, other pre-school methods might make greater use of "quiet time" or individual projects, and therefore a child is more nervous when thrown into a group project because it is something they are not comfortable with.<sup>34</sup> The focus on collaboration in Reggio Emilia comes directly from the structure of the Italian society.<sup>35</sup> For example, Italians place an importance on things such as shared governance and respect for others.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in Reggio schools, each child is taught to respect everyone despite their differences.<sup>37</sup> For instance, "children with special needs (or "special rights" as they are called in Reggio Emilia) are not limited by adult perceptions of their cognitive functioning and are included in all activities."<sup>38</sup> This allows for the development of both the child with "special rights" and all the other children, because they learn

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<sup>32</sup> See New, *supra* note 15, at 7 (noting that the collaboration aspect of Reggio Emilia schools is based on the desire to increase dialogue and conversations, which are characterized by both debate and negotiations).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* See also Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (describing how Reggio schools have a home like feeling, where "Reggio educators bring a family environment into the schools because they believe it as an appropriate one in which to learn").

<sup>34</sup> *Which Preschool is Right for My Child?*, CONTRA COSTA PRESCHOOL DIRECTORY (last visited Apr. 18, 2012), <http://www.contracostapreschools.com/PreschoolChoices.html>.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* ("The philosophy of school as a system of relations is perhaps the least visible feature of Reggio Emilia's early childhood program, and yet it is surely the foundation, both philosophically and practically, of its approach. The Italian emphasis on shared governance and long-standing traditions of collaboration among small businesses and . . . [t]he principle of collaboration is expressed in a myriad of ways beginning with the insistence by teachers that they are not substitutes for parents, but rather share with parents the challenge and responsibility of educating their children.").

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> Shernavaz Vakil, Ramona Freeman & Terry Jo Swim, *The Reggio Emilia Approach and Inclusive Early Childhood Programs*, 30 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION JOURNAL 187, 187 (2003).

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Inman Linn, *An American Educator Reflects on the Meaning of the Reggio Experience*, 83 PHI DELTA KAPPAN, 332, 333-34 (2001).

how to interact and find out that despite any differences the child has, he or she is no different from the other children.<sup>39</sup>

A further emphasis on the family and group environment in Reggio schools can be seen by looking at the structure of the classrooms themselves.<sup>40</sup> In fact, “Reggio Emilia teachers describe the environment as a third teacher, deserving attention and respect.”<sup>41</sup> Some Reggio schools do not have separate classrooms, but rather conduct classes on a floor made up of children around the same age.<sup>42</sup> Other Reggio school have rooms composed of soft materials and clear partitions so that children can see each other as well as the teachers or parents who have decided to join in.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, certain Reggio schools have holes in the wall to fulfill the same purpose.<sup>44</sup> The schools are traditionally very clean, and filled with plants, large windows, and interesting objects that are usually very colorful.<sup>45</sup> A similar take on environment is apparent in the Italian culture, which typically uses a variety of colors and puts a great emphasis on artistic ingenuity.<sup>46</sup> Reggio school’s desire to keep the school environment in such a manner

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<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8 (noting that the physical environment of a Reggio classroom is something that few people truly notice).

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8. *See also* Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (noting that the floors were not divided in the typical manner, but were divided into areas, with clear partitions “so other children and parents fe[It] welcome to join”). *See also* *Reggio Emilia Philosophy*, *supra* note 26 (stating that in a Reggio school “great attention is given to the look and feel of the classroom”).

<sup>43</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8. *See* LOUISE BOYD CALDWELL, BRINGING REGGIO EMILIA HOME: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 5 (1997) (discussing that there is “an underlying beauty in the design and organization of all the space in a [Reggio] school and the equipment and materials within it”).

<sup>44</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8.

<sup>45</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8. *See also* Nancy B. Hertzog, *Reflections and Impressions from Reggio Emilia: “It’s Not about Art!”*, EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH & PRACTICE (2001), <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n1/hertzog.html> (describing the layout of a Reggio school room).

<sup>46</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8. In fact, this type of aesthetic appreciation is also evidence in Italian homes and clothing. *Id.* “This attention to ambience and the importance of *bella figura* (putting one’s best self forward) is perhaps the most obvious and provocative feature of classrooms in Reggio Emilia.” *Id.*



shows that they are dedicated to adopting children into this culture, and also allows children to open their minds and explore simply by walking into the school hallways.<sup>47</sup>

Another remarkable feature of Reggio schools is that they do not partake in the traditional method of closing classroom doors when the day starts.<sup>48</sup> Doors in Reggio schools are never closed, which leaves open the possibility that anyone can join the activity and anything can possibly happen in terms of learning.<sup>49</sup> The message closing the classroom door sends to children is that they are separated from everyone else, and that their activities can and will only take place in that classroom.<sup>50</sup> It closes off all possibility at the door. However, in Reggio schools there are always possibilities for every child and no one is rejected at the door.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, children become more accepting of anyone who wants to join in and become more diverse by accepting new participants into their groups.<sup>52</sup> The incredible thing about projects in Reggio schools is that a group project might start off with a few children and blossom into a whole class or floor of children participating on the same project.<sup>53</sup> This use of collaboration is

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.* (stating that “[d]ocumentation of children’s ongoing and prior work is ample, revealing the rich nature of the learning environment and reminding viewers that each school has its own history”). Moreover, Reggio schools are equipped with dress up clothes for children to expand their imagination. *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16; CAROLYN P. EDWARDS, LELLA GANDINI & GEORGE FORMAN THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN: THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH—ADVANCED REFLECTIONS 212 (2d ed. 1998).

<sup>49</sup> See GIULIO CEPPI & MICHELE ZINI, CHILDREN, SPACES, RELATIONS: METAPROJECT FOR AN ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN 37-38 (1998), available at <http://llk.media.mit.edu/courses/readings/reggio.pdf> (discussing how Reggio schools focus on transformability and flexibility). “The school environment must lend itself to manipulation and transformation by adults and children alike, and be open to different ways of use.” *Id.* at 38. “The school should be able to change during the day and during the year, to be continuously modeled and re-designed as a result of the experimentation of children and teachers.” *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16. See also Graham Bowely, *The Garlanded Classroom*, N.Y. TIMES (Sep. 23, 2007), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/23/nyregion/thecity/23regg.html?pagewanted=all> (explaining how the Reggio Emilia model attempts to make a school look like a city where every day life goes on, and includes things like a piazza for children to talk to each other).

<sup>51</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (“The doors are always open” . . . “it means open minds—open to collaboration.”).

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* See also Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (discussing the construction of Reggio schools to encourage collaboration and “maximize social, creative, and aesthetic development”).

<sup>53</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (“A project usually begins with a small group of children, but inevitably leads to greater participation and complexity.”). See Karen Quinn, *Preschool Admissions—Montessori, Progressive, Traditional, Waldorf, or Reggio Emilia—Which Program is Right for Your Child?*, TESTINGFORKINDERGARTEN.COM (May 3, 2010), <http://testingforkindergarten.com/articles/preschool-admissions->

strikingly similar to how a successful corporation creates a product or implements a new strategy, and it is being instilled in children as young as three years old in Reggio schools.<sup>54</sup>

## 2. The Concept of Time

The second very interesting quality of Reggio schools is how they construe the concept of time.<sup>55</sup> As Alice Wexler has put it, in Reggio schools “time spent with children is considered sacred.”<sup>56</sup> Due to this notion, Reggio schools do not put in place interruptions into a child’s learning.<sup>57</sup> For example, there are no bells to mark the end of the day or the end of class.<sup>58</sup> The thought process behind this is extraordinarily simple and powerful. Children, especially in their preschool years, are a blank slate who learn by example.<sup>59</sup> The lesson a bell teaches them is that “no work is worth finishing” and therefore, there is no need to really formulate a care about what you are doing.<sup>60</sup> The theory is centered upon the notion that “[b]ells destroy the past and future, rendering every interval the same as any other.”<sup>61</sup> Reggio schools value a child’s ability to explore, grow, and really learn, and therefore, the best way to do this is to teach the child that once they start a project, if they enjoy the project they are working on, nothing should get in the way.<sup>62</sup>

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montessori-progressive-traditional-waldorf-or-reggio-emilia-which-program-is-right-for-your-child (stating that projects that arise from some spontaneous discovery or inquiry can last for months in a Reggio school).

<sup>54</sup> See e.g., Arnold Anderson, *Importance of Teamwork at Work*, CHRON.COM (last visited Mar. 31, 2012), <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-teamwork-work-11196.html> (noting how important teamwork and collaboration is for the success of a corporation because collaboration generates new ideas, provides support, and makes growth more efficient).

<sup>55</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* (quoting JOHN TAYLOR GATTO, *DUMBING US DOWN: THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING* 6 (2005)).

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* (quoting GATTO, *supra* note 59, at 6).

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> See Andrew Loh, *Reggio Emilia Approach*, BRAINYCHILD (Dec. 2006), <http://www.brainy-child.com/article/reggioemilia.shtml> (stating that “projects are child-centered, following their interest, returning again and again to add new insights”). The fact that a child’s rights and interests are vitally important to their learning stands at the core of the Reggio philosophy, and comes from the notion that children “have an innate desire to discover, learn, and make sense of the world.” Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96.

Another thing this type of curriculum does for a child is to develop a passion in children that might not come as quickly to children whose days are broken up into intervals where they are continually changing what they are doing. What better way to help a child find what they truly love to do than to give the child the opportunity to work on a project as long as they are interested in it. This is why many scholars, such as Rebecca New have stated that: “Reggio Emilia demonstrates the power of creative and critical thinking, especially when helped along by courage, charisma, and good timing.”<sup>63</sup> When one really analyzes this concept, it is hard to ignore the truism that America is built upon—that people should do what they love. But how often are people settling on a job because it is there, or simply struggle to find what it is they love doing. The Reggio approach develops and formulates the thought process for a child to understand and figure out throughout life the things they have a passion for in part because of how the method interprets the concept of time.

### 3. Autonomy and Independence of Children

The third important quality that Reggio Schools put great emphasis on is the autonomy and independence of the child in their ability to learn and, more specifically, decide how they want to learn.<sup>64</sup> For all intents and purposes, children in Reggio schools are given control of their own learning.<sup>65</sup> Reggio educators believe that children are born inherently with the tools they need to live a successful life, and that they must be exposed to various facets of life in order

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<sup>63</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 5.

<sup>64</sup> Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96 (describing Reggio’s approach to a child’s autonomy as the idea that a child has inherent rights and a child should be the active constructor of knowledge in their learning). *See also* THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 7 (2006) (“All that takes place within the Reggio schools in terms of learning and teaching, building relationships and professional development stems from one overriding factor—the image of the child.”). Reggio schools emphasize that their schools “believe in a child who has a fundamental right to realize and expand their potential.” *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333 (“Reggio children themselves, begin by accepting responsibility for their own learning.”). *See also* Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17 (“Ideas that generate projects sometimes begin with a walk in the city or countryside.”).

to become a well rounded successful individual.<sup>66</sup> For example, Margaret Inman Linn was part of a group of educators given the opportunity to view Reggio schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy to see why this model was grasping the attention of so many throughout the world.<sup>67</sup> She stated that one of the individual's leading their tour emphasized that:

Reggio's core value of the competent child directs choices about all aspects of the child's development. Emotional development is, at times, encouraged by exposing children to material that may be frightening to some. The idea is to help them develop necessary coping skills in the context of a supportive group. Intellectual development is encouraged through a similar belief in the child's ability to make meaning of material that is serious.

Margaret Inman Linn, *An American Educator Reflects on the Meaning of the Reggio Experience*, 83 THE PHI DELTA KAPPAN, 332, 333 (2001). The respect Reggio educators have for the autonomy and independence of children can also be seen by the trust they have in children.<sup>68</sup> Reggio schools do not believe in sheltering a child from things that might happen to them in their lifetime.<sup>69</sup> Coping skills are developed through issues that come up in school either from things that they are exposed to or even something such as being rejected from participating in a group.<sup>70</sup> However, Reggio educators believe this is an essential function because it "encourages dialogue and negotiation between children."<sup>71</sup> Rather than a parent pulling their child, or the teacher sending a child to the principal for an adult to handle the matter as is so often done in many other

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<sup>66</sup> THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 8; Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333; Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96-97.

<sup>67</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 95-97.

<sup>68</sup> See *Reggio Emilia Philosophy*, WEST ALBURY PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE (last visited Apr. 2, 2012), <http://www.westalburypreschool.com.au/reggioemiliaphilosophy.html> (expressing that in Reggio schools, the child is not viewed as a fragile being that needs coddling or taking care of, but rather as a strong and capable being, who experience the most growth if given autonomy and independence).

<sup>69</sup> This is part of the idea that a child is looked upon as a researcher, given the free reign to further what they understand and they don't. Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96. See also Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333 (describing the desire Reggio educators have to allow children to develop through all possible means).

<sup>70</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333. See also Miriam LeBlanc, *Reggio Emilia: An Innovative Approach to Education*, COMMUNITY PLAYTHINGS (last visited Apr. 2, 2012), <http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/resources/articles/reggio-emilia.html> (quoting Loris Malaguzzi) ("Our task regarding creativity, is to help children climb their own mountains, as high as possible."). The best way to allow children to grow in every possible facet of life, is to give them the reigns to control their lives, and let them experience a range of emotions and feelings.

<sup>71</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333.

preschool methodologies, in Reggio schools the children learn to handle it between themselves.<sup>72</sup> As a result of this, children undergo immense growth that's importance cannot be measured.

Finally, in Reggio schools children are taught to learn that failure is a normal part of life.<sup>73</sup> In many other types of schooling, if a child is struggling to finish something or it simply seems like they will never succeed, the teacher tells them that it is alright and they don't have to finish it, or the parents will protect them from failure in some other way.<sup>74</sup> In Reggio schools, failure is looked upon differently. If the child is struggling, they might get help from another student to finish it, or they might simply decide enough is enough and that that project is not for them. This creates incredible mental growth and maturity in children at such a young age so they are truly prepared for life as an adult.

#### 4. The Role of Parents and Teachers in Reggio Schools

The final defining quality of Reggio schools is the role of teachers and parents in the student's learning. In Reggio Emilia schools the teachers are also active learners because they observe student's activities, note what choices the children make, and then analyze them as well as record them.<sup>75</sup> As stated above, a day might start with a "town meeting" or the exploration of how something works, or why something in the environment is the way it is, and then the teachers allow the children to explore and find the answer to that question.<sup>76</sup> While the children participate in this exercise, the teachers "document . . . collect and analyze extensive data,

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<sup>72</sup> This is in direct correlation with the very important skill of listening that Reggio schools put a high value on. Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17. When children have to work together to resolve an issue, they must listen to one another, and negotiate a positive outcome. *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333.

<sup>74</sup> See e.g., THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 8 (stating that Reggio schools differ from others because they "consider[] early infancy to be a developmental phase in which children demonstrate extraordinary curiosity about the world"). This is extremely important for a child's future endeavors, and the approach Reggio schools take towards normal human events such as failing at a certain activity, prepares children for a much more fruitful life.

<sup>75</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 7. See also Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 97 (describing teachers in Reggio schools as collaborators, co-learners, and researchers).

<sup>76</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16.

including artifacts of children's work, transcripts of conversations, and images of children's activities."<sup>77</sup>

Reggio schools also do not depend on simply the viewpoint of a singular teacher. The schools employ an *atelierista* (or artist) who works directly with the teacher and "provide[s] alternative perspectives on children's creative and communicative potentials."<sup>78</sup> Due to the fact that the Reggio methodology is centered upon children expressing and developing skills through symbols, the *atelierista* is responsible for making sure that children have whatever they need to develop their art projects, which communicate what they understand and feel.<sup>79</sup> From these projects, the teachers learn, the artists learn, the parents in the classroom learn, and the children themselves learn.<sup>80</sup> For example, Rebecca New, a professor of Child Development and Early Childhood Education at Tufts University has observed:

As teachers collected and contemplated transcripts of children's conversations and detailed renderings of their developing understandings, they, too, began to refine their own form of symbolic representation. Their elegant and compelling forms of documentation represent their understandings about children's learning, their questions about their own teaching, and their advocacy for more sincere and reciprocal adult-adult and adult-child conversations.

Rebecca S. New, *Reggio Emilia as Cultural Activity Theory in Practice*, 46(1) *Theory Into Practice*, 5, 8 (2007). Therefore, one can see how instrumental this type of reciprocal learning is in Reggio schools. The methodology seeks not only to prepare children for a lifelong experience

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<sup>77</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 7. "Through observing and listening to the children, following-up with collection and analysis of data, the teacher is able to ascertain critical knowledge concerning the children's development and learning, as well as their interests and curiosities, thereby enabling him to 'produce strategies that favor children's work or can be utilized by them'." Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 97 (quoting LORIS MALAGUZZI, *THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN: THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION* 82 (1993)).

<sup>78</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 7. See also LeBlanc, *supra* note 70 (describing how the *atelierista* plays a central role in Reggio schools); Ceppi & Zini, *supra* note 49, at 39 ("The *atelier* is used for research, experimentation and manipulation of a variety of materials. In the preschools, a special teacher called the *atelierista*, with a background in the visual languages, works in collaboration with the classroom teachers with a focus on observing and supporting the children's learning and creative process.").

<sup>79</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*; Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 97; Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333. See also *THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION*, *supra* note 1, at 11 (describing the constant reciprocal chain of learning that goes on with all involved in Reggio schools).

of learning, but does this same exact thing for teachers, *ateleristas*, and even parents.<sup>81</sup> Reggio schools not only target children's development, but also the development of society by making the society more engrained in the enjoyment of learning, and the growth of understanding.<sup>82</sup> Malaguzzi deemed this type of activity "the hundred languages of children" because each child expresses something in their own way, but everyone involved derives something from this experience.<sup>83</sup>

Parents also have a special role in Reggio schools.<sup>84</sup> The role of parents goes hand in hand with the quality discussed earlier in this article about collaboration.<sup>85</sup> In Reggio Emilia schools, parents act in tandem with teachers and assist in the children's development.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, "[p]arents are viewed as partners, collaborators, and advocates for their children" in Reggio schools.<sup>87</sup> This type of partnership between parents and teachers leads children to acquire important skills such as the ability to work and develop relationships with adult figures other than just their immediate family and teachers.<sup>88</sup> Often, multiple parents will come to

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<sup>81</sup> See *Reggio Emilia Approach*, THE INNOVATIVE TEACHER PROJECT (last visited Mar. 30, 2012), <http://www.innovativeteacherproject.org/reggio/values.php> ("Education is based on communication within teacher-teacher, child-child, teacher-child, parent-child, parent-teacher, parent-parent relationships . . . [which] creates a very rich learning environment for all those involved.").

<sup>82</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 10; Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 14.

<sup>83</sup> See *The Hundred Languages of Childhood*, REGGIO KIDS CHILDCARE CENTERS (last visited Apr. 6, 2012), [http://www.reggiokids.com/about/hundred\\_languages.php](http://www.reggiokids.com/about/hundred_languages.php) (quoting Loris Malaguzzi, founder of Reggio Emilia) (stating that the hundred languages of children are "[s]ymbolic languages, including drawing, sculpting, dramatic play, writing, and painting are used to represent children's thinking processes and theories . . . [and that] as children work through problems and ideas they are encouraged to depict their understanding using many different representations").

<sup>84</sup> G.S. Morrison, *Reggio Emilia*, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TODAY, 155-161 (2009), available at <http://www.education.com/reference/article/reggio-emilia/>.

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* (expressing that parents participation in the student's learning in Reggio school is essential to the success of the child).

<sup>86</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8. See also THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 13 (stating that "[p]arent and community participation is one of the most distinctive features of the Reggio Approach").

<sup>87</sup> *Reggio: An Overview*, EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (last visited Mar. 29, 2012), [http://www.communityschool.org/academics/early\\_childhood\\_center/the\\_reggio\\_emilia\\_approach/index.aspx](http://www.communityschool.org/academics/early_childhood_center/the_reggio_emilia_approach/index.aspx).

<sup>88</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16.

school, maybe partake in the activities, or just wait in the waiting room.<sup>89</sup> Reggio schools set up nice lounges for parents to read, or observe the work their children have done while the kids are in school, and make it a point to encourage parents to know what the child is doing at school and instill similar principles when the child goes home.<sup>90</sup> This kind of approach reflects the general theme throughout Reggio schools, that learning is not something that is supposed to end when the class lets out, but it is something that is a lifelong journey, which both children and their parents should take part in.

### III. Why Reggio Schools are the Best Option for a Child's Future Success

Simply, by viewing the methodology Reggio Emilia schools implore, and the qualities Reggio schools impart upon children stated above, it becomes clear that the lessons it teaches students are vital to a child's future success. However, the Reggio approach drastically differs from what many consider the dominant model of early childhood education in the United States.<sup>91</sup> One reason for this is because many of the methods that Reggio schools utilize are very hard for American educators to swallow.<sup>92</sup> For one, Reggio schools are wholly inclusive and solely focused on respect for the child. This is not to say other preschools don't focus on respect for the child, but they do it in another way, by literally teaching the child what respect is or disciplining the child for not being courteous to another.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Id.* (noting that “[i]t is not uncommon to see parents volunteering within Reggio Emilia classrooms throughout the school”).

<sup>90</sup> New, *supra* note 15, at 8; THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 15.

<sup>91</sup> See Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 15-17 (giving various reasons why the Reggio method has not been greatly implemented in the United States). See also Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (describing why the United States should adopt more Reggio type schools, but saying that Reggio methodology requires a shift in how American educators think).

<sup>92</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 15-17; Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333-34;

<sup>93</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (discussing how American schools and other types of preschools protect children, shelter children, and cut children off from real learning by the way children are taught).



In Reggio schools, children learn these ideals and values through practical exploration and group collaboration.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, they undergo a much more thorough development of these values. In order to achieve a similar outcome in other schooling methodologies, many American educators would have to become more comfortable allowing children to use various tools to complete a project even if they are dangerous, as well as let children negotiate and work out their own issues without adult intervention.<sup>95</sup> One American educator, Margaret Inman Linn observed a Reggio school and found that it was rare to see children throw tantrums.<sup>96</sup> This is a direct result from the way in which Reggio schools educate children on everything, including important life values such as respect and being courteous.<sup>97</sup> However, if American educators could get passed this hurdle as well as others, they could see that there are three important reasons that Reggio schools better prepare a child for future success than other preschools such as Montessori or play-based “developmental” schools: A) Reggio schools emphasis on collaboration and equality creates well rounded members of society, B) Reggio schools instill in children the value of lifelong learning, and C) Reggio schools create children that are more confident in their abilities.

*A. Reggio Schools Emphasis on Collaboration and Equality Creates Well Rounded Members of Society*

The first reason the Reggio approach is the best option for a child’s future success is because Reggio schools put an immense emphasis on collaboration and equality, which creates much more well rounded members of society than other dominant forms of preschool, such as

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<sup>94</sup> LeBlanc, *supra* note 70; Reggio: An Overview, *supra* note 87.

<sup>95</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (stating that many of the objects and tools children use to work on projects in Reggio schools would be considered dangerous in other types of schools).

<sup>96</sup> *Id.* at 333-34.

<sup>97</sup> *Id.*

play-based “developmental” schools or Montessori schools.<sup>98</sup> Reggio schools are focused on making education a “spiritual quest” for the child and society in general.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the staff of Reggio schools understand that what they are doing is more than just educating the children. They are truly shaping the children’s lives, and at the same time learning and educating themselves. This is one of the major challenges American educators would face in bringing more Reggio schools to the United States, because teachers get burned out when children are not responsive to their commands, and are programmed to make use of a disciplinary action the second a child steps out of line.<sup>100</sup>

This kind of response is in part due to the differences in culture between American society and Italian society, which is often characterized as a more “romantic” type of society.<sup>101</sup> America is a country driven by competition and finding a way for the individual to succeed, and Italian culture is more focused on the beauty of life, arts, and collaboration for success.

However, there is no reason that Reggio schools would not prepare children for a great future in

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<sup>98</sup> Amy Sussna Klein, *Different Approaches to Teaching: Three Preschool Programs*, EARLYCHILDHOOD NEWS (last visited Mar. 30, 2012), [http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article\\_view.aspx?ArticleID=367](http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=367) (stating that Reggio school implement a type of “co-construction” curriculum, which “increases the level of knowledge being developed” and “occurs when active learning happens in conjunction with working with others.”). This type of collaborative success comes from “[h]aving to explain ideas to someone else clarifies these ideas . . . conflicts and questions facilitate more connections and extensions . . . [and] there is an opportunity to bring in more expertise.” *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> See *The Hundred Languages of Children –Reggio Emilia Approach* (last visited Apr. 5, 2012), <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~gbabiuk/ReggioArticleinASCDHolisticNewsletter.htm> (discussing the role of spirituality in Reggio Schools). See also Davilla & Koenig, *supra* note 23, at 24 (“What we are getting from Reggio Emilia is a passion for a process that acknowledges our need as individuals and as a society to engage in a cooperative learning adventure with others, both children and adults.”) (quoting Rebecca New, *Reggio Emilia: Its Visions and Its Challenges for Educators in the United States, Reflections on the Reggio Approach*, ELEMENTARY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 33, 39 (1994)).

<sup>100</sup> See Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333-34 (“In contrast to the Reggio image of the child as strong and competent is the American image of the child as the embodiment of needs.”). Compare New, *supra* note 15, at 10 (“Reggio Emilia offers an entirely different vision of a professional early childhood educator—one with a deep respect for curiosity about children, an unquenchable curiosity about the teaching—learning process, and a capacity for exploration and innovation that could be sustained through collaborative relationships with other adults.”). See also *Preschool Educational Philosophies*, *supra* note 10 (detailing the differences between various types of preschools including Montessori, Developmental, and Reggio Emilia).

<sup>101</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333. See also New, *supra* note 15, at 11 (“Reggio Emilia is a living and breathing example of the Italian tradition of experimentation and innovation, and the benefits of hard work, courage, and collaborative inquiry in constructing meaningful interpretations of a quality education.”).

the American society. The major emphasis in American high schools and colleges over the past few years has been on group projects because in reality, any line of business an individual chooses to embark upon requires the ability to work with others and be open to others points of view. Reggio schools teach children how to bolster this value at a young age through practical experience working on projects and watching how that project evolves by the various interpretations of multiple children as they come into the group.<sup>102</sup>

There is the argument that developmental schools and even Montessori schools have group projects included in their curriculum, and therefore they prepare a child in the same way. However, it is the way in which projects are carried out in Reggio schools that far surpasses both of these other models. As stated earlier, in Reggio schools, the project might start with a few people, but grow to include the whole class, as opposed to play based or Montessori schools where groups of three or four are constructed and no one else is let in or out of the group.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, in Reggio schools, the project can grow from a child's idea, and take turns based on a child's interpretation of how something works.<sup>104</sup> On the contrary, in Montessori or play based schools, the project might be structured, and even if it was decided upon by the children, it

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<sup>102</sup> See e.g., The Reggio Emilia Approach

<sup>103</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17.

<sup>104</sup> See Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 18. An observation of how projects can take a turn in a Reggio school and what role a teacher has in directing children to a particular answer can be seen by Alice Wexler's observation of a Reggio school:

Early in September, Ghiraldi [an *atelierista* at a Reggio school] listened to a conversation between children and teachers about their summer journeys. They talked about short and long journeys –the time it takes to travel from place to place. A debate began among the children in an attempt to better understand each other's subjective ideas about time. Problems of measuring distance in terms of time arose. The teachers asked, 'What is it? Can you see it; touch it?' Ghiraldi observed that each child has a unique concept of time. During the conversation many theories emerged. For some children time transforms as it passes. For others time has color; and is determined by the sun as it passes from day to night. Ghiraldi reflected that this example brought to the fore the question of the role adults play in the children's projects and what rules they impose on themselves. How do teachers choose which child's idea to follow, and how and when do they intervene? There are no ready answers available to them. The teachers choose to live with ambiguity for the sake of listening to the children.

Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 18.

doesn't give the child as much flexibility as Reggio schools do.<sup>105</sup> There is little room for the ability of children to engage in dialogue about their various interpretations of why one thing should be a certain way, and therefore it shuts out the ability of the child to learn how to critically analyze and accept others points of view.<sup>106</sup> This is even more so in Montessori schools where projects are usually done by a single student, and children spend the day in a very quiet environment.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, collaborative activities in Reggio schools allow children to learn how to succeed and fail, and teach children that each child is equal no matter what the result turns out to be.<sup>108</sup> In other schools, such as developmental or Montessori schools, children might be given directions on what the finished product should look like or given clues on the right way to get there.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, students in these schools are limited to the materials in the classroom.<sup>110</sup> If a student doesn't get the right result they feel a sense of failure, and the children who do attain the optimal results feel that they are better than the rest. This kind of activity only instills in children a belief that some children are more skilled and better than others. However, in Reggio schools, children are given a project and it involves multiple people. They end up feeling a sense of

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<sup>105</sup> See Robert Knox Kennedy, *Comparison of Montessori, Waldorf & Reggio Emilia*, PRIVATE SCHOOL REVIEW (Jan. 9, 2010), <http://www.privateschoolreview.com/articles/180>.

<sup>106</sup> See Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17 (stating that “[I]esson plans in the United States often do not make reciprocal listening explicit”). Moreover, in the United States and its dominant pre-school methodology “[d]ialogue often dissipates into questionnaires for the sake of staying on task.” *Id.* Reggio schools contrast this by their use of collaboration and a child's creativity and innovation to begin a group project.

<sup>107</sup> See Klein, *supra* note 98 (describing that once children are given a project in Montessori schools, they then often work on it independently on a mat designated as their work space).

<sup>108</sup> DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION, OECD, STARTING STRONG CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, FIVE CURRICULUM OUTLINES 12-13 (2004), *available at* <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf>.

<sup>109</sup> Melissa K., *Approaches to Natural Learning: Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf*, NATURAL PARENTS NETWORK (Feb. 7, 2012), <http://naturalparentsnetwork.com/approaches-to-natural-learning-montessori-reggio-emilia-and-waldorf/> (“The role of the teacher [in Montessori schools] is to prepare and maintain a ‘prepared environment’ that is carefully ordered and rich with materials and opportunities that allow each individual child to follow their inner drive for experience and learning.”). See also Klein, *supra* note 98 (stating that in Montessori schools, children might choose the activity to partake in, but then complete the activity individually on their own designated mat).

<sup>110</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (“Many of the tools and materials used by Reggio children would be forbidden in American preschools in the name of safety.”).

accomplishment together, and the hardships they encounter during the making of the project assist them in learning how to overcome hurdles in life.<sup>111</sup> Rather than saying one child is better than another, it teaches children that they are all equal and each of them has a different skill set.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, Reggio schools are dependent on the involvement of the local community, and therefore increase the general welfare of the overall society.<sup>113</sup> In fact, the town of Reggio Emilia, which operates in the same way a Reggio school operates, recently had Italy's highest Gross National Product per capita and has lead Italy in economic growth.<sup>114</sup> In order for Reggio schools to succeed, the school must be placed in a community where the parents are engaged and the society in general is engaged.<sup>115</sup> This is not to say parents cannot work and have to come to school every day, but Reggio parents are a major part of why their schools are so successful, and why the rates of burned out teachers and abuse of children is so much lower in Reggio schools as compared to American schools.<sup>116</sup> In Reggio schools, "parents are a supportive and essential presence, and social and political institutions make early childhood education a priority."<sup>117</sup> In Montessori or developmental schools there is not as much focus on the community, but rather the

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<sup>111</sup> See Shernavaz Vakil, Ramona Freeman & Terry Jo Swim, *The Reggio Emilia Approach and Inclusive Early Childhood Programs*, 30 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION JOURNAL 187, 187 (2003) (describing the importance of inclusion and group learning).

<sup>112</sup> *Id.* ("Research has indicated that social and adaptive skills of children with disabilities improve in inclusive settings. It is equally important to acknowledge that inclusion also benefits children without disabilities. When placed in inclusive settings, young children are more accepting of children with disabilities.").

<sup>113</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 334 (noting how important Reggio schools are to the betterment of overall society). See also THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 13 (stating that community involvement in Reggio Emilia schools is one of the greatest and identifiable features of these schools).

<sup>114</sup> Alessandro Ovi, *Cheese, Children, and Container Cranes: Learning from Reggio Emilia*, 130 ITALY: RESILIENT AND VULNERABLE, VOLUME II: POLITICS AND SOCIETY, 105, 108 (2001).

<sup>115</sup> *Id.*; THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 13.

<sup>116</sup> Reggio: An Overview, *supra* note 87.

<sup>117</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333-34. See also BONNIE NEUGEBAUER, UNPACKING MY QUESTIONS AND IMAGES: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON REGGIO EMILIA, CHILD CARE INFORMATION EXCHANGE 68-69, available at <http://www.childcareexchange.com/library/5009667.pdf> (stating that "[t]he children and teachers and parents develop a very real sense of community during their work together . . . [a]ll are invested in the process of learning").

emphasis is placed on the fun a child is having or the individual accomplishment of each child.<sup>118</sup> They are more focused on self-preservation and self-serving activities rather than the type of group learning mentality Reggio schools are centered upon.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, children in Montessori and developmental schools are not as prepared to work with others and tend to be more attached to their own parents. On the contrary, Reggio children are used to interacting with a variety of people including their teacher, the artists, parents of other students, and students from the whole school.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Reggio schools prepare more adept and engaged members of society than Montessori and developmental schools.

### *B. Reggio Schools Prepare Children for Lifelong Learning*

The second reason Reggio schools are better for a child's future success than other dominant forms of preschool is because one of the central tenants Reggio Emilia employs is that the process of learning should be a lifelong experience.<sup>121</sup> This is something left out of other schooling methodologies and is forgotten in American schools because in America, parents send children to pre-school in order to prepare them for grade school, which then prepares them for high school and so on. However, for the most part, many individuals who leave the schooling atmosphere have never really understood or appreciated the concept of learning. Reggio schools see this as an essential flaw of other schools because the best time to instill a child with such a view on life is in their early childhood pre-school days.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, as discussed earlier, in Reggio schools, the children are not the only ones who are doing the learning. It is a

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<sup>118</sup> *Preschool Educational Philosophies*, *supra* note 10 (stating that developmental preschools focus on interaction through play, where learning isn't as encouraged, but simply social interaction solely between children is encouraged, and Montessori schools are a much more structured environment).

<sup>119</sup> *Id.*; Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16.

<sup>120</sup> See Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 16 (stating in many other types of preschools, "a single adult often decides the approach to the subject matter . . . [and therefore] the results are predictable because they arrive from a single point of view . . . [however] with collaboration . . . many interpretations arise").

<sup>121</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 18.

<sup>122</sup> See Lella Gandini, *IN THE SPIRIT OF THE STUDIO: LEARNING FROM THE ATELIER OF REGGIO EMILIA* 54 (2005) (describing how Loris Malaguzzi felt about the notion that education should be based on things like optimism).

collaborative process where everyone including the teachers, parents, artists, and children are learning from the subject matter and from each other.<sup>123</sup> Becoming a life long learner is more than just being knowledgeable about a wide array of facts. From a Reggio perspective, one of the most important parts of being a life-long learner is the ability to always be learning from your peers or co-workers.<sup>124</sup> If one is able to truly listen to what someone else says, digest it, and critically analyze it, then they are much more adept for future success.<sup>125</sup> Both Montessori schools and developmental schools do not hone in on listening in this matter, and hence, leave out an essential learning tool for a child's future success.<sup>126</sup> This is something that for example lawyers are trained to do, however, it is really a skill that needs to be constantly practiced and developed over time. Therefore, starting at the preschool age puts Reggio children light years ahead of their peers at other types of schools.

Reggio's emphasis on life long learning also inspires children to love the idea of education. Education in America is often a word that is narrowly tailored to how experienced one is in a particular field.<sup>127</sup> It is seen as something that people either must do to get where they want in life or as something children do not enjoy partaking in. Reggio schools destroy this connotation because the way the school is created and set up is to make a child enjoy school, and come to grips with the true meaning of education. Education can mean anything from learning an important piece of literature to finishing the construction of a class project. Its emphasis is not on right or wrong, but the process it takes to finish the work and the analysis of each step it

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<sup>123</sup> Neugebauer, *supra* note 117, at 68-69.

<sup>124</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17; Neugebauer, *supra* note 117, at 69.

<sup>125</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17 (describing how important listening is for the Reggio goals).

<sup>126</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17-18 (explaining how Reggio schools are really the only school to place so much emphasis on listening, and how this gives Reggio kids an advantage).

<sup>127</sup> See e.g., *Why Our Current Education System is Failing*, A BOUNDLESS WORLD (last visited Apr. 6, 2012), <http://www.aboundlessworld.com/why-our-current-education-system-is-failing/> (discussing how some Americans feel the American education system has failed them).

took to get there.<sup>128</sup> The Reggio approach expresses a respect for the child's inherent skills and shows immense respect for the child's learning experience.<sup>129</sup> It isn't a structured map on how to get from point A to point B, but a map of endless potential, that Reggio educators attempt to foster. For example,

In [a Reggio school] in Italy, a child constructed a water wheel. The young boy had attached the water paddles at the wrong angle, and became frustrated with his work. The teacher, rather than telling him he had put them on incorrectly and giving him direct instruction, took him to the sink and allowed the water to run down the palm of his hand. She asked him to cup his hand to catch the water. Aha! He now understood why his paddles were not working. She facilitated the leap to his next level of understanding.

Donna E. Davilla & Susan M. Koenig, *Bringing the Reggio Concept to American Educators*, 51 ART EDUCATION 18, 19 (1998).

Finally, the idea that education is a lifelong spiritual quest allows Reggio children to explore what they are passionate about, as opposed to children in Montessori or developmental schools who may not gain this exposure until as late as high school.<sup>130</sup> One-way Reggio schools make learning an enjoyable adventure is by avoiding the use of repetition or a set in stone structure. On the other hand, Montessori schools and developmental schools, even though they do not always have a set in stone curriculum, rely more on repetition than Reggio schools.<sup>131</sup> One reason these schools take such an approach is because once children leave pre-school and

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<sup>128</sup> See Ceppi & Zini, *supra* note 49, at 38 (stating that the ability to transform and be flexible is essential to how a Reggio school operates).

<sup>129</sup> Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96 (stating that in Reggio Emilia, children are seen as having rights and being the most important part of their own learning experience). See also Karen Quinn, *Choose the Right Preschool: Montessori, Progressive, Traditional, Waldorf, or Reggio Emilia*, ABC ARTICLE DIRECTORY (last visited Apr. 8, 2012), <http://www.abcarticledirectory.com/Article/Choose-the-Right-Preschool--Montessori--Progressive--Traditional--Waldorf-or-Reggio-Emilia/921581> (stating that the Reggio approach views children as competent and resourceful individuals, instrumental in their own growth and education).

<sup>130</sup> See THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 11 (stating that in Reggio schools "[c]hildren are the protagonists of their learning . . .").

<sup>131</sup> Kennedy, *supra* note 105.



advance into higher forms of education this is how their day will be carried out.<sup>132</sup> However, many Reggio children carry on with their Reggio education into higher forms of learning, and nonetheless, even if they then go into a more structured environment after a Reggio type preschool, the child has been given the essential tools on how to enjoy learning, as opposed to being taught to just go about the motions of learning.<sup>133</sup> Finally, when one thinks about life after mandatory schooling, in college or graduate school, a day is much less structured and it is really the student's passion for what they are studying that determines how successful they will be. Children who have been given a Reggio type outlook towards learning and education will more likely find this environment easy to adjust into because it is what they were taught to do at a young age, as opposed to other children, who will use their free time and lack of structure to do things other than focus on their education. Therefore, Reggio school's focus on life long learning more efficiently prepares children for future success than Montessori or developmental schools.

### C. Reggio Emilia Schools Create Children That Are More Confident in Their Abilities

The final reason Reggio schools are the best option for a child's future success is because Reggio schools create children that are more confident in their abilities than other types of schooling because they view each child as having inherent rights and adults in Reggio schools are respectful of that right.<sup>134</sup> Due to this conviction, Reggio schools put more trust in children

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<sup>132</sup> THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, *supra* note 1, at 8.

<sup>133</sup> Melissa K., *Approaches to Natural Learning: Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf*, NATURAL PARENTS NETWORK (Feb. 7, 2012), <http://naturalparentsnetwork.com/approaches-to-natural-learning-montessori-reggio-emilia-and-waldorf/> (noting that Reggio schools implore their methodologies even as late as middle school these days).

<sup>134</sup> Hewett, *supra* note 24, at 96 (quoting Loris Malaguzzi, *History, ideas and basic philosophy* in CAROLYN P. EDWARDS, LELLA GANDINI & GEORGE FORMAN, *THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN: THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION* 51 (1993)) ("If the children had legitimate rights, then they should also have opportunities to develop their intelligence and to be made ready for the success that would not, and should not escape them."). This is why the act of truly listening to the child is given such importance in Reggio schools.

to do a variety of things.<sup>135</sup> For example, in the construction of a project, Reggio children are given leeway to use tools that might be considered dangerous in other school settings.<sup>136</sup> They are also not given directions on how to use these tools.<sup>137</sup> As a result, the children become more confident in their own abilities.<sup>138</sup> In other schools, especially in America, a parent often comes to the aid of a child and sometimes even just finishes the project for them, which only serves to diminish the child's confidence. Moreover, other preschool methodologies do not put as much trust as Reggio schools put in their children to use professional grade materials in their projects. The fact that Reggio schools do this makes the children feel more mature and competent at a young age as opposed to the feeling of necessity and reliance that other schooling methodologies impose upon children. Confidence is a vital trait that stands in direct correlation to future success.<sup>139</sup> There are two other factors in Reggio schools that make students more confident individuals than Montessori or developmental students: 1) the teachers' role of documentation in Reggio schools and 2) the environment of Reggio schools. Teachers at Reggio schools are also studying themselves by documenting projects and activities the child takes part in.<sup>140</sup> As a result, children can always see both their achievements and the steps it took to get there all around the

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*Id.* Because the child is a being with inherent rights, and the child will develop in the best possible form if educators listen to them, and respect their rights and wishes, especially when they relate to educational intrigue. *Id.*

<sup>135</sup> KATHY HALL, MARY HORGAN, ANNA RIDGWAY, & DENICE CUNNINGHAM, LORIS MALAGUZZI AND THE REGGIO EMILIA EXPERIENCE 35 (2010).

<sup>136</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333-34. See also Jinju Kang, *How Many Languages Can Reggio Children Speak?*, 30 GIFTED CHILD TODAY 45, 46-48 (2007), available at <http://www.creekwoodcottage.com/HowManyLanguages.pdf> (stating that children were given free range to use overhead projectors and light tables in their projects). These are materials that young children are usually forbid from using in many other preschools for simple fear that the child might break it.

<sup>137</sup> Linn, *supra* note 38, at 333-34.

<sup>138</sup> Kang, *supra* note 136, at 48 (stating that “[o]ne of the philosophies of Reggio Emilia school is a respect for children’s abilities”). See also SUSAN FRASER & CAROL GESTWICKI, AUTHENTIC CHILDHOOD: EXPLORING REGGIO EMILIA IN THE CLASSROOM 223 (2002) (stating that “[e]ducators also show respect for children’s abilities by giving them materials of the same quality that an artist would use, and by presenting them in a way that makes them appealing and accessible).

<sup>139</sup> *Fostering Self-Confidence*, MYCHILD’S FUTURE.ORG (last visited Apr. 12, 2012), <http://mychildsfuture.org/parents/item.htm?id=28>.

<sup>140</sup> Kang, *supra* note 136, at 48; New, *supra* note 15, at 7.

walls of the school.<sup>141</sup> In other preschools, they often hang up children's completed work, however, in Reggio schools the important part is that pictures depicting the steps it took for the child to finish the project are visible to all.<sup>142</sup> This allows the child to be even more proud of their accomplishment and recognize the hard work it took to finish it.<sup>143</sup> Hence, Reggio schools do a better job than other schooling models at preparing children to become confident individuals because children are not just given praise for the success in completing a project, but are praised for the hurdles they overcame in the creation of the project.

Moreover, the design and environment of Reggio schools alert children that they are supposed to be mature. Reggio schools want children to feel like active members of society and not an isolated sect that is on a different stage than adults. For this reason, many schools contain a central piazza just like a real Italian village where children come to talk to each other and engage in anything from simple greetings to complex discourse.<sup>144</sup> Due to this structure, children do not feel like they are a separate group of people from their older peers or even parents, but automatically feel like they are part of the general society, and as a result, children brought up in the Reggio system are more prepared for the realities of adult life than children

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<sup>141</sup> Kang, *supra* note 136, at 48.

<sup>142</sup> *Id.*

<sup>143</sup> Kang, *supra* note 136, at 48. Jinju Kang was given the opportunity to visit a Reggio school and noted:

On each wall, documentation boards described students' experiences. The documentation boards contained photos of the children's works and an explanation of them, which seemed to be similar to pamphlets or brochures from museums. Some of the children's works were put into frames or transparent acrylic boxes and displayed in front of the class. These ways of exhibiting the children's works were aesthetically pleasing and provided opportunities for children to appreciate their own works and those of others.

*Id.*

<sup>144</sup> LeBlanc, *supra* note 70. LeBlanc observed that:

The layout of a typical school echoes that of the city, with a central, indoor piazza or common area representing the traditional Italian town square—where buddies pass the time of day, bands march, marketers sell their wares, or families stroll of an evening. As in the city, the school's piazza serves as a place where children can intermingle or get together in larger groups. The classrooms and kitchen/dining area open directly off the piazza, with no connecting hallways to interrupt continuity. The children can observe the cooks at work, and frequently be helpful with meal preparation and cleanup. There is great freedom of movement between areas, including the outdoors. By design, the center itself becomes part of the city, and the children can see its activities unfolding around them.

*Id.*

from Montessori or developmental type preschools. The fact that children's interactions in a Reggio school can range from child to child, child to *atelierista*, child to someone else's parent, and so on gives children the important skills they need to be confident communicators in their adult lives. Children learn that they can ask a question or voice a concern to more people than just a teacher or their own parent, and makes them much more confident than a child in another preschool methodology who might voice a concern or question only to their own parent, or might not voice it at all. The premise of this design comes from the simple principle of listening, which is highly valued in Reggio schools.<sup>145</sup> Thus, Reggio schools inherent structure and purpose of making children feel like they are competent adults whose participation with a wide range of people is vital to their success makes them much more confident individuals.

#### IV. Conclusion

When one reviews the qualities and advantages Reggio Emilia schools impart upon young children it is easy to see why a company such as Google has latched on to the Reggio Emilia methodology for their own company run pre-schools.<sup>146</sup> Google is a company that was founded by innovators who thought outside the box.<sup>147</sup> Their success can be greatly attributed to the cornerstones that the company was created around, such as collaborative work, collaborative thinking, and creative expression.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, their office environment is set up in a way that defies the traditional office building, making use of a tremendous amount of group work space,

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<sup>145</sup> Wexler, *supra* note 25, at 17 (describes listening as "the most valuable human condition" in Reggio schools "because to listen means to be changed . . . [and it] means that all points of view are collected, interpreted, and rendered visible").

<sup>146</sup> *The Reggio Emilia Approach*, *supra* note 2.

<sup>147</sup> See e.g., Amy Fries, *The Power of Daydreaming*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (Feb. 9, 2010), <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-daydreaming/201002/sparking-creativity-in-the-workplace> (discussing a program Google has set up for employees to think creatively, and describing why this important for a successful corporation).

<sup>148</sup> Dan Erwin, *Personal Creativity: Google's Nine Notions of Innovation*, DANERWINBLOG (Jul. 29, 2009), [http://danerwin.typepad.com/my\\_weblog/2009/07/personal-creativity-google.html](http://danerwin.typepad.com/my_weblog/2009/07/personal-creativity-google.html) (discussing nine notions of creativity that Google has expressed).

or simply places where people can let their creative side come out such as slides and pool tables.<sup>149</sup> When looking at the various preschool methodologies out there, Reggio Emilia is really the only one that matches the culture of a company such as Google. For example, Google office environments almost mirror those of a Reggio school, and Reggio's emphasis on collaboration and creative expression are constantly at the center of how Google conducts their daily business. In fact, many of our nation's most successful companies today such as Google, Facebook, Groupon, and Apple have all put great emphasis on the qualities Reggio schools instill in young children.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, in order to best prepare a child for his or her future success, it is clear that the most complete and best methodology of preschool is the Reggio Emilia method, and more American educators should make a greater effort to adopt more of these pre-schools into the United States.

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<sup>149</sup> Jane Wakefield, *Google your way to a wacky office*, BBC (last updated Mar. 13, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7290322.stm>.

<sup>150</sup> Susan Cain, *The Rise of the New Groupthink*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 15, 2012, at SR1, *available at* <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/15/opinion/sunday/the-rise-of-the-new-groupthink.html?pagewanted=all>.