



REGGIO CHILDREN

International Conference

Reggio Children, Reggio Emilia, Italy in collaboration with St Mary's Junior School, Bellavista School and The Ridge School presents;

The Reggio Emilia Approach to Education: Experiences in Dialogue

The Reggio Children's Infant Toddler Centres and Preschools
approach to Early Childhood Learning



Programme and Registration Form

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Why should you participate?

This conference differs from traditional conferences in that it presents a unique opportunity for educators in South Africa and beyond to listen to and engage with representatives directly from Reggio Children, Reggio Emilia, Italy about the Reggio Children's Infant Toddler Centres and Preschools approach to Early Childhood Learning.

The opportunity also exists for conference participants to form networks with other educators in Southern Africa to further support an ongoing understanding of the educational project of Reggio Emilia

About Reggio Emilia

Hailed by *Newsweek* magazine as being amongst the best forms of early childhood education in the world, the Reggio Emilia approach which originated after World War II in Northern Italy is recognised world-wide for its innovative approach to education. From 28 - 30 June 2011 representatives of Reggio Children will be visiting Johannesburg and will be speaking at a conference of early childhood professionals. This will be a significant milestone for the early childhood sector not only in South Africa but also in other African countries.

This conference will include speakers from Reggio Children who will be presenting on the context of the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy; projects from the Reggio Emilia schools and the principles and philosophies of the educational projects. It will also include respected international speakers, part of Reggio Children International Network, and educators from the early childhood field who will share with participants their experiences to strengthen the quality of early childhood provisions in Southern Africa.



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Historical links between Reggio Emilia and South Africa.

The city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy and the resistance movement in South Africa have enjoyed a long and significant relationship, most recently celebrated at the sixth anniversary of the twinning of Reggio Emilia with Polokwane, Limpopo on Saturday, April 24, 2010. What started in the 1960s as solidarity on health issues escalated to cooperation and collaboration. By the 1970s, the city was actively involved in the promotion of the anti-apartheid movement abroad, and went on to sign a solidarity pact with the African National Congress (ANC) in 1977. In 1978, declared the international year against apartheid by the United Nations, Reggio Emilia hosted the National Conference of Solidarity for the Independence and Sovereignty of the Peoples of Southern Africa Against Colonialism, Racism and Apartheid. Oliver Tambo, then president of the ANC, addressed delegates in the Municipal Theatre of Reggio Emilia at this time, alongside Sam Nujoma, then head of the South-West Africa People's Organisation, and Zimbabwe's Josiah Chinamano. Following the conference, Tambo and other guests were welcomed in Rome by then president of Italy, Alessandro Pertini, and Pope John Paul II.

From 1978 onwards, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia published *Sechaba*, the official newsletter of the ANC, in Italian, and was also published the first Italian edition of *The Struggle is My Life*, a collection of Nelson Mandela's speeches and political writings, in 1982. On the occasion of the second national consultative conference of the ANC, held in Zambia in 1985, the city of Reggio Emilia was declared "a constituted strength against the regime of apartheid", the only European city mentioned. From 1985 to 1991, Oliver Tambo corresponded with various Reggio Emilia officials, particularly regarding the city's honouring of Albertina Sisulu, granted honorary citizenship in 1987, and Albert Luthuli. Two streets in Reggio Emilia were dedicated to the struggle against apartheid - Via Alberto Luthuli and Via Soweto Martyrs - and many leading personalities of the African world were welcomed in the city from this time on, including Sam Nujoma, Marcelino dos Santos, Joaquim Chissano, Albertina Sisulu, Stephen Gawe, and Miriam Makeba. In 1994, in recognition of the role played during the resistance movement, Reggio Emilia was the only city invited to the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa.

Excerpt below taken from report to ISASA: - DIALOGUES IN EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL STUDY GROUP TO REGGIO EMILIA APRIL 2008

Our fairly recent liberation from the tragic legacy of oppression under Apartheid, by men and women of great courage and vision, at personal cost and sacrifice, has echoes of the liberation from Fascism for which the Reggio Emilian partisans and members of the Resistance movement strove during World War 2. There is a strong link between the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and the African National Congress which serves to emphasise the common bond of a struggle from tyranny, as reported in the ANC Italy Mission Records of 1982. During Apartheid, as early as 1978, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia supported the organisation and held a 'Conference of Solidarity'. In 1985, Ugo Benassi, then Mayor of Reggio Emilia, corresponded with Oliver Tambo who was 'greatly loved in this part of Italy'. Tambo was given the Freedom of the Commune di Reggio nell'Emilia in 1987.

ANC Italy Mission Records (ANC Italy Mission Office, 1982-1994) University of Fort Hare
(http://www.liberation.org.za/library/Library/ANC_Materials/ItalianM.htm)

Representatives from Reggio Children



Amelia Gambetti

Amelia Gambetti was an educator in the Reggio Emilia Municipal Preschools for 25 years. Currently she is one of the five members of the Board of Directors of Preschools and Infant Toddler Centres Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia.

She is part of Reggio Children/International Centre Loris Malaguzzi Managing Committee. She is one of the Reggio Children International Network co-chairs together with Emanuela Vercalli, responsible for promotion and development of initiatives, while she continues to be the US Liaison for Consultancy to Schools. She provides leadership and guidance to schools in North America. Among them for example: Santa Monica, CA; St. Paul, MN; Miami, FL; Greenville, SC; Atlanta, GA; Tulsa, OK; Boulder, CO. Amelia was a visiting lecturer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst from 1992-1993.

Amelia is a member of the World Forum Foundation and is on the Editorial Board of Innovations in Early Education. She has played a key role in the creation and development of *The Hundred Languages of Children* exhibit that has brought Reggio Emilia to thousands of people. Currently she also coordinates the new exhibit, a North American version of the *The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children*. She is Liaison for the relations between NAREA (North American Reggio Emilia Alliance) and Reggio Children, Italy and also between the Reggio Emilia Institutet in Sweden (part of the European Nordic Countries Network) and Reggio Children, Italy.



Emanuela Vercalli

Emanuela Vercalli has a background in Languages and a Conservatory Degree in Piano. She has been working at Reggio Children since 2000 within the International Exchanges. She is one of the co-chairs of the Reggio Children International Network together with Amelia Gambetti travelling from Singapore to South America, from North Europe to South Africa. She has given a contribution to the World Forum on Early Care and Education organization.

She has been coordinating the exhibition, *The Hundred Languages of Children* and its versions in five different languages since 2003 for Reggio Children. Currently she also coordinates the new exhibit *The Wonder of Learning - The Hundred Languages of Children*.

Emanuela has been a child inside one of the infant toddler centres and one of the preschools of the Istituzione Infant Toddler Centres and Preschools - Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy. She is currently part of the Reggio Children/International Centre Loris Malaguzzi Managing Committee.

She is also part of the Steering Committee of the Foundation *I teatri* (The Theatres) of the town Reggio Emilia, Italy.

International Speaker Network:

Reggio Children has personally invited colleagues from their International network to participate in this conference initiative in Johannesburg. These speakers have all been in dialogue and in contact with the Reggio approach for many years. They work within organisations that provide professional development initiatives (in collaboration with Reggio Emilia) and that have developed out of their own experiences in dialogue with the schools in Reggio Emilia.