

**Reggio's Arpeggio:
An autoethnographic tale of a music teacher's explorations with Reggio Emilia**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has been globally recognized by educators and researchers as the most exceptional example of quality early education (Gardner, 1999; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1991). However, within this approach there is a strong emphasis on the visual arts that in turn has diminished opportunities for children to participate in music activities. Andress (1998) was the first to expose the lack of music in this approach, and her concern was echoed by Matthews (2000), O'Hagin (2007), Vuckovic & Nyland (2010), and Smith (2011). As a result of this void, the present investigation explores the philosophies and practices of the Reggio Emilia approach within a kindergarten to grade seven elementary school music program. Specifically, I examine the role of the child, the role of the teacher, the environment as a third teacher, multiple forms of knowing, the role of documentation, and the Atelier.

I use an autoethnographic approach to implement, reflect, and document this experience. I not only discover that Reggio Emilia can be successful within a music classroom setting, but argue that these philosophies and practices are of great importance to understanding new ways in which music educators can benefit from this approach beyond the scope of traditional programs and approaches to music with children. By adapting this approach to a music setting in grades higher than the early childhood years, my research extends the current Reggio literature. I not only present my struggles during this experience, but also explain how to supersede challenges and draw from the strengths of this approach that were exposed within the scope of my music program.

PREFACE

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Matthew Yanko.

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DEDICATION

For my dearest nonna, Giovanna Cusano, thank you for keeping my stomach full, our family traditions alive, and tears of laughter

*Non puoi insegnare niente a un uomo.
Puoi solo aiutarlo a scoprire ciò che ha dentro di sé
Galileo Galilei*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, purpose, and related literature

Reggio Emilia, a prosperous town in Northern Italy, is home to one of the most celebrated early childhood education systems in the world (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2011; Gardner, 1999; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1991). The Reggio Emilia approach to education has inspired educators to follow their example in establishing an environment that supports child-centered learning, multiple ways of knowing, documents learning, and fosters communication between the child, teacher, and parent. Although educators and researchers have shown interest in this approach for over twenty years, there is a lack of research within the context of music education (Andress, 1998; Bond 2012 & 2013; Burgess, 2013; Hertzog, 2009; Salmon, 2009; Smith, 2011; Wendell, 2013; Wiens, 2009). As an elementary school music teacher, I became very interested in the philosophies and practices of this approach in relation to music education. Hence, through the present inquiry I will address this gap in the research literature in an exploration of the different ways in which the Reggio Emilia approach can be incorporated into a kindergarten to grade seven music program.

As an educator and new researcher, I operate within a social constructivist paradigm that function on the beliefs that knowledge is gained in relationships through collaboration, dialogue, conflict, negotiation, and cooperation (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993; Gandini, 1993). I make the ontological assumption that reality is indirectly constructed based on individual interpretations; moreover, people interpret and make their own meaning of events (Mack, 2010). As a result, I employ autoethnography as the qualitative methodological approach in my inquiry.

As a musician, I bring a background in composition, piano, singing, and band instruments to this endeavor. During my undergraduate degree, I focused my studies in the field of ethnomusicology and developed performance skills on non-Western instruments including the metalophones of Balinese Gamelan and the Chinese guzheng and sheng. Having a respect for other ways of “musicking” (Small, 1998) enabled me to share with my students the musical practices of other cultures. In addition to these experiences, I was able to study with Dr. Candance Galla during my Masters Degree program at the University of British Columbia. She shared Hawaiian musical practices with me, and because of this, I have been influenced to incorporate outdoor musical experiences and growing of instruments into my music program.

I have been a music teacher for seven years, and have taught middle and secondary school band and choir programs throughout British Columbia. That said, my passion lies in teaching elementary school music. I believe the elementary school music classroom is a place where students have opportunities to foster, explore, and create music. Most importantly, it is an environment where children develop a love for music. Recently, teachers in my school community have been influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach. Seeing how this approach was adapted in their classrooms influenced my practice and showed me the importance of these philosophies and practices. The combination of an exposure to a Reggio Emilia inspired program, my diverse musical background, and my diverse teaching experiences comprise the motivation to guide this inquiry.

Related Literature

In establishing a theoretical framework for my investigation, the philosophies and practices that form a foundation for the Reggio Emilia approach are important considerations.

The literature pertaining to the theories and practices of this approach that are specific to my study are (1) the role of the child, (2) the role of the instructor, (3) multiple forms of knowing, and (4) the Atelier. After exploring literature that illustrates this approach, I also examine music education research that is specific to Reggio Emilia inspired practices to illustrate past findings and provide directionality for my inquiry.

1. The role of the child

In the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, the role of the child contains interlocking philosophies that set a foundation for students on the onset of their educational journeys. Specifically, each student within this early childhood program is viewed as a capable being, having rights as an active constructor of knowledge, as a researcher, and as a social being. The right to develop their abilities through social interaction, play, and guided inquiry is illustrated in the literature of Loris Malaguzzi (1993a: 1993b: 1994), one of the founders of this approach. This literature documents and explores his view of children's rights, elaborating a belief that children have inborn endowments and potential of extraordinary richness, strength, and creativity (Malaguzzi, 1993a). I share his belief in the potential and creative capabilities of children. However, this philosophy is not unique to the Reggio Emilia approach, as many educators, including myself, share those beliefs.

As early childhood education is the primary focus of this approach, children in this setting are viewed as young protagonists, who actively construct knowledge on the onset of their educational journey. This concept of the child protagonist, or apprentice, is documented in the literature of Malaguzzi (1993b), but it is also explored in the works of Katz (1993), and Rankin (1997). Katz explains that children are viewed as apprentices, working alongside others

in the discovery and construction of solutions to meaningful questions and problems. After examining this literature, it was a challenge to conceptualize this practice of apprenticeship within elementary school music programs, especially my own, because my prior approach to teaching would not allow for this means of learning to occur.

Within the role of the child, students are viewed as researchers. This idea is explored in the writing of Foreman (1996), who explains that while engaging in projects, children have the opportunity to explore, observe, question, discuss, hypothesize, represent, and then proceed to revisit their initial observations and hypotheses in order to further refine and clarify their understandings, thereby expanding the richness of their thinking, and further defining their roles as researchers. At the onset of this study, I was keen on applying this philosophy but struggled with envisioning and implementing it, because my practices and philosophies were based on traditional music programs that did not provide opportunities for children to research and explore as part of everyday practice. Within traditional music programs, teachers lead their students in singing, instrumental performance, history, and theory. As a result of this, lessons tend to be teacher directed and rarely engage students in co-learning endeavors.

The last philosophy within the role of the child is that of the student as a social being. This is documented in the writings of Malaguzzi (1993b), Edwards, Gandini, & Forman (1993), and Gandini (1993). Malaguzzi elaborates on the importance of communication and language within this role, which is influenced by the ideologies of Lev Vygotsky and Gregory Bateson. The Reggio Emilia approach pulls from Vygotsky's belief that cognitive development needs to take place within a social context, as social engagement and collaboration with others are necessary in order to transform children's thinking (Hanna, 2013, p.3). In addition to this,

Malaguzzi was also influenced by Bateson's theory of meta-communication, in which meaning is derived from interaction with others and does not depend on literal verbal meaning (Bateson and Bateson 2000). For Bateson, the intensity and inflection of the voice, facial expressions, accompanying gestures, and secondary signals, as well as the verbal content of the communication determine real meaning during communication (Hanna, 2013, p.3). I believe music education has the ability to correlate with Bateson's theory through activities that involve audiation and performance opportunities. When children interact in a music classroom, complex layers of communication occur simultaneously that are not always visible.

2. The role of the Instructor

In the Reggio Emilia approach the teacher's role complements that of the child's, and as a result, is seen as a co-learner, facilitator, and researcher. Together, the teacher and student continuously revisit and recreate their understanding in a reciprocal dialogue exchange during a spiral pattern of learning (Edwards, C.P., Gandini, L., & Forman, G.E. 2011; Hewett, 2001). As this investigation began, the teacher's role within this approach conflicted with my experiences as a music educator. It is important to elaborate on the philosophies that construct this role because they provided guidance to my self-reflection and evolving practices.

As collaborators, teachers are seen as partners in learning with their students. There is an overarching educational principle of reciprocity that appears again and again as teacher and learner together guide the project (Rankin, 1992, p. 30). Malaguzzi (1993b), Rinaldi (1993; 2011), and Gandini (1997) explore notions of how the teacher does not control nor dominate the child's learning, but rather demonstrate respect for the child's rights through mutual participation and joint action. When exploring this specific philosophy of the Reggio Emilia

approach, the focus of the teacher in this setting is not to instruct students to create finished products, songs, or pieces of music. Instead, the focus is on the process, and as a result, the teacher has an important role to collaborate with students to further their musical knowledge. During my investigation, I became an attentive listener and observer, and my role evolved to follow students' interests and inquiries and to prepare an environment that matches the zone of proximal development (Rinaldi, 2011; Bond, 2013, p. 25).

Teachers are viewed as guides and facilitators who provoke occasions of discovery through a kind of alert, inspired facilitation and stimulation of children's dialogue, co-action, and co-construction of knowledge (Edwards, 1993, p. 154). As a partner to my students, I learned to create opportunities for questions, offer suggestions, and provide information without taking over the learning experience. This was a challenge for me, as it contrasted with the methodologies and practices that have formed a foundation for my music program.

Teachers are researchers who observe and listen to children, and then follow-up observations with data collection and analysis. They are able to ascertain critical knowledge concerning children's development and learning, as well as their interests and curiosities; they are able to produce strategies that favor children's work (Malaguzzi, 1993b, p. 82). This concept of listening and documentation is explored by Malaguzzi (1993b), Edwards, et al. (1993), and Gandini (1993). As teachers conduct their research, they compile large and varied amounts of data including: notes, photographs, audio recordings, and video recordings of students engaged in learning endeavors. From the collection of data, the teacher prepares and displays this documentation on classroom walls (Edwards, et al., 1993; Gandini, 1993b). This process of documentation serves three primary functions. First, it provides the children with a

visual memory of what they have done, and provokes them to revisit and expand on their old ideas. In addition, it fosters inspiration to develop new ideas from where they left off. Moreover, it provides a research tool for teachers, in that it can assist them in continuing to improve and expand project ideas, better understand students, and evaluate their own goals within the curriculum. The final function of this process is that it is means of providing parents with detailed information about what happens in the classroom (Edwards et al., 1993).

3. Multiple forms of knowing

Within the Reggio Emilia approach, knowledge is perceived as socially constructed and ever dynamic. This is presented in the literature of Edwards et al. (2011), which explores constructivist ideologies that infer to multiple ways of expressing, demonstrating, and interpreting knowledge (Hewett, 2001, p. 98). Children in Reggio schools are encouraged to represent their plans, ideas, and understandings using one or more modes of expression (Edwards, et al., 1993, p. 3). By using different mediums to represent meaning, children confront new possibilities and generate new questions that would not have occurred had they used only one way of knowing (Forman, 1996, p. 172).

Within the Reggio approach, there is a concept “The Hundred Languages,” named after a poem by Malaguzzi (1993c). In his poem he explains that children have hundreds of ways of doing things like thinking, speaking, loving and understanding; that they also have a hundred ways to create and explore their own worlds. Malaguzzi stresses the importance of not only allowing children to learn in their own way, but also the freedom to express themselves in a medium of their choosing.

The Hundred Languages

No way. The hundred is there.

The child
is made of one hundred.

The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling, of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.

The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and at Christmas.

They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy

science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.

The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.
(Malaguzzi, 1993c).

The spirit of music and movement are woven within this poem of the hundred languages. There are countless ways in which the many mediums within music can be used as means for children to express their plans, ideas, and understandings. I believe music educators can create opportunities for children to use movement and music as a medium to make meaning and express understanding of learning. In itself, music can also be a way of knowing that illustrates understanding without the use of language or text.

4. The Atelier

Within each Reggio Emilia school there is an *Atelier*, the Italian word for *art studio*, which provides a space for children to become fluent in the use of artistic techniques. Because of this, they are able to develop non-verbal language through multi-modalities. Malaguzzi (1993b) and Gandini (2005) explore the practices of the Atelier, and explore its function as a workshop for developing cognitive, emotional, and imaginative expression (Hanna, 2013, p .3). The studio is never meant to be an environment where children learn pre-professional artistic skills, but a place where children have the opportunity to explore and interact with materials in an informal social setting. I was intrigued by this idea of the Atelier and slowly adapted its core philosophies to create a musical Atelier.

A musical Atelier should be a space rich in material, tools, and people with professional skills (O'Hagin, 2007). My background in music allowed me to take on the role of the *Atelierista*, a specialist who provided materials and guidance for exploration. I incorporated musical instruments, everyday objects, and natural materials into the Atelier, and arranged these materials in a traditional manner: skins, shakers, woods, and metal. However, I soon discovered that this organization was not inviting. The studio must be visually appealing and arranged so that children can easily access materials and have free, open space for exploration (O'Hagin, 2007). As a result of my ill-planned organization, I provided my students with a provocation to re-categorize how we group instruments, which in turn allowed them to take ownership of not only the materials, but the Atelier.

Music and the Reggio Emilia approach

The amount of music-related literature is minimal, to the extent that Andress (1998) asked, "Where is the music in the hundred languages of children?" In her professional article, Andress provides an example of a potential music project for Reggio-inspired schools, but does not implement the project, nor has a study been conducted in a manner similar to her suggested project. Andress was the first researcher to discuss the absence of music and others also echo her concern (Matthews, 2000; O'Hagin, 2007; Vuckovic & Nyland, 2010; Smith, 2011).

As a result of the lack of music within the Reggio Emilia framework, Matthews (2000) describes her struggle in trying to adapt her teaching style to accommodate Reggio philosophies within a pre-primary music program. She was frustrated, as she could not find any music models in Reggio Emilia resources and only began to see progress when collaborating with the school's *Atelierista*. Her narrative is a valuable first-hand account of the transition that

traditional music educators are likely to face when adopting Reggio philosophies. Matthews lacked experience in this setting and was unfamiliar with this approach; I have noticed the same struggles with teachers who transfer to schools that are Reggio inspired and lack understanding of these philosophies and practices.

O'Hagin (2007) and Salmon (2010) explore music and the Reggio Emilia approach in an early childhood settings. O'Hagin's chapter illustrates a belief that developing a music listening pedagogy and documentation system is necessary in order to incorporate music into the Reggio approach. She surveyed Reggio-inspired educators inquiring on how music functions in their schools and results illustrated music being used to enhance project work. Salmon conducted an action research project aimed at analyzing children's natural inclination to music within a Reggio-inspired school. The teacher participants in Salmon's study also incorporated music into projects and documented the effectiveness of these strategies using Reggio documentation methods. I am inspired by how O'Hagin and Salmon's adapted documentation into their practices; I see documentation as a successful tool to help with self-reflection and goal setting as the year progresses.

Within a music setting, Crisp and Caldwell (2007) explore a combined Orff-Reggio approach, which in turn leads to the creation of a music Atelier. They discovered parallels between both approaches: both were founded in post-World War II Europe, emphasize the use of quality materials, hold a view of children as inherently able, value social constructivist learning, practice reflective pedagogy, and have a general openness in structure. A music Atelier was created during this study, which provoked children to compose and improvise. Crisp made sample lesson plans from his study that Smith (2011) subsequently utilizes for her

study. Smith's action research study examined the role of music in a Reggio-inspired setting, and explored ways to infuse the Reggio Emilia principles in traditional preschool music curricula. Smith documented two classes over a period of seven weeks using ethnographic techniques. Results illustrated the developmental differences between the two classes limited the degree to which Reggio principles could be incorporated. The younger students needed lessons based on music foundations and discovery-based learning, while older children leaned towards projects.

Vuckovic and Nyland (2010) advocated for a prominent position of music in the hundred languages, by documenting the musical interactions among preschool children in a music program over nine weeks. A focus on Vygotsky's social constructivism in this study allowed Vuckovic and Nyland to investigate the zone of proximal development and music as one of the hundred languages of children. From their findings, Vuckovic and Nyland positioned that the exploration of Reggio practices in music education are necessary because of the importance of music as a child's language and because of the subordinate status of music, in relation to visual arts, in current Reggio classrooms.

A review of my impressions

The literature by Malaguzzi is an excellent primary source as it details the philosophies of Reggio Emilia and puts them in perspective. In order to implement this approach during my investigation, these philosophies need to be understood. The above literature provides theoretical background and illustrates this through context. However, none of the literature explores this approach in a setting above early childhood (i.e., pre-K through Grade 3). Reggio Emilia is *placed based* education, as the culture within the city of Reggio Emilia play a

fundamental role in the development of its philosophical framework. Based on my search of the relevant literature, this is vaguely addressed in the theoretical and music literature. As a result of this place, I faced many challenges that clashed with my current philosophies and practices. Literature examining the Reggio Emilia approach and music education is minimal. This small amount of writings is quite varied, but all critique the approaches lacking of music education. Some of this literature looks at implementing music as exploratory projects, while others discuss the creation of a music Atelier. All of the research is based on early childhood and none explore the Reggio Emilia approach with older students. In addition to this, none of the research is conducted with a music specialist in a North American, kindergarten to grade seven, music classroom environment. This is a gap in the literature that needed to be explored and this was the inspiration for my investigation of the Reggio Emilia approach in an elementary school music classroom setting, across grade levels.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

My investigation into the philosophies and practices of Reggio Emilia is not driven by quantitative measurements or traditional evaluations such as interviews, classroom observations, or surveys. The present inquiry is a story of a personal journey rather than an objective analysis or dry, factual investigation. It is driven by personal feelings and desires. Through this rational, but personal lens, I analyze how I experience these practices and philosophies within an elementary school music program. Throughout the coursework that prepared me for this inquiry, I was exposed to impressionist qualitative methodologies (Ellis, 2004, p. 39) that provoke 'other' ways of knowing. Specifically, ethnographic methods in various mediums that allow for the sharing of stories that contribute to our understanding of the social world, which in turn enable us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned (Wall, 2006, p. 148).

Carolyn Ellis believes that stories are essential to our understandings of experience and that they should be both a subject and a method of social science research. I share in her belief that stories can illustrate how we make sense of our world. To critically examine the Reggio Emilia approach within the confines of qualitative research, a methodological framework of autoethnography was applied to my investigation. This approach allowed for the discovery of different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, realize, and understand Reggio inspired philosophies and practices. Through autoethnography, a connection was formed between the auto (self) and the ethnos (culture), which allows for the placement of graphy (researcher process) within a specific social context (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014; Reed-Danahay,

1997). The application of this methodology enabled me to display many levels of consciousness through my own eyes. First, an ethnographic wide angle lens was applied to focus outward on social and cultural aspects of my personal experiences with the Reggio Emilia approach. I then reflect on these experiences and look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis, 2004, p. 37).

Authenticity of self and others

As this investigation focuses on *the self*, specifically *my self*, the application of *autoethnography* is best suited as an authentic approach for this study because the use of self is arguably truer than that of an outsider when reflecting upon personal experiences (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The use of self-observation moves the researcher from being part of the situation studied to a place of self-introspection, or self-ethnography, as a legitimate focus of study in and of itself (Ellis, 1991, p. 30). Concerns with the use of my voice may arise, but if it is omitted from my findings the writing is reduced to a mere summary and interpretation of the works of others (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Taking the question of voice and representation a step further, it could be argued that I would be best suited to describe my own experiences more accurately than anyone else (Wall, 2006, p. 3). Importance is placed on the authenticity of self, in relation to others.

Thus, in addition to the authenticity of self, I was aware of the authenticity of others in my research. I protected the privacy and safety of participants by altering identifying characteristics such as circumstance, topics discussed, and characteristics like race, gender, name, place, or appearance. That is because the essence and meaningfulness of the research story is more important than the precise recounting of detail (Bochner, 2002), and I am aware

of how these protective devices may influence the integrity of this project as well as how my work may be interpreted and understood (Ellis, 2011, p. 31).

Relational concerns, contingency, and validity

By applying autoethnography as a methodology, I acknowledge the importance of contingency. Memory is fallible, because it is impossible to recall or report on events in language that exactly represent how those events were lived and felt. Because people who have experienced the same event often tell different stories about what happened (Tullis Owen, McRae, Adams, & Vitale, 2009), I entered this inquiry from the perspective of a male music teacher, with my own biases and background. The way I interpret an event may differ from others who may approach a similar study, and in turn they may also interpret it differently from one another. Contingency also brings to question the reliability of my credibility. Could I, the narrator, have had these experiences described, and do I believe this is actually what happened (Bochner, 2002, p. 86)? Within the context of this inquiry, it was important to document experiences that I encountered as I explored these practices and philosophies. As my inquiry is written as a creative non-fiction text, I do not depict precise fact. However, the essences and core of my experiences are illustrated and elaborated in my story.

Closely related to reliability are issues of validity. For autoethnographers, this means that a work seeks verisimilitude—it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true (Ellis, 2004, p. 124; Gouzouasis, 2008). To seek verisimilitude, I present my findings using elements of story, such as plot, dialogue, conflict, characters, and setting, while trying to preserve the authenticity of my experience. In addition, I am aware that my inquiry may be judged in terms

of whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves, or how it offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers, or even my own (Ellis, 2004, p. 124). By implementing autoethnography as a means of methodology, questions may arise as to the usefulness of my research findings. Although I wrote my story through a personal lens, my exploration and implementation of these philosophies and practices outside of Reggio Emilia, and even outside the pre-school setting, should be of great value to music educators, early childhood educators, and other educators who are intrigued by its philosophies and practices.

Autoethnographic influences

My desire to apply autoethnography as a methodology for my investigation has been greatly influenced by the writings of Peter Gouzouasis (2002; 2009; 2014a; 2014b), Johnny Saldaña (2008), Brydie-Leigh Bartlett (2009), Cynthia Morawski and Pat Palulis (2009), and Carolyn Ellis (2004). Carolyn Ellis' book, *The Ethnographic I*, was my first encounter with autoethnography. At first, I was overwhelmed with this style of research, due to its contrast with quantitative methods. As I dug deeper into her book, her writing introduced me to a different medium of research that I wanted to experience, especially for this investigation. Her style of research demonstrated to me that this methodology allows for self reflection during highly emotional situations, exposing vulnerability, which will result in an honest interpretation of my investigation. Ellis writes that stories tend to be composed in first person, illustrating action, dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts, and language (Ellis, 2004). Ellis' style of presenting research findings through the use of self and story captivated my methodological interests.

After reading her work I wanted to explore autoethnography more in depth. I wanted to see how music researchers and educators were applying it to my field. I began to read pieces pertaining to music education by Gouzouasis (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2013), Gouzouasis & Lee (2002, 2009), Gouzouasis, Henrey, & Belliveau (2008), Bartlett (see Bartlett & Ellis, 2009), and Saldaña (2008). Saldaña's autoethnodrama, "Second Chair" is influential to the characterization and dramatization my research findings. One of the great advantages of this methodology is that it lends itself to aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experiences, which enable texts to reach a wider and more diverse mass audience that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people (Ellis, 2011, p. 14). I believe that Saldaña's work does just that. Although not a music educator, his use of thick description of experiences brings research to life that illustrates his personal journey during his days as a clarinet player in high school band.

In addition to Saldaña, Bartlett has illustrated that this medium can be used within the context of music research in a post secondary education. Her qualitative work has set examples for me to further this inquiry into the field of research within elementary music education. From that perspective, the autoethnographic writing style of Gouzouasis has been the most influential, as the contexts of his many of his studies are similar to my investigation. In his ethnographic inquiries, he illustrates that research can be presented in a personal manner, yet can also pull elements from quantitative and other qualitative mediums. His style of writing ties into that of Ellis, in that it affords me the chance to be vulnerable at times during this investigation, allowing for honest self reflection and documentation to unfold. Gouzouasis

illustrates that the author must not forget about the self in this form of research, as he also draws upon his ethnic heritage in his ethnographic pieces, providing another level of connection between the researcher and reader.

Cynthia Morawski and Pat Palulis (2009) illustrate how this methodology can correlate well within the dynamics of a Reggio inspired music program. Their article explores the idea of doing research on the slopes [/], in-between the “auto,” “ethno,” and “graphy” to evoke generative possibilities for newness to emerge (Morowski & Palulis, 2009, p. 18). During my investigation, I explore non-traditional music practices and philosophies within the slopes [/] of my music program, that will allow for the possibilities of new forms of musical inquiry to emerge between my students, co-workers, and myself. In Morawski and Palulis’ “duoautoethnography,” they respond to Elliot Eisner (2004) by asking, what happens to the text when we stretch it with artful formats as living inquiry? They believe that we begin with ourselves; tracking our storied lives as reflexive, diffracted, and (in)aesthetic, we begin to rewrite and revise our research praxis from in-between spaces of difference (Morowski & Palulis, p. 10). I approach the present inquiry with my own biases as I explore, evaluate, and present findings. I reflect and revise my story as reflexive, diffractive, and aesthetic variables from these “in-between spaces” affect my current philosophies and practices of music education.

The acceptance of Gouzouasis, Saldaña, Bartlett, Morawski & Palulis, and Ellis’ autoethnographical research within their respective fields paves the way for researchers, like myself, to successfully employ autoethnography in our own investigations. However, to apply this qualitative methodology successfully, I account for many variables, such as the authenticity

of self, relational concerns, contingency, verisimilitude, and even my credibility. As I critically examine the effects of the Reggio Emilia approach through a personal journey, the use of this methodology guided me as I explored, reflected upon experiences, and storied these philosophies and practices.

The core of my inquiry is a tale that I crafted over the course of the six months (see Chapter Three on the following pages). During this time, I explored the Reggio Emilia approach and reflected on the processes, illustrating how these philosophies and practices affected my own principles of music education. In parallel with the twelve tones of the Western musical scale, this autoethnography is subdivided into twelve short stories that collectively document my findings. It illustrates my personal story of growth and because of this transformation of my teaching practice, it is not important to identify specific names, dates, times and other particulars, as it is not required of the genre. As such, I have framed my work as a creative non-fiction. Titled “Reggio’s arpeggio,” like the notes of a chord when played as an extended, 4 octave broken chord, I leap and explore these philosophies and practices revealing pivotal moments. As the final vignette in my story comes to an end, my arpeggio returns to the final resting tone that represents the foundation for my educational practices. Upon this arrival at the final tone, I find that there has been modulation, and I am no longer playing my song in the same key as before.

CHAPTER THREE: REGGIO'S ARPEGGIO

Stumping around

Most teachers that I know of would rather be cuddled in bed at five-thirty in the morning dreaming about the grand mysteries of life, like reality television, but not I. For waking up at the crack of dawn is when I go to CrossFit. I really can't pinpoint why I go in the morning. Perhaps it is because I am unable to sleep in, or because I enjoy the company of my fellow workout buddies. Maybe, masochistically, it's because I enjoy pushing my body to its limits. I may never know precisely, and to be honest, enjoyment is not always the best description for this situation. Some days, it can be difficult to crawl out of bed even though I don't sleep in, and others are pukingly painful after the morning workout. It's never a win-win situation. I tell myself time and time again that I put myself through it for the stamina. Yes, the stamina that helps keep me pumped for my energy draining job as a music teacher. To be honest, even though some mornings can be dreadful, this morning's routine wasn't that bad because it was a dead lift day and I tend to enjoy those days.

After CrossFit, in the middle of my cold shower, a crazy thought begins to develop in my head. I tend to develop my best ideas during my morning showers, and today the cogs in my brain are spinning fast. As I lather up a dab of Head and Shoulders between my hands, my mind begins to explore the ideas of Reggio Emilia, pondering if they could influence my practice. I think about what a Reggio inspired music program could entail as I massage the shampoo into my scalp. I try to process if I can even tackle this endeavor.

"Aaaaaaatelier," I gargle into the water pressure as I rinse the suds from my eyes thinking about this concept of an art studio, or in my instance a music studio, and what this

entails. My thoughts on this aren't entirely clear but they focus on my students exploring traditional and non-traditional musical instruments, and working together with me and one another on discoveries. I feel inspired this morning and my brainstorming goes on for a while even after feeling squeaky clean.

I turn off the tap and begin to dry off. "Ahhhh!" I shriek, as I bend down to dry my lower legs. I tremble, lose my balance, and almost fall back into the tub. I brace myself by grabbing the lip of the tub and continue drying off. I should have stretched more. This morning's CrossFit session is already affecting me. As I hobble around my apartment and continue to get ready for work, my thoughts wander to this idea of a Reggio inspired music program. I think about the teachers that I work with who implement Reggio philosophies and practices into their classrooms. I reflect on what I have observed in their classrooms and wonder if what they do can even be possible in my setting. As I'm about to head out the door, I look at the clock on the stove and realize it's already a quarter past eight. I hustle quickly because I worry that I may be stuck in traffic on the way to work.

As I quickly drive down Georgia Street toward the viaducts to escape the hustle and bustle of downtown Vancouver, I'm relieved that there isn't much traffic on the road. CBC radio is murmuring away in the background, but I am half-heartedly listening to the morning program because I am excited and focused on this new crazy Reggio idea. After driving down Hastings Street, past East Vancouver, and all the way up the Heights into Burnaby, I pull into the school parking lot and it is full. I am forced to carefully parallel park between a beat up old minivan and a dumpster. I get out of my 90's red hatchback, that's in no better shape than the van or the dumpster, and make my way into the school. I walk briskly down the hall with my

coffee in hand. Passing by colorful bulletin board displays, I head toward the office to tell Natalie about my idea from the shower this morning. She's the head honcho who keeps the school from crumbling. No she's not the school secretary, she's the principal; the type of administrator who is always supportive of my crazy endeavours as long as they are musically educational. I knock on her office door that's always open and wait for her attention. She's focused on her computer screen. As I wait, I try to make out what cool shoes she has on today; either her Doc Martens or a colorful pair of Converse. It is difficult to see them from where I'm standing under the doorframe.

She swivels her chair around and I notice that she has her Martens on today. She sees me glancing down at her cool shoes. "Good morning, Mr. Yanko, what can I do for you?" she says in a formal tone that brings a feeling of respect. I keep on staring at her shoes.

"I have this crazy idea," I say proudly as I twitch out of my dazed moment to make eye contact.

Natalie smiles and empathetically replies, "I like crazy ideas. Give it to me," then leans back into her chair to hear me out.

I feel a bit of anxiety come over me as there's no way of knowing for sure how she'll take my idea. I don't want her to think that this idea is unrealistic so I try to down play my idea. I take a deep breath, regain my thoughts and begin to explain, "Well I don't mean to sound crazy, but this morning in the shower ..."

"Shower!" Natalie cuts in, "This better not be another story about you singing in the shower and the neighbours complaining."

I shriek inside my head and hesitate for an instant. Why did I begin to tell her that?

“No, I always do my best brainstorming in the shower. Anyways, the shower’s not the point of my story. What I’m getting at is that I want to implement Reggio philosophies and practices into my music classroom.”

“I love this idea. I can see your classroom being an Atelier,” Natalie says as she looks out her office window. I can tell she’s reflecting. “Well, it wouldn’t be an visual arts-based one like in a traditional Reggio school, but a musical one. You could even be our school’s Atelierista.”

“Yes, I thought about that. It’s hard to imagine how this will look at the moment because it really hasn’t been explored in an elementary school music setting. There’s so much to look into, I just wanted to give you a heads up of what I was planning,” I respond as the bell rings, cutting me off.

“I’d like to see how this unfolds. Let me know if you need anything,” she insists, and I head out to my classroom to teach my first class.

At lunch I organize a few charts for my afternoon guitar lesson with Mr. Simpson’s grade six class, then walk out of my portable and head across the open courtyard that bridges my music portable to the main school. Like I always do, I’m going to Elsa’s classroom to eat lunch with her and Becca. Elsa, or Ms. Grey as her students call her, teaches a mixed class of grade one and two students. Coincidentally, her classroom is the one that’s directly across from my portable making the walk a short distance. The proximity of our classrooms, my constant walking through her classroom to enter the school, and our mutual sarcasm, have drawn us together. Elsa has implemented Reggio philosophies and projects into her classroom and the

direction she has taken has inspired me. She and her students are probably the root of where this crazy idea sprouted.

♪ Du-day, du-day, du, du-day, du. ♪

I knock a rhythm pattern on the door. The kids know it's me at the door by the sound of my musical Morse code, and through the window I can see Logan run to open the door. He swings the door ajar and stands there, blocking my way with a half eaten golden delicious apple in hand.

"Mr. Yanko, you're joining us for lunch today?"

"I am," I reply as Logan blocks my way. He stands there and takes a bite of his apple, crunches it, and then smiles at me revealing chunks of apple between his teeth.

"Go finish your lunch," I say as I nudge past him to enter the room. I look around the room to find a seat and don't see Elsa anywhere. I catch a glimpse of Becca sitting at a table and I walk over to join her.

Becca is Elsa's education assistant and is a Reggio inspired artist. She lived in the city of Reggio Emilia for a summer and had first hand experiences observing their practices and philosophies. Whenever I need to brainstorm, Becca and Elsa are always there for me. I place my lunch bag on the table next to hers and pull up a birch stump.

"I had a crazy idea this morning. It's partly inspired by what you guys are doing in your classroom," I say proudly as I open my lunch bag and pull out a bowl of pasta and a fork.

"So you want to switch from being a music teacher to a classroom teacher?" Becca jokes sarcastically.

“No!” I snap at her, then shake my head, “Never in a million years! I love teaching music. I want to create a Reggio inspired music program.”

“That’s awesome,” encourages Becca. She heads toward the back counter to put her lunch in the microwave. “So you’re going to need a set of stumps for your room as well?” she shouts from across the room. A few kids hear her shouting and they look at her, but go back to their lunches and conversations.

I take a sip of my water to wash down the cold pasta then reply, “Why would I need stumps? Kids sit on carpet in my room.”

Becca takes her glass Tupperware out of the microwave and walks over to explain, “It’s not about having a seat to sit on; there’s more to it than that. We use the stumps as a tool to help develop self-regulation. We don’t have enough for everyone, but the stumps act as an incentive.” She gives me a stern look, taking notice to the stump wobbling underneath me, “Self-regulation is needed by everyone, including you.”

I suddenly notice what she’s hinting at and freeze. Becca takes a spoonful of her butternut squash soup then continues, “As I was saying, it can be difficult to sit still while trying to focus on a lesson and the stumps help as incentive for some children. Not all students like them, and as you know, some can barely sit still on the carpet.”

I finish up the last of my pasta in the bowl. “I think I’m going to do a lot of reading this evening. I printed out a stack of articles at recess. There isn’t much on Reggio inspired music programs and a few of the papers only explore music in preschool settings. I am actually shocked that there is so little that examines this approach. I was hoping for more guidance in this endeavor as there is so much to take in. I honestly don’t know where to begin.”

“Why don’t you begin with the stumps?” Becca suggests as she blows on a piping hot spoonful of soup. I try to imagine stumps in my music room, but can’t and shrug. “I don’t think I can start with the stumps. I know so very little about Reggio inspired classrooms. From an outsider’s perspective, all I see is natural materials and lots of baskets. I know there’s more to it than that stuff. I want to do some research to figure out what I can apply to my program. I don’t even know if I can attempt to adapt my program to implement Reggio philosophies.”

“Don’t get too caught up in the readings, just try the stumps in your classroom. See how it goes,” Becca insists trying to give a bit of direction.

“You’re right, I have to start somewhere,” I concur with gratitude and give her a smile. She gets the class’s attention, “Boys and girls. Mr. Yanko wants to know if he can borrow our stumps for this afternoon. I told him that I didn’t think you would mind if he borrowed them.”

“Can we help him bring them to his room?” Logan shouts.

“Only after you are done eating,” Becca replies.

The kids eat silently and rush through the rest of their meal to give me a hand carrying over the stumps. Elsa’s class is always enthusiastic when it comes to my projects. I’m very thankful, especially after this morning’s CrossFit class. I don’t think I can handle another leg workout.

After lunch, Mrs. Rockford’s class of grade two and three students loudly plow their way into the music room. “Look at these stumps,” yells Paige, as she runs towards them at the back of the classroom.

“Wait!” I shout firmly as she runs, “No running, please sit in your rows and don’t touch the stumps.”

“What are they for? Are we going to make music with them?” she asks drumming the air.

“Yeah, why do you have all these stumps?” Jason adds as he makes his way to find his spot in his row.

“Just wait until everyone is settled down and I will explain,” I reply walking to the front of the class.

“Hey, those look like the tree pieces in my sister’s class,” Elise blurts out as she makes the way to the back of her row.

I look around the room and notice a lot of chatter, fidgeting, and excitement. It appears as if these stumps have made Ms. Rockford’s class anxious. I didn’t think that a few stumps in a classroom would be that enticing to a group of eight and nine year olds. As the last child finally makes his way into the classroom and sits down at the back of his row I explain, “Ms. Grey lent me her stumps to see if they could be used in a music class.”

“How can we use them?” Paige asks.

“I think they’re for our bums to sit on,” Sebastian jokes, as he smacks his bottom.

I roll my eyes at his comment, and give him a stern look before continuing.

“There are only twelve stumps and there are twenty-one of us here today. Not everyone will get a stump and we’ll have to share them. Besides, some of you may not even want to sit on a stump and can sit on the carpet. I’m also going to give no warnings, so if you act silly with the stumps, or do anything dangerous with them, you’ll lose your stump privileges. That means

no standing on them or jumping over them.” I pause and look around the room, then in an over exaggerated manner yell, “Capeesh?”

“Capeesh,” they repeat loudly.

I dismiss them row by row to get the stumps, and notice a few kids decide not to get up to grab one. By the time I get to the last row there aren’t any stumps left.

“No fair. I don’t even get a stump,” whines Sebastian.

I give him a comforting look and plead, “We have to share them. You may not get one this class, but if Ms. Grey lets me borrow them for a few days there’s a good chance you will get one next class.”

“He can share my stump,” Chase suggests as he scoots his bottom over to make room on his stump. Sebastian runs over to join him on the log. As they settle down I look around the room and realize that I can’t see all the kids because some of them are blocking those on the carpet behind them. I’m now frustrated, as this endeavor may not be a good idea after all.

“Boys and girls, our rows don’t work for stumps so we may have to put them back. I can’t even see Elise sitting on the carpet behind Chase and Sebastian.” I say with frustration and look at the clock feeling like we just wasted ten minutes trying to figure out how to incorporate stumps into my classroom.

“Why do we have to sit in rows? We sit in groups in our classrooms,” exclaims Jason.

“In music class we sit in rows or lines. That’s how it’s done. That’s how it’s always been,” I say thinking about how band, choir, and orchestra classes are arranged. Rows and lines are what myself and other music teachers use to create order.

“So what? Why can’t we change things?” Jason adds.

I play with this idea for a moment and ask the children, “How would this look?”

“We sit in squares or groups of four in our classroom,” explains Paige as she wobbles her stump.

I think about her suggestion and propose an idea, “We could try sitting in small arc shape or a rainbow shapes facing the front board. Let’s try groups of four or five students,” I allow them choose where to sit and who they can sit with. As they put themselves into groups, I also remind them that if they act silly or don’t work well with their group that I will have to do some rearranging and they will be moved to a different spot.

I gaze out at the children once everyone is in a group and I’m pleased that I can finally see everyone. We begin working on our songs for a primary music festival that is coming up, but don’t have much time as most of the class was spent stumping around. I guess I won’t know the effects of these stumps for a few days. I hope Elsa lets me borrow them until the end of the week.

The stumps became my entry point to exploring this idea of a Reggio inspired music program. A few weeks ago I thought this was a crazy idea, but over time this idea starts to become more realistic. During my evenings, I read through stacks of journal articles and books on Reggio Emilia teachings. I discover that this approach contrasts with my many of my current practices, and, although this is the case, I feel I’m beginning to develop an understanding of how and why Reggio-inspired teachers approach curriculum. A sense of angst enters my mind because I want to let go of control and give more autonomy to my students. That said, I feel that I can’t because I want to have a better understanding of the philosophies and practices

before doing so. I wish there was someone who had already implemented these practices into their elementary school music program to help guide me through this journey.

Although there's a lack of support, I'm glad I have Elsa and Becca to push me in the right direction. Elsa doesn't ask for her stumps for quite a while. Actually, her students, not her, miss them and claim their return. I am grateful, because this time spent with the stumps has empowered them to become a provocation and play an instrumental role in reorganizing the function of my music room. As a result of this, students are no longer sitting in rows, but in small groupings of their choice. When classes arrive to my portable, they now show excitement for the stumps and ask if they can grab them to sit. In addition to this, minor changes in students' self-regulation have been evident, not only in primary students but surprisingly in the intermediate ones as well. I have noticed less fidgeting during group discussions, a general awareness of personal space, respect for materials in the classroom, and even leadership development within some students. These changes haven't happened for every student, but they are sufficient enough amongst my classes to make me wonder as to why and how they happened. I'm not sure if it is because of the stumps, the new seating arrangement, or a combination of both. I may never know precisely. I'm going to keep these changes as my students seem more eager to learn and they're focusing better. There is just one problem; Elsa's students took their stumps back. It's time to get a set of my own.

Bringing the classroom outside

After a few weeks of stumping around, I don't make any effort to incorporate Reggio practices and philosophies into my music program. To be honest, I'm not sure which direction to go, so I spend my free time reading journal articles, books, and theses on Reggio Emilia. I am

discouraged as I realize that its practices and philosophies differ greatly from the elementary schools within my city, but more specifically the music programs. While immersed in these readings, I focus my attention on important concepts—the role of the child and teacher, the environment as a third teacher, and the Atelier. Over time, I begin to see how I can adapt my program to include these Reggio philosophies and practices. I spend many lunch hours with Elsa and Becca having great discussions on ideas for my program, but for some reason I'm still afraid to jump in and can't seem to put these ideas into practice.

"I have some time this afternoon if you want me to join your class at Beecher Creek? Mr. Simpson's students are away on a fieldtrip and won't be coming to music," I say to Elsa as I drop a pair of eights onto the stack of cards. I have been trying to fit in a game of "Big Two" with Elsa and Becca for the past two weeks and today is the day where we finally have a lunch hour to do so.

"Ha, my jacks beat your eights," Becca exclaims as she tosses them carelessly onto the deck. "Why don't you lead the class in an exploring music in nature activity?"

Becca nods at Elsa to play a hand. She takes a moment to glance over her cards and adds, "Yeah, you can show them all the amazing sounds in nature." Elsa contemplates looking at her cards, then at me and continues, "Pass. Can you beat her jacks?"

"Um, no," I shake my head, "Pass."

I think about Becca's idea, but I have no clue as to what to do for an outdoor music exploration activity. I have never done this before. The only ideas that come to mind are from my childhood—buzzing my lips through two pieces of grass, crunching dry leaves with my boots, clicking rocks together, and banging a few dry stumps. Honestly, my immediate ideas

aren't that enticing. I don't want to lead in an activity that will be disappointing or non-engaging.

The bell rings to end lunch. "Oh too bad we have to clean up and get ready to go," jokes Elsa sarcastically as she tosses her cards onto the deck to end the game, saving the both of us from losing against Becca, yet again.

"Mr. Yanko can you hold my stick? I want to go across the creek. I want to see what the boys over there are doing," says Marcus as he hands me a mossy branch that he's been dragging around since we arrived. He hops into the creek with his red rubber boots and takes off to the join his friends.

I'm a bit disappointed by the lack of sounds to explore in nature at this time of year. It's late spring, and there are no crackling sounds from crisp maple leaves. Beecher Creek has slowed down to a trickle, and the greenbelt that the creek runs through is full of thick mud from the recent rainfall. Even the waterlogged stumps and branches that the students explore don't lend themselves to the rich hollow sounds that I had expected.

I walk over to where Marcus had gone to join his friends. I see Gregory taking pictures with Elsa's iPad.

"What are you boys up to?" I ask.

Marcus splashes his rock into the creek bed and then turns to Gregory, "Can you show Mr. Yanko what we did?"

“Hold on a second, let me find it,” replies Gregory as he glides his index finger of the screen to bring up a video. He presses play and hands it to me. It is a video of the boys dropping different sizes of rocks into the creek creating various sounds and tones.

“What type of sounds did you explore?” I ask.

“Um, splashing,” shrugs Marcus.

“And rock sounds like this,” adds Carlo as he skips one into the creek bank. It bounces off a few rocks creating offbeat *clink-clink-clinks* before sinking into the water.

“Did the size of the rock make a difference?” I dig deeper as I pick up two contrasting rocks out of the creek bed.

“Sort of, the bigger rocks make a slower ‘boom’ in the water,” says Gregory as he makes an exploding gesture with his hands, “and the smaller ones made a quick, ‘pop’ sound.”

I hand Gregory the iPad. “Keep on exploring. I’m going to see what your classmates are up to.” I head away from the creek bed toward a growth of trees.

Marcus yells at me as I walk away, “Hey, I gave you my branch. Where’s my branch?”

“Somewhere over there,” I point to the other side of the creek from where he’s standing and keep on walking toward the greenbelt.

“Hey! Mr. Yanko come check this out,” insists Logan as he drums on a cedar log repeatedly and sings.

♪*Everything is awesome.*

Everything is cool when you’re ...

I interrupt, "What if you tap your beat on a different stump or on a different part of the log?" I tap his rhythm pattern on the grass beside the stump and then back on the stump, wanting him to try and explore different timbres.

"No, I'm happy with this," he replies firmly. Logan seems to be more interested in singing and not in developing the rhythmic accompaniment. I leave him to work on his music and walk over to the grass field to see what discoveries Elsa and Becca are taking part in.

As I catch up with them I notice Elsa gathering her students. I look at my watch and see that it's almost time to head back. She takes off to get some of the kids who are still in the forested area, leaving Becca and I to watch the ones who are ready to go. Marcus quickly gets bored waiting and wanders up the hill that runs into the grass field. Becca notices him instantly and shouts, "Marcus! ... come down here! ... it's time to head back!"

"No, I'm not done exploring!" he protests and then begins hitting his branch on a drain pipe. A boingy 'thud' escapes from behind the group of kids standing with us.

"Ahhh!" shrieks Ava, startled from the sound.

We all turn around to see what made that sound and where it came from.

"Listen. There," shouts Ava pointing to a metal grate at the edge of the field.

"That exposed pipe that Marcus is banging on must lead down the hill to this storm drain," Becca says.

Ava crouches down low and yells into the hole, "Hello. Hello. Hello." It echoes all the way up the hill to where Marcus is. He laughs and a few other kids run up to join him. Logan grabs Marcus's branch and taps a rhythm pattern on the exposed pipe. Ava whines to the boys at the top of the hill, "Stop tapping with that stick, I want to tap the rhythm back." She taps on

the drain grate, but it doesn't echo back to the boys as loud as their sound when they tap on the pipe. Elsa and the rest of the students return and gather around the grate. The boys on the top of the hill begin to play a rhythm on the pipe and sing.

"Everything is awesome.

Everything is cool when your part of a team.

Everything is awesome when you're living the dream ..."

I feel inspired to incorporate Reggio practices into my classroom, but I don't know where to begin. While driving home after school, I reflect on some of these practices that were illustrated during our outdoor music exploration. I think about Gregory, and how he used the iPad to document learning experiences. I wonder if Elsa will use any of his footage for her class's documentation wall. I run into a bit of traffic and take a moment to reflect on the practice of co-learning. I think about today's activity and how it illustrates these children being co-learners, co-explorers, on learning endeavours with one another and their teacher. Finally, there is a break in traffic, and as I make my way through it, I ponder the concept of the environment as a third teacher, and how these children were able to explore the musical qualities of Beecher Creek. The traffic dies down and as I continue my drive towards downtown, I reflect a bit more on these practices and how they may fit into my program.

First experiences with explorations

Later in the week as I cut through Elsa's class to get to the office, I observe her being a co-learner with her students in a daily activity that she has termed explorations. I've heard her talk about this activity many times in which her students get to be explorers and scientists in

making discoveries, but I've never seen it. I hold off from going to the office and take a moment to watch what's going on. I'm intrigued by the different levels of learning that occur and get another crazy idea to adapt this concept into my program. My students and I can be co-learners in music explorations, in which we can make discoveries and research various instruments. The next day I gave it my best with Miss Roseberg's kindergarten class.

I sit at the piano and accompany the hello song. This tune is sung as routine at the beginning of every kindergarten class to foster confidence and audiation. Ruth, the special helper of the day, stands tall in her skinny jeans and oversized pink hoodie as she leads her classmates in the song. She is a good singer and even creates some funny gestures for her class to mimic.

"Please to meet you!

If you are wearing yellow stand up, stand up.

If you are wearing yellow dance like a ballerina.

If you are wearing yellow walk like a chicken...

... and sit down."

I let Ruth lead the song for a bit longer than planned because the students are engaged and having fun. As it goes on, I take time to think about the activity I have planned next. We're going to do explorations similar to what I observed yesterday in Elsa's outdoor class, but using musical instruments. I'm bit anxious and not exactly sure what this process entails. I do know that I'll have to become a co-learner with my students and to be honest, I fear this idea. Having to give up my role as teacher and become a co-researcher on whatever these students choose to explore is a scary thought. Most of the activities I do are teacher directed—that's the way

music is taught. The teacher conducts or gives directions, and there's very little room for freedom. I have a strange feeling that today is going to be more of a learning experience for me than for my students.

After Ruth finishes the song and takes her seat I begin to explain, "We are going to do some exploring with the instruments at the back of the room. Out of all those instruments, you get to choose which ones you want to explore and try playing." I wait as heads turn to take a peek at the many red, blue, and green instrument bins at the back of the class.

"What about the guitars?" John asks as he strums the air.

"No not today, you can only explore the percussion instruments," I say, because I don't want them messing up the tuning pegs. "We also have to remember to be respectful when playing these instruments. If you are using a drum, I only want to see your hands tap the head or skin part of it. We can't hit them with sticks or mallets because they break very easily and can't be fixed," I pause.

"Nod your head if you understand?" Many little heads bob up and down in an over exaggerated manner.

"Stomp your feet if you are going to hit the drum with a stick."

Sam and Rishi uncross their legs and are about to stomp their feet when Sam shouts, "Hey, you tricked us," as soon as he realizes what I said.

"I'm glad you are paying atten ...," I reply as Ruth cuts in, "What about the flutes? Can we play the flutes?"

"We don't have any flutes in this classroom. Do you mean recorders?" I inquire as I

point to the bin of recorders at the back of the classroom.

“Yeah, those,” she confirms and points to the bin as well.

“I don’t want us to use any blowing instruments, only *percussion*,” I emphasize.

“Percussion instruments are the hitting ones, besides, I don’t want you to get each others’ germs,” I state with a pungent look on my face.

Despite the limitations placed on what they can explore, the students appear to be enthusiastic about having some choice in what they can play. Most of them go to take the fun instruments off the shelves—the vibra-slap, thunder tube, crash cymbals, and djembe. I observe a few students take an instrument and sit down with it to explore. However I notice Sam, Rishi, and John go as a group and take instruments out of their bins and hit them or crashing them together then put them back, pick up new ones and do the same thing. After five minutes of this, I feel frustrated as there is very little in depth exploration happening here. It’s also getting very loud in the classroom and as a result of the ruckus, I see Emily sitting on the carpet holding her egg shakers to shield her ears.

“Stop! Stop exploring and sit down,” I shout above the crash, chick, and booms. “Boys and girls, if we all explore our instruments as loud as we can, we won’t be able to hear them. We need to be gentle and treat them with respect. Who can show me what respectful playing looks like?”

Jacob raises his hand and he quietly drum rolls his pudgy little fingers on his djembe.

“One more person?” I ask as I look around the room. “Anna, can you show us what respectful playing looks like?” She smiles and picks up her triangle from the carpet in front of her and taps it every so softly creating a calming ring.

I look at the clock and realize that there are only ten minutes left before I have to walk them back for lunch, “I’m going to give you a few more minutes to be explorers. This time, I would like you to take your instrument and sit down with it while you explore. And remember, be respectful.”

After my attempt at music explorations with Ms. Roseberg’s class, I take on the same activity with all of the primary classes and surprisingly notice the same eagerness to explore percussion instruments. I begin to place value on music explorations, but in turn, question the validity of my current program’s emphasis on performance. If more time is allocated to this endeavour, I feel that it will not hinder students’ performance skills, as this one on one time with particular instruments allows for further inquiry into potential and possibilities. Music explorations seem to help develop an awareness of respect for instruments, self-regulation, and audiation. In turn, all of these characteristics are transferable to performance.

Although I didn’t want to place limitations on this activity, over time I felt they were necessary at the onset of music explorations, as too much freedom and variety could hinder children from wanting to develop a deeper understanding of the capabilities of particular instruments. Before genuine explorations could take place as creative activities, students had to develop an awareness and respect for these instruments. Placing limitations allowed for me to provide guidance as a co-learner with my students. I had to be careful with this interpretation of co-learning, because providing too much guidance would prevent this activity from being an exploration, and in turn would hinder it and become teacher directed.

Constructing the musician's Atelier

Days roll by, and so do many explorations. As a result, my students are learning many new music concepts and are also developing self-regulation while doing so. I've observed less fidgeting and blurting out answers, which has enabled students to focus on the lesson at hand. Children who have a better grasp of self-regulation have even illustrated peer to peer regulation, resulting in them taking control of their music time. That allows for a more productive learning environment. Despite those changes, the way things are going isn't what I had originally intended and I feel like I am only adapting to these concepts on a superficial level. My classroom hasn't evolved to become a "third teacher" for my students. Kids are exploring these instruments in a controlled environment with rules and restrictions. That seems to hinder their creativity and desire for further inquiry. These students need more than a few guitars and percussion instruments to explore.

What happened to my idea of creating an Atelier, a musician's studio?

I reflect on what I had originally planned and begin to alter my space to function as a studio. Part of this change involves incorporating found objects, and to make this happen I head over to a thrift store one afternoon. The next day I show up at school with bags full of various objects to add to our Atelier. I am excited about this and head over to show Elsa these new found instruments.

"Guess what I purchased last night on my way home from school?" I say to Elsa showing her four bags stuffed with kitchen items.

"Let me guess. Some lingerie?" she asks with a puzzled look on her face.

"What? No, I picked up a whole bunch of found instruments at that thrift shop on

Hastings Street to incorporate into my music Atelier,” I reply defensively. “Oh ... but why are they in a lingerie bag?” she asks inquisitively.

“What?” I exclaim, and look at one of the bags. On it is a photograph of a woman posing in a bra and panties. I continue with agitation, “Oh, no. The lady at the store must have reused this bag. I honestly didn’t even notice it.”

“Right,” says Elsa rolling her eyes.

“I better get to class and get rid of this bag. You should come by later to check out the sounds your students create while exploring these new objects,” I say and rush off to my classroom to dispose of the bag.

The students are excited by these new instruments and can hardly wait to hear the sounds they can create with them. A new symphony of timbres explodes from within the classroom as pots and pans are whacked with forks, ice-cream scoops, and ladles. Salad spinners are spun and explored with various objects inside to create different timbres, and even a set of bicycle wheels are rat-a-tat-tatted with chop sticks. As more instruments are added my students’ inquiry for timbre increases. These new instruments are only part of what is needed to create this Atelier. The room itself needs to become a studio.

I begin this endeavour and notice an instant change in the way students approach their explorations. The bright colored plastic bins that house the percussion instruments are replaced with baskets and that impacts the choices students make when gravitating toward instruments. Unlike the bright colors that entice students, the neutral colored baskets appear to have less of an impact on choice when it comes to exploring what’s inside of it. Students even take initiative by painting recorder fingerings onto paint sticks and photographing solfege

hand signs to create new resources to replace the store bought posters that plaster the walls. This classroom is becoming a place where students can take ownership, where they are a part of the process of creation, and a place where they can see that their voice is present and valued. Slowly, it is evolving into a music studio to create further inquiry, and discovery.

As the Atelier develops and the environment becomes a third teacher, music explorations develop to become a central part of my program. I begin to tie songs and lessons into our daily explorations, and today is no different.

The kindergarten students in Miss Roseberg's class sit in a zig-zag line that stretches across the carpet from one end of the room to the other. We are in the middle of playing *"Hunter you must wander."*

"Hunter you must wander everywhere,

Dark eyes will find you,

Bright eyes will find you,

Hunter you must wander

Everywhere."

Anna shuffles her socks across the carpet in search of the hidden stuffy. She walks in a big circle around the edge of the classroom, searching high and searching low, trying to figure out where it is. As she nears my desk, the students' singing reaches a crescendo.

"There it is," she exclaims as she squats down to pick it up from under the desk. I notice a few students are getting restless and start fidgeting. Anna hands me the stuff and I know it is time to move on.

“We’re going to do music explorations. When you are exploring your instrument, I would like you to see if you can play loud and also see if you can play soft,” and pause before continuing, “Who remembers, what is the musical word for loud?”

A half a dozen hands reach for the sky to answer.

Sam shouts, “Forte,” before any of his classmates get a chance to answer.

“Yes, Sam, forte is the musical word for loud. Everyone say *forte* with me,” I say in an Italian accent and gesture with the conjoined three fingers of my right hand in the air.

“Forte,” the class echoes and mimics my hand gesture.

“Who remembers, what is the musical word for soft or quiet?” I whisper.

I nod at Emily who has her hand raised.

“Shhhhhh.” she says quietly holding her index finger in front of her lips.

“Nooooo, it’s *piano*,” interrupts Sam as he gives Emily a cocky glare.

“I want everyone to repeat after me the musical word for quiet, *piano*.” I whisper slowly.

“Piano,” the class whispers back.

After a few minutes of exploring, and hearing more fortissimo than pianissimo, I gather them into a circle to share their experiences of creating forte and piano sounds with their instruments. I look at John sitting politely with his legs criss-crossed holding a pair of egg shakers in the palms of his hands, “John, can you show us how you explored forte and piano on your instrument.”

John wiggles them very slowly, trying hard not to make a sound. I look around the circle, “Did John play forte or piano?”

John answers cheerfully, "I played quiet," and wiggles the shakers again to illustrate. I make an over exaggerated eye roll because I had wanted a classmate, not him, to answer. "Can you play *forte* for us?" I ask with an Italian accent and hand gesture.

He shakes his head, "No, I tried, it can't be played loud."

I look around the circle to his classmates then ask, "Does anyone think they can play John's shakers in a forte way, respectfully, and without braking or hitting them?" Many arms quickly thrust into the air accompanied by sounds of "ooo-ooo-ooo," but John hands them over to Sam, his best friend. Sam stands up, shakes his whole body with the shakers, and then suddenly freezes.

"John's right, this instrument can't be played loud," Sam states as he hands them back to his best buddy.

I try to elaborate on this discovery, "Hmmm. Boys and girls, there are different types of loud and soft. All of your instruments can be played loud and soft. Egg shakers, like the ones John explored, can be played forte and piano. If he shakes them very, very softly we barely hear them. If he shakes them faster or harder, like Sam just demonstrated, they get louder." I pause and look around the circle for another instrument to illustrate my point.

"Emily, can you play your instrument for us as softly as possible?" Emily nods then wraps her little fingers around a side of her triangle. Gripping it firmly, she taps an edge with a wooden xylophone mallet.

"Was that as quiet as John?" I ask, as I get up from the circle to stretch my legs.

"Yes," shouts Sam.

"Emily used the wrong thing to hit it with," grumbles Ruth under her breath.

“What do you mean? Emily was exploring the triangle using a mallet. She’s allowed to explore using a mallet. She could even use a spoon or a fork to tap it if she wanted to explore those sounds,” I respond to her observation.

“No,no, no!” she states stubbornly and shakes her head, “She’s supposed to use this,” revealing a metal beater in the palm of her hand.

“Ruth can you play forte? I think the class wants to know if the beater will make a difference in creating loud and soft sounds.” I ask. Ruth holds the triangle by the twine that suspends it and waits for it to stop spinning. Out of nowhere she rapidly rattles the beater inside the triangle, than taps the sides of it playing it as loudly as she possibly can.

“Was that louder than John and Emily’s playing?” I ask, already knowing the answer. “Yeah,” shout the children. We continue around the circle with our explorations and compared the rest of the instruments to one another.

The changes in the classroom go smoothly over the next little while, and as a result I am more willing to try new things with the students. My friend Tim, who works at a local paint store, donates a box of paint sticks to add to our collection of found instruments. These sticks lead me to facilitate another outdoor music exploration, but this time with kindergarten students. During this provocation, they use the paint sticks to tap, scrape, and drum the various sounds of the playground. This exploration provides them with a toolbox of playground timbres to compare to the ones they discover during regular explorations. All of my kindergarten students are taken by this concept of outdoor music explorations and ask to do it again and

again. Who wouldn't love this activity? You get to make music outside in the brisk spring air and play on the playground at the same time. It's a win-win situation for these kids.

A stump to call my own

After Elsa's class takes back their stumps, I realize it's time to get a set of my own. I spend a fair bit of time searching through Craigslist posts, but all of the free stumps are either too large, poorly cut, or made into kindling. All this searching makes me feel like Goldilocks looking for a stump that is just right.

One Friday after school, I walk down the hall to return a book, "Visible Learners," to Rosalie, our school Librarian. She is a Reggio inspired Librarianista. I call her that sometimes because she's implemented a few Reggio concepts into her library program as well. I walk through the doorway of the library and see Jacob, one of the shortest kindergarten boys returning some overdue books.

"Overdue books, eh?" I ask.

"Mhmmmm," he nods with a shy look on his face.

"Don't worry," I whisper and show him my book, "Me too." I help him place his books in the return bin and head over to Rosalie sitting at her desk.

Rosalie is part of an informal Reggio inspired committee at our school that includes Becca, Elsa, myself, and Chelsea another Kindergarten teacher. This committee began as a grassroots approach and over the course of five years it has evolved and branched off into a formal network with other teachers in the school district. I'm the newest member of this grassroots committee at our school as well as the district one. Both of these groups have been encouraging and supportive as I've been able to network and collaborate with others who

share similar philosophies and practices. From time to time, I even get to share what I'm doing with teachers in other districts, as Maria Farfallina, the district early learning helping teacher, is keen on Reggio inspiration and likes to share what we are working on.

"How was it?" Rosalie asks as I hand the book to her.

"It was good. I got some ideas about documentation," I reply.

"I thought you would. Let me know if you need it again," she adds. I catch a glimpse of Elsa sneaking out of the library with a stack of picture books cuddled in her arms and run in her direction.

"Ms. Grey, wait up! I need your advice." I shout.

"Shhhhhhhhh!" Two girls in the library hiss at me as I rush past them.

We head down the hall toward her classroom and I share what is on my mind. "I've been trying to get a set of stumps for my classroom, but they've been difficult to find. You'd think it would be easy with all these trees around here. Well that means they haven't been cut down, hence no stumps available," Elsa says sarcastically and then asks, "Have you tried Craigslist?"

"Yeah I tried that, but there weren't any that were worthwhile."

We enter her classroom and I see Becca cleaning some paint brushes in the sink. She's humming to herself as she swirls a rainbow of murky colors into the drain. As we walk toward Elsa's desk I pry, "Where did you get your set of stumps?"

Becca stops, turns her head to look in our direction when she hears us talking about stumps. "I," she interrupts as she points a brush towards her chest, "Got them from my neighbour's house. A tree fell on their house a few months ago during that big wind storm.

There was a ton of stumps in their backyard when we got these, but that was in the Fall.

Besides, I thought said you found some on Craigslist?” “Apparently those weren’t any good,” answers Elsa, as she plops the pile of picture books on her desk.

Becca adds, “Well, my neighbours still have quite a few stumps piled up in their back yard. Do you want me to ask if you could have a few for your class as well?”

Elsa puts on her jacket to head home and adds, “I remember that their back yard had a big slope. You should get someone to help carry the stumps so you don’t have to do it alone up that hill.”

Becca washes the last brush and winks, “It’s just a little slope, but bring Liam along to help with the stumps. I’ll ask my neighbours tomorrow if you can have them. I know it won’t be a problem.”

The next morning I twist Liam’s arm to help load up my car.

“Arriving at destination in two hundred meters,” states the GPS in a monotone British accent.

“That must be Becca’s white SUV up ahead,” Liam says pointing at it, and I slow down to park behind it. Her neighbourhood is nestled on the edge of a forest on the North Shore Mountains. We get out of the car and from where we’re standing, I point out the picturesque view of downtown Vancouver.

As we walk up the driveway to her house, I notice that she’s heading toward us from the neighbour’s yard. From the looks of the new roof on the house, it’s the one that had the birch tree fall on it during that horrendous wind storm.

“I see Matt twisted your arm to help with the stumps,” Becca calls out cheerfully to Liam as she walks onto the driveway to join us.

“Did you get bribed with filet-o-fish as well?” Liam jokingly asks Becca.

Becca smiles and confirms with a few nods, “We should go and get the stumps, I just asked my neighbour and she said we can take as many as you need.”

We walk along the side of her neighbour’s house toward the backyard. Becca stops to open the back gate, “Remember how I mentioned that there is a little hill that we have to carry the stumps up?” She pauses as she presses on the handle to unlock the rusted lever of the gate then slowly swings it open, “Well ...”

“That’s not a little hill,” I pause. “It’s not even a hill,” I continue shaking my head, “it’s a steep ravine!” I stand frozen and take in our surroundings. The backyard consists of a patio that stretches ten feet from the house; this meets up with a steep incline covered in ferns, cedar trees, wild flowers, not to mention lots and lots of mud. We had come this far to get the stumps and I even brought Liam to help haul them up this ‘little’ hill.

“We came all this way; there is no turning back now,” I say to Liam, and he doesn’t reply.

“Liam?” I turn around confused. Becca is standing on the patio but he’s nowhere to be seen. I hustle down the side of the house and see Liam in the distance walking toward my car. He’s ready to leave.

“Liam, I need your help to carry the stumps. It’ll take forever if I have to do it on my own.”

“You do CrossFit, do it on your own. That hill is crazy,” he protests.

“Come on, it’s not as bad as it looks. It won’t take that long if there’s two of us to carry them up the hill,” I plead, realizing I’ll probably be indebted a few extra filet-o-fish sandwiches after this is done.

Becca and I convince him to come back and the three of us quickly determine which stumps would meet our needs; ones that aren’t too large for students to push or lift across the floor. Liam and I haul eleven stumps up the hill and load them into the trunk and back seats of my car. These things are waterlogged and heavy. With all of this water in them, I hope they dry out fast. Once all the stumps are loaded into my car, we wiped off our muddy hands and go for our well deserved filet-o-fish lunch.

Miguel toots his trumpet

Days goes by and the stumps slowly dry out evoking a fresh scent of Christmas trees in my classroom. Our explorations also continue with these new found instruments, yet I don’t feel that I’ve created the Atelier of my dreams. The students have plenty of percussion, found instruments, guitars, and ukuleles to explore, but they haven’t had a chance to explore band instruments. I reach out to Ben Roche, the school district’s co-ordinator for arts, to help with this task. He shows interest in my Reggio endeavour and is able to locate a handful of old brass instruments for us.

A little while passes and as I check my morning emails I skim through one from Ben letting me know that he will come by today to drop off the instruments. A feeling of excitement runs through me while reading this, but as the day flies by this feeling begins to diminuendo. My day is spent correcting fingerings and rhythms for a difficult recorder duet, followed by prepping the primary choir for an upcoming festival. Also, I just finished working

with three kindergarten classes in a row. Thirty more minutes to go until the end of the day, and I just realized that Ben hasn't come by yet.

As I look out my classroom window I see Mrs. Pratt hustling her students up the ramp to my classroom. "No stomping, go inside quietly!" she commands as her students march past her one by one. The last student walks by her into the classroom and she makes eye contact with me, giving a sympathetic smile before leaving. I guess she could tell by the tired look on my face that I'm exhausted. Her students finally settle down and begin working diligently in small groups on their sound story projects. A few of the students remain in the classroom, but because it's a warm day most of them take advantage of the opportunity to work outside in the fresh air of the courtyard.

"What if you create a sound to represent each season? So far you have Spring, Fall and Summer, what about Winter?" I ask the trio of girls standing on the painted hop-scotch lines with their percussion instruments stacked neatly in one of the squares.

"Well, I'm doing Summer because I love the beach and swimming," says Julia in an over exaggerated tone then continues, "Sandra is Spring because she loves bunnies and flowers." She pauses then looks at Carol with a questionable look, "I think Carol is Fall because she loves pumpkins and maybe because she likes dressing up for Halloween. There's no one to do Winter!" She crosses her arms defensively, "That's why we can't do it."

"Well maybe all of you can play Winter together, or just one of you," I suggest. Glancing over the courtyard at their classmates scattered in their small groups I get another idea, "I can even get another student to join your group for Winter, but you will have to tell him or her exactly what to do."

“I like the idea of all of us doing Winter,” Carol says quietly. The other two nod in agreement.

Sandra adds, “If we all play at the same time we can create a loud snowstorm.”

“Ya, like a blizzard. Pshzzzhshshshsh,” Sara exclaims making a storm sound effect.

As I’m about to leave the girls, I see Ben Roche walking toward me from the school with two awkwardly shaped cases in each hand. By the look of these black cases, I assume he’s carrying some of the brass instruments. I leave the trio of girls and walk over to greet Ben. The girls’ curiosity takes over and they follow me shortly after, leaving their instruments on the pavement to see who this man was.

“Are you Mr. Yanko’s daddy?” interrupts Julia.

“No, Julia, he’s not my dad,” I firmly reply with an eye roll.

She turns her head sideways to look at him from another angle, “Are you Mr. Yanko’s brother?”

Ben cuts in, “No, I’m Mr. Roche. I am a music teacher like Mr. Yanko, but I co-ordinate the music and art for all of the schools in Burnaby. I help teachers like Mr. Yanko with projects and festivals.”

“I see,” she says, not sure what to make of him yet. “What’s in there?” she taps her little hand on one of the black cases.

“I think it’s a euphonium, Julia,” I reply.

She gives me a disgusting look, as if I’m making up a pungent word.

“They’re both baritones,” corrects Ben as he lifts up the cases to emphasize.

“I can’t wait for the students to use them. Do you need a hand getting the rest of the

instruments?" I ask.

"We can help," interrupts Sandra.

"Sure why don't the three of you give Mr. Roche a hand," I say as I take the two cases and carry them into the portable. I place them on carpet away from the group that is working inside and open up one to reveal a dinged-up brass baritone. Lifting it from the case I vigorously press on the three valves, shocked that they moved quite easily. After putting on the oversized mouthpiece, I begin to blast a few notes. My tone was rustier than the brass finish on this instrument. My lips had lost their embouchure as it had been quite a while since I played a brass instrument. My attempt at a scale distracted the students that stayed in the classroom and they stop their practicing and run over to see what I'm doing.

"Mr. Yanko what's that?" asks Rebecca as she rubs a hand over the faded brass tubing of the instrument.

"It's a big trumpet," adds Jai proudly.

"No, it's a baritone. It's similar to a trumpet, but much larger and sounds deeper," I reply then blow a few rough notes, illustrating my point.

"Can I try it?" Jai asks.

"Yes, but you need to wash the mouthpiece first like we do with the recorders," I instruct as I pull off the mouthpiece and hand it to him.

Ben walks into the classroom accompanied by the three girls who are chatting his ears off with grade one gossip. Sandra carries a case moulded to the shape of a French horn and the other two girls enter the room with long black cases, which without a doubt are trombones.

"These students are going to have fun with the trombone slide. I just hope their little arms can

reach,” I say to Ben as I take the trombone cases from the girls.

All of the students in Mrs. Pratt’s class make their way into the music portable to see what is happening. As they gather, I introduce Mr. Roche and explain, “Boys and girls, we are going to take a break from our group projects. Mr. Roche has brought some brass instruments for us to use. I know some of you are eagerly waiting to try them out, and who knows, maybe you can incorporate them into your sound stories. However, some of these instruments can be very loud and we don’t want to hurt our ears so we have to play respectfully. We also need to be extra careful when exploring or playing these instruments, because they have fragile parts that can easily break off.”

I pick up the trombone and put it together. The kids circle around closer.

“Who knows what this is?” I ask.

“A trumpet?” shouts Rob.

I sigh then reply, “No, not a trumpet. You kids call everything a trumpet. It’s a trombone. Trombone’s are very fun instruments because they have a slide that is used to change notes.” I unlock the slide to illustrate. “Make sure you turn this little lock when you aren’t using the slide or else it will just slide right off.”

A few kids giggle.

I take off the mouthpiece to show them how to clean it. “We also need to buzz into the mouthpiece. It sounds like a duck call. It may be a bit difficult to do at first, but once your lips memorize it, it gets easier.” I buzz into the mouthpiece to illustrate and the same group of kids giggle again. After I finish my quick demonstration, the students break themselves into small groups around the instrument that interests them and begin to explore.

In a corner of the room I notice Miguel sitting crisscrossed with his back towards his classmates.

“Miguel, what’s the matter?” I ask quietly as I crouch down to make eye contact.

“I tried to play the trombone, but I couldn’t get it to sound. Every time I blow into it nothing happens. Jai used it after me and made it sound easily, it’s not fair,” he begins to sob.

“I have an idea. I can get my trumpet out and you can practice on that,” I reply trying to comfort him.

“I can show him how to blow properly,” adds Ben as he joins our conversation.

As I dig through the cabinet to find my trumpet I notice that it is getting too loud in here from the over blowing. “Boys and girls, it’s sunny outside, If you want to take your instrument outside to explore your more than welcome too, just stay in the courtyard where I can see you. Oh, and don’t forget to clean the mouthpiece every time a new person uses the instrument.” Miguel takes the trumpet and holds Ben’s hand as he leads him outside.

Exploring the brass instruments is going to be a loud and difficult experience and I know that I can’t expect these kids to play songs on these instruments. I just want them to get a feel for them and have experiences discovering their unique tones. I stay in the room and show a few girls who stay behind how to buzz into the French horn. One finally grasps how to do it and I leave her to show the rest of her friends what she can do. I head outside to check on the others.

Ben and Miguel are sitting on a bench, and I go to see what they are up to.

“Can you play a high sound for me?” asks Ben. Miguel shrugs his shoulders, puffs his cheeks and blows into the mouthpiece.

“What about a low sound?” he asks. Miguel takes a deep breath and blows the same way. “To play a higher pitch, or sound, tighten the corners of your mouth like this,” Ben instructs as he points to corners of his lips.

“A few minutes ago you couldn’t even make a sound, now you’re working on playing different notes. That’s very impressive Miguel. You got some skills,” I say encouragingly.

“Yeah, this is so cool,” he exclaims as he rubs the corner of his mouth.

“I see your lips and cheeks probably hurt a bit, that’s just your face muscles memorizing what to do,” I reply. Ben helps him work on this for a while longer and I leave the two of them to see what the other students are up to.

I walk over to the ramp of my classroom to see what a group of boys are up to with a trombone. As they show me what the slide can do, a few grade seven students walk past us in the courtyard. Chris, a student who plays trumpet in band, notices Miguel sitting on the bench trying to play the trumpet and stops to watch him play. He takes the trumpet from him and silently practices as Miguel runs inside to wash the mouthpiece for him. I feel like walking over to him and telling him to go back to class, but I know Miguel could use some encouragement and Chris may be able to do just that. Miguel plunks the mouthpiece on the instrument for him, and Chris plays a band song that he is learning. A few of Miguel’s classmates hear his playing in the distance and head over to watch him play. The students stare at him, silently studying his fingers and his embouchure. After he plays his final cadence they applaud and try to apply what they learned from watching him on their brass instruments. Chris sits with Miguel and spends a few minutes trying to teach him notes on the trumpet before taking off to class.

After Chris leaves, I walk inside to see if the students are being productive. Some of the

kids have gone back to work on their group projects. Two boys anxiously walk up to me as I enter the room. “We can’t find the blowing things to play the trom - bo - nees,” says Kevin pointing at the two trombones resting on my desk. I search through the shelf where the mouthpieces are kept. They weren’t put back in their proper spots, but on a higher shelf out of sight. I hand Kevin and Rob each a mouthpiece and send them outside to play so that they don’t disrupt the group working inside.

“If you boys need help getting a sound, ask Miguel. He has a good grasp of how to buzz into the mouthpiece. I’m sure he’ll be willing to show you how to do it,” I reply as they walk out of the classroom.

A few minutes later I look outside the classroom window to check on them. I can’t believe what I see and rush outside to take a closer look. These kids are stomping in a line trying to mimic a live marching band. As soon as I head out the door I realize that I’m not the only one watching these boys. They’ve drawn a crowd of parents waiting for their kids, as it’s almost the end of the school day. After the boys finish honking their pretend band, Rob and Kevin follow me inside. Miguel continues exploring his instrument. He’s so captivated by it. I let him play it all the way until the dismissal bell rings.

After school I’m excited by this new addition to our Atelier and head over to Elsa’s classroom with a baritone to share my thoughts with her.

“I see you finally got those brass instruments,” she states as she takes the baritone from me.

“Yeah, the kids were captivated by them. I was shocked that Miguel played with the

trumpet for most of the class. He couldn't even make a sound at first, but as soon as he got it he couldn't put the instrument down." I notice Elsa playing with the baritone's valves.

I can tell by the look on her face that she doesn't like me watching her explore the instrument and thrusts it toward me, "Are you going to play something for me?"

"Not unless you want to hear a rusty scale," I state as I take it from her and try to toot a few notes. She covers her ears with her hands and walks to her desk, "Didn't you go to music school? That's not mus ..." I interrupt, "I'm happy that they took to these instruments."

"Well they are shiny and loud, anyone would love them," Elsa states as she organizes her desk. I leave her to her work and find a stump to sit on to practice some arpeggios.

"Oh, I have a story for you," she blurts interrupting my playing, standing at the window before continuing, "Marcus stood here and watched a group of boys march around the courtyard with those instruments. He was so captivated by them that he caused a scene and disrupted everyone's seatwork. My entire class joined him to gaze out at them as they marched with those noisy things."

I walk over to join her gazing out the window, "I was actually quite impressed to see that. I thought they were just going to explore them sitting down, but they took this exploration to another level."

Elsa adds, "That gives them the opportunity to see themselves as capable learners, leading to self-confidence, self-regulation, and even working together in a team productively."

I turn away from gazing out the window and look at Elsa with confusion, "What do you mean by that?"

"Basically, they're coming to realize where they fit amongst a community of learners."

“Really? I didn’t realize these brass instruments play such a pivotal role in this,” I say as I lift up the baritone to emphasize my point.

She smirks, “It’s not just the brass instruments, it’s everything that’s been happening since you incorporated the stumps into your classroom.”

We both gaze out onto the empty courtyard in silence. Only the ticking of her classroom clock could be heard in the distance. Neither one of us says anything for a few moments as we reminisce on our observations of the boys mock marching band.

Bark! The herald angels sing

The students in Ms. Grey’s class don’t make a sound as she hustles them through the doorway. I ignore them and wipe guitar chords off of the white board as they settle into their seats. From the corner of my eye I notice Carlo making his way up to me with a bouncy step. He stands beside me and waits politely as I finish erasing then asks enthusiastically, “Can we do music *explorations* today?”

“Every class you ask, ‘can we do explorations? Can we do explorations? Can we do explorations?!’” I reply with a crescendo in my voice, “Why every class?”

“Because I like it a lot,” Carlo stammers with his toothless smile. I smirk, “If there’s time at the end of class we can do some exploring, go take your sea...”

“You said that yesterday,” he snaps and shakes his head angrily, “and we didn’t get explorations!”

I bend down to make eye contact, “If it means that much to you, I will fit it in, but you have to make sure your class is exploring and not being silly with the instruments.”

“I *pwomise*,” he says quietly then suddenly runs to grab a buffalo drum. As he is about to bang its head with a mallet I yell, “Carlo, come here!”

“Yes?” he asks, as he gives me a confused look while holding the drum in one hand and the mallet in the other.

“What happened to your promise? You were going to watch your classmates so that no one was being silly with instruments,” I say firmly.

“I will. Everyone is sitting on the carpet. When they get up to *explore* I’ll make sure they’re not silly,” he replies confidently.

I sigh, then point to his spot on the carpet, “Take a seat, please. You have to wait till I’m finished giving instructions before going to explore.” He walks with the same bounce in his step to find his seat on the carpet and sits criss-crossed with the drum to his left and the mallet in his lap.

Near the end of class I give the students some time to work on their explorations. As they embark on their discoveries, I notice Becca standing in front of the pile of stumps and just staring at them. She reminds me of a little girl standing in a pumpkin patch looking for the best one to pick out. As she rolls one out of the pile and begins picking at it, I make my way over to see what she is up to.

“I think we can debark these. It’s starting to break off easily,” she says peeling off a chunk and handing it to me. Not knowing what to do with it, I toss it onto the ground, wipe off my hands and ask, “Do you want to come by at lunch and help with it? I haven’t done this yet and you’re a pro.”

Becca laughs, “Ha, a professional debarker. Your words are soooo enticing.” She notices

dry dirt on her hands and wipes it off saying, "I don't think Elsa and I have anything planned for lunch. I'll ask a few responsible kids to help out as well; they really enjoyed doing the ones in our classroom so I'm sure they'll be eager to help." We both go to see what the students are exploring before the end of class.

Becca walks into the music portable with a quartet of boys. She brings Marcus, Logan, Eli, and Gregory to help with the debarking.

"I'm here for the party," dances Marcus as he moonwalks across the room, "Where's the music?"

"Ummm, party, were not having a party," I hesitate.

"Yes we are, Ms. Biggins said we're going to have a debarking party to help you take the bark off," adds Logan as he unpacks his lunch on the carpet.

I quickly realize what is going on and correct myself, "Oh, ummmm, yes. We're going to have a debarking party. I'm so glad you could make it." I crank up the tunes on the stereo, giving the boys some time to eat their lunch and to give me a few minutes to find some tools. I'm a bit hesitant to have students do the debarking as giving eight year olds chisels and screwdrivers to pry off the bark is not something I would normally do in my classroom.

"What if they cut themselves?" I question Becca as I tap my finger on the tip of a chisel.

Logan eavesdrops and shouts out, "We know what we're doing. We're supposed to pry the tool away from us so that it doesn't slip and cut us."

Becca reassures, "These are the boys that debarked the stumps in our classroom. They can do this."

After a few minutes of eating, dancing, and singing, the boys begin to work. I'm shocked by how well they remove the bark and I only need to help them with a few pieces that aren't peeling away easily.

"Wow, look at this piece," exclaims Eli as he pries it off of the stump and waves it in the air, "I think we can use it for our race track. Mr. Yanko can we have the bark?"

"Of course you can," I reply and begin to sweep up the small scraps into a pile.

"Look, look, there goes a wood bug!" shouts Marcus pointing at it with his chisel.

"Where? Let me see, let me see," blurts Logan as he runs over to see it.

Cruuuunch.

"Uh oh! I think it's dead," he squirms as he peels it from the sole of his shoe.

"You didn't kill it. I think it was already dead," says Marcus as he pries off another chunk of bark and finds another insect. "You guys, look, here's another one and it's not moving either." He pokes it repeatedly.

Becca walks over to the boys, "Marcus go to the classroom and ask Ms. Grey for a Petri dish to put the bug in. There may be more insects that we can take back to class to add to our bug collection for research."

A few minutes later, Marcus returns with a magnifying glass in one hand and a mason jar in the other. "Ms. Grey didn't have a pear tree jar so she said I could have a Mason's jar," he says as he waves it in the air, "And look what else she gave me," he exclaims as he looks through the magnifying glass giving himself a big bug eye.

"Oh cool," says Logan, "hand me the jar. I want to put the bug in it."

"I think it's a beetle," adds Eli. "Can we look it up on the computer when we go back to

class to see what it could be?”

“You’ll have to ask Ms. Grey, I don’t know what we’re doing after lunch,” Becca replies.

The boys continue to scrape off the bark and capture a few more insects just in time for the lunch bell to ring, leaving me a pile of bark scraps and stumps to stack up. Becca packs up her lunch and sees me struggling with the stumps, “I think they still need to dry out. They’re still a bit too heavy.”

The boys and I roll them back into the coat room and they take off back to class with their new bugs to explore and bark for their race track story they are creating.

Incorporating the stumps into the classroom proves to be a useful tool to help the primary students with self-regulation, but they also appear to help with the intermediate students as well. After changing our seating plan from rows into small groups, the classroom dynamic changed for all of my intermediate students. Those who need more help can now easily look to their group members for it, and the overall tone of ensemble pieces seem to feel more connected. Many students are becoming co-regulators amongst their peers, enabling them to develop their self-identity within a community of learners. I believe that part of this is because they can now see one another to give visual cues when to begin, and where and when to place fingers on instruments instead of relying on me for all of their instruction. In a sense, they’ve become co-learners and creators of their endeavours in class—be it recorder, theory, or group projects—and I can now go from group to group to help where I am needed instead of one on one with each and every student.

Documenting the 100 Languages of music

The recess bell rings. Mr. Simpson's class with their recorders and duo-tangs in hand scatter swiftly away from my classroom and onto the playground. Finally, I have a minute to enjoy my morning coffee. Taking a sip of the lukewarm beverage, I head toward the window and gaze out at a glossy sheet of dew painted over the field. Behind this, a blanket of rolling fog from the inlet fades as the sun breaks above Burnaby Mountain. This scenery is a nice change from the usual umbrella and rubber boot weather that plagues us this time of year. I take another sip when...

Tick .. tick .. tick .. tick.

The metronomic tick of the clock draws my attention away from the outside and my eyes veer to this sound above the window. I notice that I still have a few minutes before Miss Roseberg's kindergarteners hustle to my classroom. After taking a big gulp and finishing the coffee, I walk toward my desk. Placing the empty mug on a stack of sheet music, I pick up my daybook and flip through its pages to see if an event, like an assembly, will interfere with the lessons I have planned for the rest of the week. There it is. Scribbled in red ink: TERM 2 REPORTS. I roll my eyes and sigh.

I still have a few minutes to skim through my assessment binder and see if more is needed. I go through the sixth grade class lists, making mental notes of their progress. As I'm deep in thought I slowly pace, and my feet begin to unconsciously play a circle game around the room. I flip through the last pages of this section and then dig right into the grade four and five classes. I trail my index finger over names and match them to various notes that graffitied the pages. Some of these pages are as difficult as a twelve-tone score to decipher, but from my

observations I know that there is more than enough to work with for my reports.

The loud bell above the guitar rack rings, startling me. I plop the book onto my desk and wait for the sound of trumpeting elephants to come stampeding up the steps to my classroom. I walk to the front door. I turn the knob ever so slowly and inch open the door to peek outside. Two tiny hands spring through the opening and reach around the edge of the door, prying it out of my grip. It swings open revealing a pack of loud, eagerly awaiting kids. I stand tall in between the door frame to block them from running into the classroom.

“Mr. Yanko can we go in?” asks Ruth as she tries to push past me.

“Wait,” I firmly reply, “I don’t think everyone is here yet.” As we wait for the rest of their classmates to arrive I realize that something is bothering me. I think about my mark book, but dismiss this idea because I am pleased with my students’ progress. I can’t figure it out. In the distance, Sam and Rishi slowly drag their feet and make their way to the back of the line. Both boys are carrying chunks of dirt in their palms and have brown handprints all over themselves.

“Boys throw that on the ground, you are not bring...,” I protest as they toss it onto the ground, knowing exactly what I am about to say.

Ruth thrust her hands onto her hips and with spunk asks, “Can we go in now?”

“Yes, let’s go inside. There is some dew on the ground outside. If your shoes are wet take them off,” I respond.

The class settles down on the carpet and I am still puzzled by what’s bothering me. Now more so than ever, because I can’t figure it out. In the middle of a singing “Rocky Mountain” it hits me like the sound of an unresolved tri-tone. I have a book full of data illustrating the

progress of each student. In this book, pages contain numerous notes, numbers, and checkmarks. The problem is that this is a tool for me and not for my students. It isn't something that they can access with ease, nor does it help them see their progress, or aid in setting goals. I feel frustrated and now know exactly where this frustration is rooted: the numerous journal articles, books, and thesis' on Reggio Emilia that I had recently delved into. I've come to discover that I want to create something that my students can use on a daily basis to reflect upon and to help set goals, something similar to the documentation wall in Reggio inspired classrooms.

At lunch, I cross the courtyard that stretches between my portable and Elsa's classroom to join her and Becca. I want to get their insight into what is bothering me and perhaps get some ideas on documentation. Outside their room, I peer through the window to make sure I'm not interrupting anything before entering. I notice kids sitting at the carpeted area eating their lunches and chatting with one another. I tap my usual rhythm pattern on the door.

♪ Du-day, du-day, du, du, du-day, du. ♪

The door slowly opens and Carlo stands there greeting me with a big smile.

"Hey Mr. Yanko, are you joining us for lunch today?" asks Carlo enthusiastically.

"Yes I am," I reply as I walk in and drag to join Elsa at her desk.

I place my lunch in my lap and look up. Carlo is standing right in front of me. He followed me across the room and is just standing there staring at me as I am about to shove a forkful of Pad Thai into my mouth. He thrusts his bowl of spaghetti towards my chest almost making me drop my fork into his bowl.

“I have spaghetti for lunch today, what did your mom pack you?” he asks then slurps on a noodle. It is very clear from the red painted across his face that the noodles may have disappeared into his mouth but not the sauce. “I have some left over Thai food. Go sit with your friends and finish up your lunch so you can play outside,” I reply. Carlo leaves me and heads back to join his friends on the carpet.

As I begin eating, my eyes are drawn to the documentation wall in the classroom. To an outsider it looks like a sloppy bulletin board plastered with photographs, drawings, artwork, and notes; like a giant puzzle, but I know there’s so much more to it. Many questions run through my mind.

“I think I want to create a documentation wall in my classroom,” I blurt out as I shove another forkful of cold pad Thai into my mouth. Elsa is deep in thought writing something into her daybook. She looks up from her notes to acknowledge that I am sitting beside her, smiles, and goes back to writing. Becca is across the room supervising some students and hasn’t even touched her lunch yet. They’re both busy today. I may have to wait another day to get some answers.

Becca makes her way toward us. She sighs and pulls up a stump to sit down, “Do you even have a wall you can do this on? I don’t recall there being any free wall space in your room,” she says as she opens up her lunch bag and continues, “You may have to be creative in finding a space to use for documentation.”

I take a sip from my water bottle and reply, “Well, there are two bulletin boards hidden behind the xylophone shelving unit. Things will have to be rearranged, but I am thinking those boards could be good to use. The only problem is that I don’t know what to do with the

xylophones.” I take another sip and continue, “I can’t get rid of them because students use them, but their shelves are so massive. I don’t want to move them to a place that makes the room seem small. The open feel to the room is what I like about it. I also need a big space to do movement activities.”

“I get what you mean,” Becca replies. “The room is arranged for a music setting. I didn’t even know you had boards behind the xylophones. That wall would be good for documenting.”

As soon as the bell rings their students rush outside to play. We continue eating our lunches and sharing our weekend plans. Becca talks about the trendy Italian restaurant she ate at in Gastown and I explain the adventure I had hiking up Grouse Mountain. Elsa interrupts and goes over the details of a field trip she is planning with Becca. While they chat, my curiosity for their documentation wall distracts me. I finish eating and walk over to the wall to take a closer look at how it is organized.

“How did you have time to do all of this?” I interrupt their conversation. “I mean how were you able to take pictures and figure out when and which to select?”

Elsa responds, “It wasn’t easy and some days we forgot to document as we were so engulfed in projects that we forgot about the documentation process altogether. We sometimes take them ourselves, but have recently had a few responsible students use the class iPad to take photos.”

“Oh yeah, I remember Gregory used the iPad to document when we went to Beecher Creek to do our outdoor music explorations,” I comment.

Becca takes a big bite of her sandwich and mumbles with her mouth full of food like she

has something important that she wants to add. She walks to join me at the wall, swallows her food and continues, “We discovered that the perspective the kids bring is one totally different than ours. They open up to their peers and they are able to capture a different view than Elsa or I.”

I reply with frustration, “I see. There’s so much to absorb. Unlike you, I have every class in this school, not just one. I have almost 500 students and twenty classes. I want this documentation wall to be applicable to all grades. I rub my brow as I ponder and continue, “Even if a class takes up a fraction of a bulletin board I don’t see how I can do this for all of my ...”

“Stick to themes,” Becca enthusiastically cuts in, “or just do a snapshot of the project to remind them of what was going on. You don’t need to cover everything, but the documentation should be used to trigger a reflection.” The bell to end lunch rings. Elsa could sense that I’m a bit nervous about implementing documentation in my classroom and empathetically adds, “Don’t stress about it. I’ll give you a hand tomorrow to help figure out where to move the shelving and to see what we have to work with for the documentation wall.” We pack up our lunch containers and I head back to my room to begin a group project with Mr. Simpson’s grade six students.

“One, two, three, puuush,” I exclaim as Elsa and I slowly move one of the heavy xylophone shelves. Inch by inch, we shove it across the carpet revealing what is to be my documentation wall. We stare in silence at the two empty bulletin boards on the wall for almost a minute. The two of us are out of breath and take this moment to rest and to

brainstorm ideas. Elsa rubs her hand over the sandy surface of the blue board and suggests, “I wouldn’t cover up these boards with paper, they’re already a neutral color. You don’t want to take away from the documentation with flashy paper.”

I reply, “You’re right, these colors will allow the documentation take precedence.”

Then, with jazz hands, I sarcastically add, “Besides it’s not supposed to be something showy, like a display of children’s artwork.”

“Well there is a big bottle of glitter in my classroom you can use if you want it to sparkle,” she jokingly smiles.

“No, no, no!” I shake my head, “but you just gave me an idea of what to add.” I hustle across the room to the stack of stumps.

“Stumps?!?!” yells Elsa.

“You’ll see,” I smirk and go to pick up a cardboard box full of birch bark left over from our debarking party. Elsa takes it from me and scavenges through it. She lifts up a fragment and places it firmly against the edge of the blue board.

“This bark would make a great border,” she says.

I grab another piece and place it next to the one she is holding, “It will also tie into the theme of music in the environment,” I pause then continue, “or is it too much?”

“No, I think it will work. If you need help putting it up let me know,” she says as she squats down to salvage through the box pulling out various pieces. “Have you thought about how you’re going to document all of your classes.”

“I thought about what Becca mentioned yesterday with regard to themes, and decided to stick with them because many of my class themes and projects overlap,” I explain then toss

the piece of bark back into the box, “as Becca said, ‘the picture doesn’t have to be exactly of the student, but of the project or theme that’s being done to trigger thoughts.’ I want to use one board to document primary classes and one for the intermediate.” The recess bell rings and Elsa heads back to her room, leaving me with a stack of xylophones in the middle of the room to put back on the shelving unit that we just hauled across the room.

Over the next few weeks, I go through the various photographs that I’d taken since the beginning of the school year. I’m searching for ones that capture the process of each theme. I also continue taking pictures of students working on current projects. To say there is an abundance of documentation is an understatement. I organize the photographs of the primary classes into themes that stand out for them: rhythm patterns, brass instruments, explorations, and outdoor music explorations. The intermediate ones are left uncategorized at the moment, but I have a general idea of what they will encompass.

One day after school I crank up some tunes on the radio, sit on the new grassy-green carpet, and surround myself with stacks of photographs. I pick up a pile to my left, flip through a few photographs of students exploring rhythm patterns and place it back down. I pick up the pile next to it that captures kindergarten students exploring the sounds of the playground with paint sticks, flip through some photographs and place it back down as well. I suddenly realize that I’m procrastinating.

I pick up another pile that contains photographs of students exploring brass instruments. Flipping through this stack, I am reminded of traditional band and elementary school music programs and wonder if this Reggio stuff that I’m doing even belongs in such a

setting. I go through a few more pictures, stop and look at one that captures Sam's eyes and cheeks puff out as he blows into a French horn. I put the pile down and again contemplate if a documentation wall can be implemented into my classroom. If I'm able to create an Atelier and adapt my philosophies to those of a Reggio inspired classroom, then why do I suddenly doubt my ability to create a means of documenting student progress?

I shrug off these doubts because there is absolutely no way of knowing without trying. I stand up, stretch from sitting down for too long, and then look for the earliest stack of photographs, finding it by my feet. It is the rhythm pattern theme that we explored a few months ago. Picking up a roll of tape and the pile of pictures, I place rings of tape on backside of each and tack them onto the blue bulletin board. I now have an idea of how much room this theme canvasses and plan the rest of the layout in my head. After all of the photographs from the rhythm section are up on the wall, I step back and take a moment to reflect. I'm pleased with the many images that capture students illustrating how they understand rhythm. Although these photos do not contain all of my students, they seem to capture the essence of the process, allowing them to reflect on their own experiences. I do some final rearranging of crooked photos, and make sure to leave enough room for the other themes. By the time I finish I look at the clock and notice that it is shortly after four. Time has flown by. I decide to leave the documentation wall with just the pictures of our rhythm patterns on the board to see what the students reactions will be tomorrow.

The morning bell rings and Mrs. Rockford's students hustle their way into my classroom. A few of these grade two and three students notice that there are pictures on the wall and go over to see them after dropping off their backpacks in the coat room.

"Hey Jason," shouts Paige, waving from across the room, "there's a picture of us on the wall."

"What picture?" asks Jason as he tosses his backpack down on the ground and runs across the room to join her. After greeting a few students and parents at the door, I walk over to the documentation wall to observe as they reflect on the pictures.

"Mr. Yanko, why do you have these photos of us on the wall?" Paige asks.

"I will explain once everyone is settled in. Sit in your groups please," I reply and usher them to take their seats with a swooping hand gesture.

"Mr. Yanko, Mr. Yanko can we use stumps today?" shouts Chase as he drags one across the floor. I reply sternly, "Yes, but be careful moving the stump. If it's heavy, push it from the bottom so it doesn't tip over."

I give the class a few minutes to look over the photographs on the wall and to share what they remember from their experiences. The responses and stories that come about are great, but this discussion shows me that my students' voices are missing from the wall. It has pictures that capture the processes, but there isn't anything on the wall that represents *their* thoughts. I think about Elsa's documentation wall and remember that she has student responses and other items tacked up on her wall, not just photographs.

The second class of the day is Mrs. Pratt's class of grade one and two students. They are also intrigued by the photographs on wall. I give them a few minutes to observe, than we sit in a circle and share stories about the photographs. Jai waves his hand in the air to share.

"Yes, Jai, what did you learn about rhythm patterns?" I ask.

Jai hops up and runs to the wall. He jumps and points at a photograph in the top corner of the blue board. "I used these cups to create a pattern of Ta and Ta-tays," he pauses and stares at the photograph, then jumps and points again, "but it's missing the beanbags I used for Shhhhs!"

"Thanks for sharing Jai, come back and sit with us in the circle." I state as I point to the spot he was sitting in. As he slowly walks back, I place a stack of paper and a basket of pencil crayons in the middle of the circle. I explain that they will be writing down what they had just shared and this will be posted on the documentation wall, "Don't worry about spelling, just try your best. When you are finished your response you can do music explorations, but I would like you to include something you learned from the rhythm pattern unit during your explorations today."

Kevin runs up to me with his paper and is the first one to hand it in. I read what he had written in a green pencil crayon.

I lern duday and Sss.

"What happened to the story you shared about creating that huge train of rhythm cups across the room?" I pry.

Kevin shrugs, "I wrote what I learned."

He runs off to do explorations. Sandra and Rob come to show me their papers. They

were both similar to Kevin's.

I Irne alot ta an ta tays.

I did ta shhhh.

I realize these responses are not the descriptive stories that the kids just shared. They are simple sentences, not a reflection of their inner voices. I had wanted them to paint a picture of their learning process. These responses are not what I had expected. Julia comes up to me and hands me her paper.

I lern du and du day.

"Is this good Mr. Yanko?" she asks quietly.

I wait a few moments to contain my thoughts. "You wrote that you learned 'du' and 'du day.' What did you do to learn those two rhythm syllables?" She looks at me inquisitively and tilts her head to the left while thinking. Then she smiles, grabs my hand and pulls me to the documentation wall.

"See that picture?" Julia says pointing to a photograph of two students creating rhythm patterns with Duplo blocks.

"Yes," I reply and let her continue.

"Well, me and Carol were fairy princesses and we used the rhythm blocks as a magical spell to save our puppy from the evil dog stealing man," she replies.

"Oh really, and how did you use the rhythm blocks? I mean, how did the rhythm patterns fit into your story as a magic spell?" I ask.

"So you see there was the evil dog stealing man and the fairy princesses had to use a magic spell of rhythm patterns to save Chester," Julia explains.

“Is Chester the puppy’s name?” I ask to confirm.

“Yes of course Chester is the puppy! He is brown everywhere except for a white circle around his eye,” she says as she points to her right eye then continues, “Yeah, so the fairy princesses, me and Carol, used different rhythms as spells to see which one could freeze the evil dog stealing man. I put ‘*du du du du*’ blocks, but that didn’t work.” Julia states as she waves her hand in the air pretending to cast a spell, chanting the pattern to a nice steady beat. “Then Carol tried ‘*du du-day du-day du.*’ That didn’t work either. Finally we tried ‘*du-day du du du*’ and he froze. We rescued Chester and lived happily ever after in our fairy princess castle.”

“Thanks for sharing your story,” I reply and she runs off to the wall of percussion instruments.

These students are masters at telling descriptive stories, yet their tales can’t be transferred to paper. That frustrates me. As class goes on I realize that this doesn’t matter because their written responses act as catalysts, evoking these memories in a similar manner to the photographs.

At lunch I crank up the stereo again and tack two more sections onto the wall. The first section, music explorations, takes up a fair bit of space as this is an ongoing theme. There are tons of pictures documenting the many ways in which students explore the different means of music making. The other section on this board branches out from this theme. It is the outdoors music explorations unit that the kindergarten students partook in.

Instead of having the kindergarten students share written responses, as I will have to scribe for all of them, they use another one of “the 100 languages” to illustrate what was explored and learned, the language of artwork. The crayon and pencil crayon drawings that

these students create to depict their outdoor music explorations are simple, yet colourful. As I collect their artwork, I realize that like some of the grade one and two students written responses, these simple drawings only make sense to them and I have to dig deeper and ask individual students how their drawings represent what was learned.

“Ruth, can you tell me what your picture is about?” I ask. She points to a pink design on the paper and explains, “That’s the playground. That’s the sound it makes when I scrape it with a stick.” She pretends to scrape the carpet with an imaginary stick. Jacob, a quiet classmate of Sara’s, draws the swing set that he drummed on and explains to me that it makes a good ‘tic-tic-cha’ sound.

After this experience with these kindergarten students I realize that this medium of artwork will benefit some of the older students as well to illustrate what was learned.

As this week ends and the next begins, I spend some time working on the intermediate students’ wall and it surprisingly develops much faster than the primary one. I finish tacking up the last photograph, take a step back and realize I need to spend more time documenting the process. Unlike the primary students, there is only one theme. For each of the intermediate grades it spans over the course of many months; ukulele for the grade six students and the recorder for the grade four and five classes.

Like the primary wall, I think it is important to have their voices on it as well, so I spend some time with them to create some responses to tack up. I explain to Mr. Cruz’s grade six class, “Today we’re going to write sentences about our group ukulele projects that we just finished. You can write about things you struggled with, things you learned, something that

was fun, how it felt to learn a song within small groups instead of the whole class, or something to improve on for next time. I'd like honest answers, so please take a few minutes to think about the project before writing down your statement. Put some time and thought into your comments, and names don't have to be on the papers."

"Can we make it fun and use pencil crayons like the primary students?" asks Shauna. Calvin cuts in, "Can we draw a picture instead," as he points to the kindergarten drawings up on the documentation wall.

"Yes, you can use pencil crayons, and if you seriously want to draw a picture of your experience, I will welcome it if you feel it is a better way for you to express the experience," I say to the class.

The students begin to work quietly on their responses. After a few minutes the silence breaks and I give them some time to share what they wrote with their group members from the project. I am hesitant to share them as a class, so I only have a few students volunteer their comments aloud.

"It was fun to experiment different strumming patterns and seeing what other people thought." Mandy, Grade six.

"I like working in groups because they told me what to improve." Jack, Grade six.

"It's hard to play at the same time." Dom, Grade six.

"I had good group and made friends to." Tina, Grade six.

"I didn't like my group. We couldn't play at the same time." Gordon, Grade six.

"It was a bit hard to get the rhythm for the song." Parvinder, Grade six.

"It was really hard to get the rhythm and beat, but I loved how at the end I got it perfect"

and it made me so proud.” Myles, Grade six.

“It was difficult to play four strings because I play the electric guitar.” Suzie, Grade six.

After sharing them with one another, we have a group discussion on where to go from here because some students appear to have issues or concerns with the project. With Gordon’s response, his classmates suggest different things that worked for them like practicing slowly, or maybe changing groups for the next project. I don’t know how to react to their verbal and written comments. The function of their writing differs from the primary students, whose writing is used to trigger long descriptive aural stories.

Over the course of the week, I do the same thing with the grade four and five students. They write about their journey in learning the recorder over the past few months. Their responses are comparable to the grade six students in that they took some time to reminisce about their experiences and write a reflective comment to share with each other and me.

“Something challenging was learning the notes and read while doing a difficult song.”

Tannis, Grade five.

“La Bamba F# A C B A used to be hard, but now it’s easy.” Darren, Grade four.

“I enjoyed playing with the older kids because they help us.” Hollie, Grade four.

“Playing a low C was hard but practicing it became easier.” Steven, Grade four.

“I enjoyed learning songs from the radio.” Robert, Grade five.

“I really like doing a duet with Samantha because she is my best friend and I enjoyed doing it with her.” Francis, Grade five.

“I enjoyed that I got to play recorder with my friends.” Linda, Grade four.

“It was surprising how at first a song seems so hard, but at the end it was really easy.”

Jonathan, Grade four.

“I liked how I was able to learn songs by hearing and sound to make recorder more challenging.” Kitty, Grade five.

These responses are similar to the grade sixes, but differ in that the students who wrote about challenges also wrote about how they overcame them. Near the end of the week, I tacked up all of these responses onto our wall as a place for these students to see where they were, what was learned, and where we can go from here.

Film scoring alla Reggio Emilia

I have been planning to do a film scoring project with my primary classes for quite some time, but other things seem to take precedence. This project keeps on getting sidetracked. After a few months of adapting Reggio inspired philosophies into my music program, these students have demonstrated on various occasions, most notably through explorations, the ability to use inquiry-based learning in my classroom. Because of this development, I am keen on knowing what they can take from previous projects and explorations, and see if, and how, they implement these ideas into a film score. Part of this inspiration has spun from helping Elsa’s students incorporate sounds and melodies into their story-workshop stories, or “storyations,” which is exploring stories using musical elements to enhance the details in the story. I finally have time to implement this film scoring project, and today I plan on starting it with Ms. Grey’s class. I’m excited to see what we can create together this afternoon.

“Don’t sit in your groups today. Come sit up front near the TV,” I say as Becca walks Elsa’s students into the room.

“Awesome! We’re going to watch a movie,” shouts Marcus, as he takes long strides with his feet shuffling his socks across the carpet. I wait for his classmates to join him before explaining.

“Today we’re going to be film composers. Who knows what a composer is?” I ask.

“A person who writes?” shrugs Ava with uncertainty.

I smile at her, “You’re on the right track, but what does a composer write?” The students are hesitant to answer and I give them a few moments to process. Anthony looks around the room and then suddenly points to the bust of Beethoven on the bookshelf at the back of the room. I wait a moment for him to add a comment to his recognition of Beethoven glad that at least he is on the right track. I wait a bit longer looking around the room at his classmates for the words to escape his mouth or theirs ... but nothing is sounded, so I continue, “Yes, he is a composer Anthony, but what does a composer write?”

The grade one and two students are silent as they ponder this question. The piano and violin students in this class should know what a composer does. This is frustrating. I have to help them out even more.

“What class are you in right now?” I ask.

“Mr. Yanko’s class,” blurts Logan followed by a long period of silence.

I get tired of digging for an answer, “Yes, my classroom, and in here we learn music, so a composer is someone who writes ...”

“Music,” shout Alice and Ava simultaneously.

“Yes, music. Today we’re going to be composers and write some music, but not just any ordinary music, we are going to be composing music for a funny movie,” I explain.

“Are you sure it’s funny?” Marcus questions giving me a doubting look.

“Well, I think it’s funny.” I reply defensively then continue, “This film is very short, but there is a lot that we can create musically to make the scenes better. I am going to show you the movie a few times. The first time through we are just going to watch it to get a feel for it.” I turn off the lights creating a theatrical mood as they settle down and comfortable on the carpet.

“Where’s the sound?” asks Felicity.

“Yeah, there’s no sound Mr. Yanko, can you turn up the volume?” Ava adds.

“There’s no sound or music because we have to create it,” I whisper, “Just watch the movie for now.”

As the class watches the film I notice that there is a lot of over exaggerated laughter and am glad they take to the movie. I wasn’t sure if they would like it.

Logan tires to get his classmates’ attention and shouts, “Oh my gosh, that fat guy just did a belly flop off the div....”

“Shhhh, watch the movie,” I cut in with a firm whisper and a stern look.

Not sure of which way to go about the next step in this project, I reminisce on my numerous evening trips to Seattle, where I completed a degree in film scoring over a two year period. I think about trying to explain what I learned in a simplified manner so that this entire class of primary students can score a film as a group. The film ends with a fade to black and as I turn on the lights, I quickly notice excitement and fidgeting throughout the room. It’s time to get them working on their score.

“We’re going to watch the movie again and this time we’re going to look for ‘hit points.’

A hit point is not something you actually hit, but a place in the movie where music could be added to it to make the soundtrack better. So if you have an idea at a particular moment I will freeze the movie and we will add your music to that section.” I press the play button on the remote control and hands thrust into the air as soon as the movie begins. “Yes Gregory,” I nod.

Gregory comments, “You know that part Mr. Yanko. You know ... ummmm ... where the fat guy jumps on the diving board. Well I think we should ...”

I abruptly interrupt, “We aren’t at that part yet. Raise your hand when we get to it. Right now were at the opening scene with the swimming pool that looks like an ocean.” I press play again and wait.

A few hands jet into the air accompanied by “oh, oh, oh” chanting, overemphasizing a desire to be picked for a suggestion.

I nod and smile at Candace to share her idea.

“There’s a hit point here,” she jokes as she punches her fist into her palm causing a pack of girls sitting near her to giggle. I role my eyes and open my mouth about to comment, but she beats me to it and quickly asks, “Can I use the gong here?”

Not the gong! It’s a calm scene with flowing water and she wants to bang a gong? I sigh, then dig deeper into her question, hoping she doesn’t want to bang it as hard as she can. “Who can tell me what is going in this scene?”

She answers, “It looks like the ocean, but it’s weird because it’s in a swimming pool.” Logan shouts, “It feels like were swimming,” doing a front stroke with his arms to illustrate.

I disagree with the use of the gong because it’s not how I hear the score in my mind. I feel that something less forceful should be used, but this is their score and not mine so I gesture

for her to proceed, “Candace go to the gong. I’m going to back it up and press play again, I want you to show us what you think would sound good here.” I wait expectantly for her to whack the gong with all her force as I watch to movie, ready to cover my ears with my hands as soon as she whacks it. The whack doesn’t happen! There is a soft rippling sound that penetrates the room. I turn away from the TV to see what she’s doing and notice her taping the gong with a fluffy white mallet repeatedly and ever so softly. I’m shocked, and I admit, impressed. I would have suggested egg shakers or maracas for this cue, but the sound she creates sounds so much richer. I’m glad I wasn’t too quick to push them toward my compositional ideas.

As this is a group project I ask, “How did that sound boys and girls? You are composing as a class so you get to decide what works and what doesn’t. I can only give suggestions.” Felicity states, “I liked it, but maybe a little bit quieter, or as Mr. Yanko says,” she pauses then whispers with a finger in front of her lips, “more piano.” Candace nods as she takes Felicity’s suggestion into consideration.

Marcus shouts, “Oh oh oh, I have an idea to play something. Can I play the harp.” He pretends to strum the strings in the air.

I take in his suggestion and concur, “Yes, I think those two sounds will blend well together.”

The movie continues a few frames past Candace and Marcus’s scene and more hands jet into the air. I quickly pause it with the remote. Three elderly men splashing one another are frozen on the screen and a few kids giggle. I have an idea of using the kazoos for this section as they can mimic the three men talking, but don’t share this with them because Candace’s choice

of instrumentation and dynamics has influenced my thought. If she can come up with a creative part, perhaps others will as well and my input may restrict them from being unique. I focus hard on keeping my suggestions to myself.

“What should we add at this hit point?” I ask.

“Can I use the Quebec horn” shouts Derek pointing to a French horn hanging on the wall.

“Yes, go grab a mouthpiece and the *French horn*, not the Quebec, not the Mexican, or the American horn,” I state sarcastically.

“Wait, Mexican horn? I want to play that instead,” he bellows pretending to play a trumpet.

“Go and get the French horn,” I say firmly pointing at the instrument hanging on the wall.

After I restart the scene, Derek blows into the horn trying to mimic talking. I was impressed with his ability to alter pitches on the mouthpiece. His playing needs some practice, but it has potential.

I prod a bit further to add more to this cue, “How many people are talking?”

Ava raises her hand to answer, “Two.”

“No, three,” shouts Marcus louder than her.

“Derek, your horn playing can mimic the talking of the skinny old man. We should also get instruments for the two other men in this scene. What other instruments can we use that blend well with the French horn?”

“Kazoo,” Felicity replies.

Gregory comments slowly with puffy cheeks, "I want to play the baritone for the fatso."

I look around the classroom for any disagreement from their classmates then confirm, "Sure those will both work." I forget what the third man looks like, and take a moment to reflect on it as they get their instruments ready. "Felicity, you can be the third man, I think he has a Santa Claus beard."

"Yeah he does," Marcus reassures with a nod.

"Silence on set, ready and ..." I wait for silence, "Action," I shout as I play the film from the beginning.

The students make their music and the brass playing is a bit sloppy as their instruments aren't warmed up yet. I know it will get better with practice. We go a bit further this time and Juliana's hand pops up in the back of the class as the skinny old man shuffles across the edge of the pool towards the diving board.

"Yes Juliana," I say as she frantically waves her hand at me. She looks around the back wall where the percussive instruments are and grabs two sand paper blocks to mimic his shuffling across the floor.

Ms. Grey comes in the room. I realize that time had flown by. The students are excited to show her their composition so far. I dim the lights again to create a theatrical mood and press play. I explain to her that I had my own ideas for this film, but the ones they came up with were actually much better than the ones I had. Elsa applauds her students after their performance and turns to me, "If that's the case, perhaps you need a little 'music explorations' time yourself, Mr. Yanko."

That evening I think about the creative elements that went into their film score and how quickly I was about to dismiss their ideas. I'm glad that I decided to wait and listen to the kids as they turned out to be more creative than my own. I realize that with this new philosophy, my students and I are co-creators in our projects. It is a constant struggle, but if I am going to be a musical Atelierista in my classrooms, I have to pull back on the direct instruction I provide and be more of a facilitator or co-researcher with my students. This group of grade one and two students created an impressive project and this leads me to wonder what the possibilities would be for intermediate students.

The next day I plan on doing the same lesson with Mr. Cruz's grade six students. As the class settles down in front of the TV, I explain the instructions similar to the day before with Ms. Grey's class. I go over the concept of a hit point, and add that they will also be composing some music for the score using the xylophones and ukuleles.

Under the dim lights the students watch the movie for the second time awaiting to give their thoughts on where the hit points are and what instruments should be added. Their eyes are glued to the screen as the movie plays past the part where Marcus and Candace played the gong and guzheng, and no one raises a hand. "There is a missed opportunity," I think to myself. I watch the class and wait anxiously for a hand to pop up, but nothing as the movie plays on. Their eyes are still focused on the TV. We pass the part with the three men in the pool and still nothing. I am getting worried and with frustration say, "You can raise your hand at any point where you think music can add something to make it more dramatic." The movie plays as the man jumps on the diving board and a student at the back of the class finally raises a hand. I am relieved.

“Yes Alice, what should we add here?” I ask her freezing the movie on the skinny man as he dives into the pool.

“Can I play the gong here?” she asks.

“Yes, let’s try that,” I rewind the film and she whacks the gong as hard as she can while the man is midair. Oh my. The one student who raises a hand and the one thing she contributes is a loud whack of the gong. I’d hoped that she would have been creative with the gong as Candace was yesterday.

“Hmmm. You hit the gong where there was no impact. It was while the man was in the midair. Did you mean for the gong to be played there or did you want it when he hits the water?” I prod and she thinks about it.

Gordon shouts, “The gong sounds better for the splash. We should use something for the wobble, wobble, wobble. You know that sound the diving board sometimes makes.”

“What could we use for that?” I ask the class, a bit relieved that this inquiry is going deeper than just a whack on the gong.

“Oh, oh. What about a drum? That would work,” Calvin suggests and runs to the back of the room to grab a pair of bongos.

I rewind the film and Calvin taps the drum for every step the man takes. There is a big splash on the TV as the man enters the water and Alice strikes the gong right on cue. I pause the movie thereafter and give Calvin a confused look, “Calvin, I thought your drumming was supposed to help illustrate the diving board vibrate.”

“Oh, really. I thought it was for his walking. I’ll fix it,” he says empathetically.

“Mr. Yanko,” Interrupts Shauna, “I have an idea for his walking.” She goes to grab a red

boom whacker out of the basket and taps it on the carpet to illustrate her idea.

“If the guy has two feet maybe we should add another boom whacker,” I state sarcastically.

“I’ll do it,” adds Brittany as she grabs a matching red one and sits criss-crossed next to Shauna.

The film plays back from the beginning and we go a bit further before we run out of time.

I was perplexed by the differences between this class and Ms. Grey’s. After school, I go to discuss this with Elsa, wondering if explorations and the other changes are responsible for this difference. As I walk into her room, I see her sitting at her desk getting ready for tomorrow. I ask, “This afternoon I did the same film scoring project with Mr. Cruz’s class, but it was a totally different experience than with your students.”

“What do you mean?” she asks.

I explain, “Well the grade six students chose typical instruments, played them in a traditional way and couldn’t think outside those parameters. Your students were more creative in their means of composing a score as they were able to see more than one way of incorporating an instrument into this assignment. I wonder if explorations has something to do with this difference in outcomes.”

She looks up from her daybook and states, “Possibly, but there are many factors that could play a role as well,” then flips through her daybook to plan the rest of the week.

I reply, distracting her as she writes her notes, “I don’t think your students wouldn’t have been able to come up with unique ways of playing those instruments or have a developed

an ear to tell which sounds to use without having taken the time during their explorations to really get to know the instruments. I think part of the difference is that these intermediate students haven't had the time to actually sit down with instruments and really get to explore them and their possibilities for utilization."

Elsa stops writing and asks, "Well are you going to stop teaching the intermediate students ukulele and begin incorporating explorations into their classes?"

"No," I snap, "Well, maybe, but I'd definitely approach it differently."

"How do you mean?" she asks as she closes her daybook giving me her full attention at this moment.

I sit down on a stump as my feet are sore from standing on them all day and continue, "I haven't really thought about it until now. I know I would alter it so that it challenges them and allows for further thoughts and inquiry. I don't want them to feel that they're doing something that's too easy, something that's for the younger kids."

I stop my rant as Elsa gets up from her desk and heads to the computers to log off. While typing on the keyboard she states, "There is a lot that these students can learn from explorations. You yourself tell me all the time that you're learning new things from your students' experiences."

"It wasn't just the explorations though. There was something about the way things flowed as well. I wonder if these Reggio philosophies impact the way these students go about group work. The way your students came to conclusions as to what instruments to use and how to play them. It wasn't just random. Candace and Marcus seemed to employ a particular thought process to see where music could be used and had a means of knowing what to be

used as well at particular moments in the film. They approached the project differently than the intermediate students. I think your students have developed a means of inquiry, and what they discover seems lost with intermediate students or just not developed to the same extent," I ramble on and on as Elsa puts on her jacket.

She grabs her tan leather backpack from behind her chair, then her lunch bag. She begins to make her way to the door. "I have to get going. It could even be because of learner awareness of self or even the class culture. It's difficult to document this as these students change classes and teachers from year to year."

"You're right, there are so many variables involved that I may never know." I reply with frustration and Elsa makes her way out of the classroom. I walk toward my classroom and ponder this for a while longer. As I pack my things to head home, I try to brush it off as I know this thought will be on my mind for the remainder of the evening.

My musical explorers take on ethnomusicology

"Clickety-clickety, clickety-clickety, Clack!"

A marching band of flapping flip-flops creates a polyphonic melodic rhythm as Miss Roseberg's class hustles its way into my music room. I turn from writing on the white board at the front of the room and notice many little hands waving rapidly near red sweaty faces trying to keep cool from this unusually warm spring weather. As these bright coloured flip-flops plop off near the doorway, the tune of their entry morphs into a softer melody made up of little feet rustling across the grains in the carpet.

"It's too hot in here," shouts John as he tries to lift his t-shirt over his face, getting his skinny arms and head tangled up in it.

“John leave your shirt on, we’re not at the beach,” I command in a stern voice. He untangles himself and finds a place to sit on the carpet.

I wait for his classmates to join him then begin to explain.

“Today we’re going to be learning another Hawaiian song. This song has some words that may sound kind of funny. We need to remember that we’re learning a song from another culture and it is very important that we are respectful when singing other peoples’ music. Why do we have to be respectful or ‘nice’ when other people share a song with us?” I ask and almost every child’s hand is reaches for the sky.

“Ruth,” I say as I smile in her direction.

“It hurts when there’s laughing,” she replies.

“So we shouldn’t laugh then. It doesn’t feel good when someone shares a song that is different and people laugh,” I add.

Looking around the room I notice Sam still has his hand up.

I look at him and give him an affirming nod.

“We should be nice and clap after they are done,” he says cheerfully.

“Yes, so today there may be some words in this song that sound funny to us, but for Hawaiian people these words have a different meaning,” I state.

I take two black stones off the shelf behind me and join the class on the carpet, sitting in a low kneeling position.

“Watch what I do with my arms because you are going to join me once I am done.” I begin to sing.

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e

O ke kahakai kahakai e.

Pupu hinuhinu e.”

“Pupu. Ha-ha-ha! You said pupu, haaaa-ha-ha,” Rishi bursts out in fake laughter. I immediately stop performing and glare at him with a raised eyebrow. Ruth quickly shushes him in his face and he stops.

“Remember what I said about the words. Some words may sound funny in English, but in other places the same word means something tooooooally different,” I explain to the class then continue the hula.

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e.

E lohe kakou e.

Pupu hinuhinu e.”

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e.

E moe, e moe, e moe.

Pupu hinuhinu e.”

The students clap. They never do that. It must be because of Sam’s comment about clapping after a performance. Regardless, it made me smile.

I place the two black stones on the carpet in front of my knees.

“This song is about a little girl named,” I pause and I look around the classroom for someone not paying attention. I see Rishi looking out the window at a group of kids on the playground. Probably wishing he was there.

“Rishi,” I shout. “Her, *his* name is Rishi!” I stammer.

He quickly turns and looks at me with a surprised look on his face.

I continue my story, "Rishi goes to the beach one day with his family. He loves seashells so much that he always wants to search for the prettiest ones. In this song, 'Pupu hinuhinu' means little seashell."

"When I do this," I say as I show them a rippling action with my arms, "it kind-a looks like little waves in the ocean when you throw a shell or a rock in it. At the beach Rishi digs for seashells in the sand. Remember this action from the song." I demonstrate a rolling motion with my arms. And many students copy me. I continue.

"That's Rishi digging for seashells. What other action did I do with my arms?"

Ruth shouts out, "You went like this," she enthusiastically shows one hand cupped behind her ear and the other pointed up to the sky in the same direction.

"Yes Ruth, that's the Hula action for listening. Can everyone try this action with me?"

The entire class joins Ruth and myself in the gesture. I notice a few students doing it the opposite direction and continue with my explanation

"Little Rishi takes his seashell and puts it to his ear. What does he hear?"

"The ocean," shouts Emily, and I pose a question.

"How many of you have put a seashell to an ear to hear the ocean?" Only about half the class's hands went up. At this point I wish I had brought a shell to class for them to hear the ocean's sound in it.

"Who remembers the last action I did?" I ask.

"You went like this," Anna says as she clasps her hands together and lays them on her right shoulder, bending her head in the same direction, and pretending to sleep.

"Yeah, I was sleeping," exclaims Rishi.

“Rishi liked his tinny seashell so much he took it home to cuddle with, and he fell asleep.” I say in a soft tone as I show the sleeping gesture pretending to fall asleep as well.

“Let’s try it together. I’ll do a little bit then we can do it together.”

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e”

Miss Roseberg’s class hustles through my classroom door in a noisy fashion. As they make their way onto the carpet, I notice many kids glancing over at the black planters on the window sill.

“What are those?” Sam asks, pointing toward the back of the class.

“Those are the seeds that some of the older students planted. They’re trying to grow their own drums,” I reply.

“Wow, can we do that too?” he asks.

“Maybe next year if their plants actually start to grow,” I say looking perplexed. It’s been over three weeks and I am still hoping for germination because gourds aren’t used to Vancouver’s climate. He walks to the window sill to take a look at dirt in the planters and finds his place on the carpet.

I begin, “Today we are going to sing ‘Pupu hinuhinu’ again.” I wait and look around the room to see the reaction on their faces when they hear the word ‘Pupu.’ No one giggles or laughs. A sigh of relief passes through me. I was afraid that I would have to reiterate our conversation from yesterday about being respectful.

“Who remembers this song from yesterday?” I ask.

Ruth yells out in a semi-singing voice trying to recall the melody and does the ripple

action in her arms, “Pupuuu hinu hinuuuuu.”

“Ah okay, so some of you remember. Let’s try it together then,” I respond.

I look around the room for my stones, to perform the song with but cannot find them.

This time I begin singing the song with the students, but clap my hands together instead of clicking the rocks.

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e”

The students do very well for having just learned the song a day ago. Many remember the melody and everyone is able to do the actions with their arms. However, something is off. It feels wrong singing without the click sound made by the rocks, almost as if the stones are a crucial part of the piece. I continue my lesson and this thought bothers me as I go on.

“Who remembers what this song is about?” I ask as I look around the class.

“Me,” Rishi shouts.

“Yes, it’s a story about a boy named Rishi, but what does he find at the beach?” I add.

“Seashells!” Tina says in a soft voice as she makes a gesture with her two hands that look like a clam.

“Yes, he found seashells. When I sang yesterday, did I use seashells to make clicking sounds in the song?” I state.

“No, you had rocks. Black rocks,” Rishi blurbs.

I explain, “Yes I had two rocks. We are supposed to click two shells together when we perform this song, but we don’t have too many here in Vancouver; especially ones big enough to tap together. In Hawaii we can easily go to the beach to get seashells. There are tons everywhere, but here it is difficult to go to the beach and find ones that are big enough to click

together. That's why I use rocks instead. We have so many cool looking rocks here, of all different shapes and colours. I figure rocks work just as well."

"The rocks do sound cool," Rishi adds.

"If it's still sunny tomorrow, we'll go down to Beecher Creek and everyone can get a pair of rocks for the song," I exclaim.

"Look at this rock. It has black specks all over it," exclaims Emily, as she thrusts her dirty hand holding the little stone toward my face. I take the rock she is holding in front of my mouth and wipe some of the dirt off of it.

"Very nice, it has a cool looking pattern. See if you can find another one that's the same size," I reply and hand it back to her. I leave Emily to her exploring, and walk down the creek bed to see the stone treasures other students had discovered.

In the distance, I see a trio of boys playing in the trickling stream. They are definitely not looking for stones. I make my way toward them,

"Boys," I shout, "where are your rocks?" I say with a stern look on my face as I approach them. Sam and Rishi jump to their feet and realize they are not on task. They run back toward the section of the creek bed where the smaller rocks lay.

John has his shoes off, his grey jogging pants pulled up to his knees, and is hunched over with his back toward me. He ignores me and continues playing in the water.

"John?" I question softly.

"Oh, I haven't found them yet, I'm watching these bugs play," he mumbles.

"Well let's get going, we only have a few more minutes left and you boys won't have

any stones to use for our song.”

He runs his finger tips through the water almost splashing me. Then he speeds off to join his two friends.

“Five more minutes,” I shout as I walked back toward the section of the creek where most of the class is exploring, “and once you have found your musical stones come join me on the grass.”

A group of students come over with me right away. Emily runs to catch up.

“Wait, wait for me,” she clicks her two stones together rapidly.

“You like this sound?” she asks.

“Yes it has a clear sound. Now come and join us on the grass with your new rocks,” I reply.

Everyone sat on their knees with one rock in each hand waiting for me to begin.

“Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e

O ke kahakai kahakai e.

Pupu hinuhinu e.

Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e.

E lohe kakou e.

Pupu hinuhinu e.

Pupu hinuhinu, pupu hinuhinu e.

E moe, e moe, e moe.

Pupu hinuhinu e.”

Everyone is silent. Rustling in the distance, I hear the wind blowing through the fir trees that line the side of the creek. Goose bumps begin to appear down my arms, perhaps from the

wind, or from the performance. As I place my two stones on the grass in front of me, there is a feeling of serenity inside of me. I look around the circle and see it on the faces of the students as well. I don't know how explain this feeling. I wonder if it has something to do with a connection between nature and music. Or is it something deeper that we can't begin to understand? Even when I performed this song in my classroom with the rocks I felt something, but it did not compare to the feeling at this particular moment.

"Can we do it again?" whispers Ruth. Her tone reflects the calmness in the faces around the circle, and reassures my observation that it isn't just felt by me. I reply with a whisper to keep the mood.

"One more time, then we will have to return our rocks to the creek and head back to school." I look around the circle at the students sitting on the grass, so respectfully, with their rocks in their laps awaiting me to pick mine off the grass to join them in sharing this moment. I pick up my stones, place them on my lap, give everyone a smile and we begin to sing.

"Pupu hinuhinu"

Student led conferences - Composing musical connections and the classroom learning experience

Student led conferences are this afternoon, and I only expect a few students to visit me. This event emphasizes academic work and picture perfect art on bulletin boards. Music learned in my program isn't generally a physical entity that students can show off to their parents, and that's why it's so quiet for me during these conferences. In a just a short while these parents will get a firsthand look at what their children are actually learning while their classroom teachers take a backseat and try not to get in the way.

Since few students ever visit me during this event, I plan on fixing the broken xylophones. Searching through my cupboard I pull out my tool kit and a box of random tools and place them in the middle of the room, making sure I have plenty of space to work. After, I walk over to the xylophone shelf and begin inspecting the instruments. I'm looking for ones that need new rubber hosing, or nails to hold the bars in place. As I continue examining the xylos, I soon realize that many need repairs. My pile of instruments on the carpet is becoming overwhelmingly larger than anticipated. After going through the first shelf, I sit next to the pile, sigh, then begin removing a crusty, dry rubber hose. It isn't until I finish replacing the hoses of two instruments when Marcus and Logan, two boys from Ms. Grey's class, show up with their parents. I introduce myself briefly. I don't want to get too involved as these students are supposed to lead in the conference so I go back to the pile of instruments. Standing tall above the pile, I sift through it mentally and then lift an alto xylophone from the stack. After inspecting it, I am relieved that it only needs a nail to be fastened tighter.

More and more grade two and three students keep on arriving with their parents. This is unusual, as no one ever visits. I look around the room and notice that all of these kids are from Ms. Grey and Mrs. Pratt's classes.

"Marcus, did Mrs. Grey tell you to come to music?" I ask as he plays "The Cookie Jar" melody on a bass xylophone.

"Yes," he answers, not making eye contact as he keeps on tapping his yarn mallets on the bars, "it's written on the board to visit Mr. Yanko. She even wrote what to show my mom."

"Really?" I pry with uncertainty.

"Yeah, I have to show my mom one thing that I learned in music and ummm," he

pauses, “something else.” He stops playing and focuses on the given instructions.

“And something you like about music,” his mom adds.

I converse with them a bit more, “If ‘The Cookie Jar’ song is something you learned, what is it that you enjoy about your music class?”

“That!” he exclaims pointing at a scuffed up baritone hanging on the wall. “Can I play it for my mom?” he asks with excitement, and then with a sad look in his eyes begs, “Please, Mr. Yanko, please?”

“Do you remember what that instrument is called?” I reply, not answering his question.

“Yeah a trump. No,” he pauses then sounds out, “a bear-e-ton.”

“Yes a ba-ri-tone,” I echo slowly. “You can get a mouthpiece and play it as soft as you can for your mom. Oh, and don’t forget to wash the mouthpiece after you’ve finished.”

“I will,” he says as he takes off to grab the mouthpiece.

Marcus with the baritone in his hands causes a ruckus. The other students in the classroom bombard me and ask to show their parents the brass instruments. As they begin to show their parents the instruments, I eavesdrop and notice that the reactions by their parents are priceless. A few share stories with their children and reminisce about their childhood band experiences. As this sharing by both the parents and their children develops, I notice Logan trying to help his dad play the French horn. He shows him how he holds it, places his dad’s fingers one by one on the valves, and even demonstrates how he blows into the mouthpiece. While observing the situation and noticing the depth of inquiry Logan has developed for brass instruments, I take notice of a mother across the room with a perplexed look frozen on her face. She is complaining to her son that he can’t even play a simple song on the trombone. I

intervene and explain the role of explorations and why these instruments are incorporated into my music program.

As students circulate the room, I see Carol enter with her mother and her grandma. She is very shy to show them what she has been learning, so she decides to take them on a walking tour. "This is a xylophone," she says as she runs her little fingers over a glockenspiel.

"Can you play a song on it for us?" her mother asks.

She thinks about it for a moment then shakes her head. "Sometimes we play music with them, but I don't remember how. Come, I want to show you this," she insists as she pulls on her grandmother's sleeve, leading her across the room to the guzheng. Her grandmother's eyes light up when she sees it. "You're learning how to play the guzheng?" her mother asks. "No not exactly. I get to use it for my story. I create waterfall music with it in my story," Carol responds as she runs her fingertips over the strings of the harp creating a crescendo effect.

Her grandma asks her, "Ni ke bu ke yi tian ye gai wo ting?"

Carol shakes her head and plucks a few strings before replying, "I don't know any."

Her mother gently pats her shoulder. "That's okay. I didn't know you had one of these in your music classroom; maybe one day your 'popo' will give you lessons. I sure wish she had taught me how to play," she says to Carol and glances over at her mother with a smile.

I walk over to greet them. Carol's grandma smiles and shakes my hand vigorously.

"Mr. Yanko, why do you have a guzheng in your classroom?" her mother asks.

I reply, "I used to take lessons on it years ago. I don't use it anymore unless I am introducing students to traditional Chinese music. I usually keep it locked away in its case, but this year I decided to incorporate it into the classroom and allow them to use it during their

music explorations.”

She interrupts, “Wait a second, you can play the guzheng? I thought it was an instrument that was donated to the school,” and gives me an accusing look, as if I was lying. I reply with certainty, “Yes, I took lessons a long time ago, but it’s not my instrument of choice. I used to play the sheng.”

“I don’t know what that is,” she replies, then asks her mother about it. Carol’s grandma tries explaining to her in Mandarin. She mimes holding up the instrument to her mouth, pretends to blow into the imaginary mouthpiece, and taps her fingers onto its invisible finger holes.

“Mr. Yanko’s really good at it. He plays it for us sometimes,” adds Carol.

I leave Carol to continue with the student led conference. She pulls her mom toward the documentation wall and points at various photographs.

“We did music patterns with those blocks, and over there we did explorations, oh let me show you what I like to explore.” She is excited and runs to gather some pots and pans. Carol creates a metal drum kit to play for her mom.

As I see her setting this up, I ask Carol to play softly because other students are also in the room with their parents. She taps her rhythms on the kitchen materials and receives an applause from the other students in the classroom. As she cleans up, her mother comes to chat.

“I really like what you did with the classroom. I mean all the instruments that are available for Carol to use are great,” she states then continues, “She has shown me a lot of stuff that she gets to explore, but does she actually get to learn songs?”

“Yes, explorations and group projects are only a part of my music program. We also sing, play the xylophones, and do movement activities. Carol has only shown you what she remembers about her most recent classes. This afternoon she’s shared a glimpse of a few of these musical experiences,” I reply.

Carol and her grandma walk over to join us. “Mom do you want to see me play the guitar?” she asks as she tugs on her sleeve.

“No, not unless you can play a song on it,” her mom sternly insists.

“Oh, okay,” she thinks for a moment, then runs to get a ukulele to play. Carol holds the instrument in her lap and plucks the four strings, strums a random rhythm and sings a song. “That’s not real playing,” her mom states, “Can you play a song on the guitar?”

I cut in, “No, Carol hasn’t had an opportunity to learn melodies on the ukulele yet. She won’t begin that until grade four. Carol has an opportunity at her age to explore the instrument. I want to give her an opportunity to develop ‘a feel’ for the strings and other important aspects of the instruments like its timbre and the way it sounds. She’s discovering how it makes sound and how to manipulate this sound in different ways.”

Carol explores that ukulele while I explain my program a bit more to her mother.

“A few months ago Carol wouldn’t have been this keen to run up and grab a ukulele to play. She was shy and it took time for her to open up. I created an atmosphere that provides students with opportunities to choose what instruments they explore and find an avenue to develop musicianship skills, inquiry and even social skills. I had to change everything around in this classroom. Even the smallest things, like removing instruments from bins and placing them

on shelves or in wicker baskets actually made a difference in drawing students to use them. It's funny how things so minute can make a difference."

Carol's grandma picks up a basket of wooden blocks and tells her daughter something in Mandarin which she translates for me, "My mother really likes the nature aspect of your classroom. She grew up in a village where she were always outside and feels kids need to be outside to learn more often. She says it makes them happier and better learners."

"Thank you, I agree with you one hundred percent," I reply to her grandma.

Carol's mother looks at the clock at the back of the room and states, "Oh my, I didn't realize what time it is, we better get going we spent more time in here than in Carol's classroom."

"I really don't mind, it's usually quiet in here during these student led conferences. I'm glad you got a chance for Carol to show you part of what she does in music."

Carol and her family are the last of the groups to leave the music portable. I look at the pile of xylophones on the carpet and realize I still have to stack them on the shelf and put the tools away before heading home. For a moment, I contemplate staying late and doing the repairs because everything is already laid out, but that thought is quickly dismissed. Even though I don't finish the repairs, I'm not disappointed. This afternoon was a memorable experience for my students, their parents, and me.

The coda to my Reggio overture

June rolls around quickly. It's time to put away my umbrella, dust off my collection of tank-tops, and pull out my flip-flops. The weather has become unbearably muggy and because of this most of my time is spent outside with the kids. To keep my students engaged, I give them an opportunity to explore glass bottles filled with various volumes of icy cold water.

During the first day of this exploration a water fight breaks out with Mr. Simpson's class, and I get drenched while trying to intervene. In spite of this little fiasco, our bottle explorations continue. Many intermediate students try to replicate popular tunes using the bottles, while the primary students use inquiry and electric tuners to identify pitches. Surprisingly, almost all of these students have never taken a moment to blow into a bottle before this experience. I thought it was something every child did, but I guess the times have changed.

As the last day of school rolls around, I empty the bottles of water and begin packing up my classroom for the summer. I take the afternoon to re-organize some of the percussion instruments for the new school year. I glance over the shelf and reminisce on what is rarely explored and remove a basket of little mason jars filled with various seeds, pods, and grains. I look for a spot on the shelf that is more accessible and remove a tin of rhythm sticks for the jars to be placed in its spot. I take a jar out of the basket, shake it to amuse myself, place it on the shelf, step back and take a moment to reflect on this change. Pleased with this new location, I continue placing the rest of the jars on the shelf, but hear "bam-bam-bam" and "clink-a-clink-clink."

Pounding on the door startles me. I turn my head to see who is there as the door slowly opens, but can't make out who it is from where I am in the classroom.

"Ho, ho, ho!" I hear in a jolly, deep, woman's voice from the doorway.

"Katelyn," I shout as Miss Roseberg enters my room with a handful of jingle bells, "Why the heck are you pounding at my door?"

"Your room is usually noisy and you *never* hear when I knock at your door," she replies sarcastically and emphasizes the word never. "Anyways, I found these instruments left in a

boy's cubby hole this morning. Do they belong to you?" she asks as she shakes them in my face.

"Yes! I say pushing them away from my face. "Just place them on my desk and I will put them away." I turn my back to her and continue placing the jars on the shelf as I have a lot to finish up before leaving today. Katelyn shakes the bells and boogies with them all the way to my desk. She takes notice of the documentation wall and heads toward it.

"You haven't taken this down yet? Aren't you going to get your bulletin board ready for next year?" she asks.

I stand up after the last jar is placed on the shelf and reply as I walk over to join her at the documentation wall, "No, I'm going to leave it up."

"Really? It's a new school year, why don't you put up a new display next year if you're continuing with the Reggio stuff?" she asks.

"It's not a display where I showcase what my students have done, it's a documentation wall," I snap defensively. I pause for a moment as she looks at the various pictures then continue, "I want to keep it up because the wall illustrates growth and progress. When school starts up in September and we begin new endeavours I would like them to be able to see where they were at when the school year ended and see where they can take things. I don't just have these kids for ten months out of a year; I have them over and over again from kindergarten to grade seven."

"Oh, it's like a living wall. That's a great idea. You're lucky in that regard, 'cause I have to start fresh every September with a new group of kindergarten students," Katelyn states.

"I know. I do teach your students music," I reply sarcastically.

She focuses on a picture of her class exploring the sounds of the playground and points to it commenting, “I remember that activity. The kids talked about making music outside for the next two weeks. Day after day they wanted to go outside and make music on the playground.”

“I know. They asked me the same thing,” I concur.

Katelyn takes a look at the glockenspiel wind chimes hanging from a branch next to the documentation wall and swings a metal bar so that it clinks against another bar hanging next to it creating a ringing tone. “So all this Reggio stuff, was it worth it? I mean did these changes like the instruments in baskets and all the wood stuff actually make that much of a difference?”

I think about her question for a moment as she is only focusing on the aesthetics of Reggio Emilia. “I can’t really argue that this way is better than any other music program, but I can say that it’s engaging and because of that, students are taking an active role in their learning. Students in my class use inquiry on a daily basis that’s seldom done in a music learning setting.” She seems engaged so I keep explaining, “Personally, I felt that it was difficult to change from rote teaching to that of co-learning with my students. Don’t get me wrong, there are times when rote learning is necessary and I have to take what works from this experience, but ...”

Katelyn interrupts, “Well what worked?”

“Some projects weren’t successful at all, and others went on way longer than anticipated. Anyway, to be honest a lot of this Reggio stuff surprised me as time went on. At first I thought Reggio was just incorporating natural materials, like the baskets or stumps, but as

I dove deeper into its philosophies I realized that it had a huge impact on the different ways of playing, comprehending, and expressing music. I've come to understand that because of these experiences, my students are capable of illustrating many ways of knowing music. Reggio foundations talk about 'the hundred languages' that a child has to express knowledge. I feel that these changes in my program have provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge using different ways of expressing what is discovered. You should have heard some of the suggestions and comments your students gave later on in the year after we developed our Atelier." I finish my rambling.

"I didn't realize it had that much of an impact on your program. If it works for you, keep on doing it," she assures me with a smile.

"You have to do what works for your class, right. Anyways, I better get back to organizing things. I don't want to leave here too late today. It's nice out and I want to get to enjoy the sunshine." I reply and head back to a shelf of percussive instruments.

Katelyn leaves and I continue rearranging the instruments and grab my ukulele and a few resources to peruse during the summer. As I head out the door, I glance over the classroom and take a whiff of the fresh scent of the cedar stumps before locking the door.

Heading away from my classroom, I see Elsa and Becca working away in their classroom through the window. I head over and knock on the window for them to let me inside.

Becca sees me in the window and jokes, "Go away Yanko! We don't want any!"

"But I've brought," I smile as she opens the door and interrupts me.

"What did you bring? Chocolate?" she asks.

"I wish, no just myself," I say and walk in to join them. "I can't believe you two are still

here cleaning up. It's almost five-o'clock."

Elsa responds, "We got sidetracked with Rosalie. She wanted to discuss what we plan to do next year with our Reggio inspired networking group. We talked about expanding it to have a few more interested teachers join us for next year."

"That's a great idea. I'd like a few more teachers to join us as well. It would be good to have more people to bounce our crazy ideas off of," I exclaim.

"I have a big idea for us as well, but we discuss it during the summer over filet-o-fishes," she adds.

"You can't keep me waiting. What is it?" I pry.

"I've been thinking about creating an outdoor learning space for the kids," Elsa states as she points out the window at the grass field.

"I can't wait to hear the details. I better get going though, it's getting late and I want to enjoy the nice weather," I respond as I head towards the door.

As I unlock my car door, I look out into the distance at a small grass field between my portable and the kindergarten wing. I conceptualize this idea of an outdoor learning space. Elsa's idea is already beginning to flourish in my mind. The cogs turn as I think about a natural learning environment, perhaps with stumps! Or instruments, like an outdoor plastic tubular xylophone to spark musical inquiry.

Sigh. I had a feeling that this crazy Reggio idea I had in the shower that one morning was going to be more than just a fad. It sparked the beginning of change for my students, my music program, and for me. If this year was all about stumping around, I can hardly wait to see what

musical provocations my co-learners and I will take on next year as this Reggio inspired movement continues.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary

My investigation into the philosophies and practices of Reggio Emilia has truly been a journey, complete with creek bed explorations, foresting stumps, creating an Atelier, and shedding some light on my educational practices. At the beginning of this journey, I sought to answer Andress' (1998) question, "Where is the music in the hundred languages of children?" In an attempt to find an answer, I started exploring the practices of this approach in an early childhood setting, and over the course of six months augmented my investigation to include all of my students from kindergarten to grade seven. After reflecting upon and re-analyzing my recollections, I was able to present my 'findings' using autoethnography. This format enabled me to illustrate the merits of adapting these practices and philosophies to my own principles of music education.

At the onset of my journey, I reviewed literature pertaining to the role of the student and teacher to develop a solid understanding of the Reggio Emilia approach, as it differed greatly from the practices that I had employed in teaching general music. Although the music related literature offered no guidance, I was still able to establish a comprehension of these philosophies and practices. Moving forward with my inquiry, I became inspired by a co-worker's classroom and began my investigation with a provocation of stumps. This invitation opened a door that allowed the role of the student and teacher to be transformed. Over time more provocations presented themselves, and together as researchers, my students and I explored music, which resulted in various means and ways of investigating, questioning, understanding, listening, and performing to occur. To empower my students to take control of

their music education experiences, I had to foster our relationship through mutual participation and joint action. Although giving up control, and providing guidance without taking over the learning experience was a challenge, the overall result, as illustrated in the film scoring story, was extremely rewarding.

As my inquiry developed, I was able to create a documentation wall that helped foster reflections on learning experiences. This wall not only provided children with a visual memory of what they had learned, but also encouraged them to revisit and expand upon old ideas. That means of documentation also functioned as a research tool to assist in continuing to improve project ideas and better understand my students. This was represented in the intermediate students' reflections on their learning journey with the recorder and guitar. As a result of the reflective texts and visuals that scattered the wall, I was also able to show parents information about the learning processes of their children. Although the student led conferences story illustrated this connection, I found it frustrating to foster a triadic connection between teacher, student, and parent. I believe this challenge was a result of the place based aspect of this approach.

In the schools of Reggio Emilia, children are encouraged to represent their plans, ideas, and understandings using one or more modes of expression (Edwards, et al., 1993, p. 3). By using different mediums to represent meaning, children confront new possibilities and generate new questions that would not have occurred had they used only one way of knowing (Forman, 1996, p. 172). Throughout this process, I tried to adapt this concept of knowing and expressing what is learned, and found success in applying Baetson's theory of meta-communication. This was done through non-textual means of communication, using visual and

auditory responses, such as singing, instrument manipulation, and non-verbal cues. During explorations, the success of my students illustrating their learning through these various means of communication was the result of enabling performative research to occur in an inviting learning environment.

Intrigued by the Atelier of Reggio Emilia, I slowly adapted its core philosophies to create a music studio. This endeavour of altering my classroom space to become an Atelier extended over the course of the entire inquiry, as it took time, trying and trying again, to develop a workshop that fostered cognitive, emotional, and imaginative expression. As a result of this adaptation, my students and I co-created a flexible space that enabled interaction with musical instruments and materials in an informal social setting. Exploring these instruments, everyday objects, and natural materials allowed for a foundation of music inquiry to develop within my students that set them up for success in other activities, like our musical adventures to Beecher Creek, sound stories, and film scoring projects. The transformation into an aesthetically pleasing and fully functional Atelier took a lot of time, thought, and collaboration. My students and I had to carefully arrange the space so they had easy access to materials and open space to explore music making that made sense to them. Small differences, like the draped sky-blue tulle under fluorescent ceiling lights, hanging branches with glockenspiel bars as a provocation, student photographs of each other performing solfege hand signs, and recorder fingering charts drawn on paint sticks allowed for an inviting learning environment where they could flourish, and recognize their autonomy and ownership of our Atelier.

Several months after this story was written and well into the new school year, I still find myself applying these new practices and philosophies in everyday activities. My program is still

in a state of evolution and change, and because of the nature of this approach, I feel that this will never cease. In addition to this everlasting evolution, I continue to review aspects of this approach to see the long term overall effect on my students' learning experiences.

A few months ago, a new set of stumps with carved handles were donated to my program. Although there is rich history with the old stumps, I chose to replace them with the new ones because they are much smaller and easier for the primary students to use. My students were concerned about the old ones, and together, we made sure they found new homes. With regard to classroom management and composition, I still allow students to sit in small groupings with their friends. Some groups are very productive, but others sometimes lose focus and need co-regulation to get back on track. I don't know if these challenges would occur if I revert back to rows, but the benefits of having friends to help with recorder fingerings, singing, and self-confidence is priceless and I am reluctant to take this away from them.

The documentation wall in my classroom has become an integral part of the reflective process for my program. At the beginning of the school year, I removed all of the photos and documentation, and created mini poster boards out of this data to illustrate previous learning experiences. These posters are hung under the documentation wall to show a foundation for my program and the value of reflection over past years. My hope is that this wall will become a living entity that will allow children to see their musical journey as they progress over the years. This concept of linear documentation is new to the Reggio Emilia approach, as documenting a child's learning experiences as they progress from grade to grade is nonexistent. In addition to expanding the documentation wall, I began a blog this year with a few classes, in which students document, on a weekly basis, their learning experiences through photographs and

reflections. This online means of documentation creates a connection between parents, students, and myself that was lacking in my initial inquiry.

Currently, my classroom still functions as an Atelier and both primary and intermediate students have a strong desire to participate in music explorations. In addition to the band instruments that were added during the course of my story, I have recently added a violin and snare drum into our Atelier. My one concern with music explorations is the volume of the brass instruments, recorders, and snare drum, as they tend to overpower the quiet percussive instruments and diminish other students' explorations. This past winter, I expanded on my outdoor explorations by leading the kindergarten students on a music exploration in the snow. The result was amazing, as these students not only examined the sounds of the playground, but also explored the many means of using snow, slush, and ice, musically.

To further my investigation, future research lies in conducting a study over the course of a few years, and at more than one location. However, I believe that my investigation has demonstrated that music does relate with Reggio Emilia inspired programs and I was able to respond to Andress' concern about the lack of music in this approach. I have brought forth in this study many effective practices that can be adapted to benefit student learning, and see great value in this approach for music educators. With regard to music related literature, the practices and philosophies that form a foundation for music education have evolved very little since the advent of public school music education in the 1830's with Lowell Mason (Goble, 2011, pp. 187-188). This conventional means of teaching works, but one may question if it is the most effective model that meets the current needs of our students. In and of themselves, traditional, teacher directed programs might have an adverse affect of hindering authentic

opportunities for children to cultivate a life-long passion for music. Thus, as is illustrated through the welcoming acceptance of the Reggio Emilia approach by my students and myself, there is a need for change in music education practices and this approach is a viable option. As a result of adapting my philosophy and practices to this call for change, I have also brought to light the great potential of this approach as a new means of engaging with and learning music.

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