



## Welcome to the EtonHouse® Newsletter!

Message from Mrs Ng Gim Choo, Group MD

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*"We should remember that there is no creativity in the child if there is no creativity in the adult: the competent and creative child exists if there is a competent and creative adult."*

*(Rinaldi, 2006, p120)*

This quote by Carlina Rinaldi from Reggio Emilia in Italy echoes the significance of adults in the teaching and learning of young children. It also stresses the importance of qualified and passionate early childhood educators in the creation of high quality educational provision. It is also creates the difference in the way children feel about their school and their teachers.

Fifteen years ago, when I started EtonHouse, I was inspired by the enthusiasm and excitement that my 4 year old daughter demonstrated while going to pre-school in England. So much so, that she wanted to go to school every day, even on weekends and holidays. I then resolved to develop a similar environment in a pre-school in Singapore and the first EtonHouse centre at Broadrick campus opened its doors to children and parents on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1995.

Today, the smile I see on children's faces when they walk into our schools, their excitement when they share with their friends and teachers their experiences after their school breaks, the energy and vibrance I can feel every time I walk into a classroom makes me very happy and gives me a great sense of comfort and motivation. At the same time, it also motivates me to continue making EtonHouse a better place for all teachers, staff, parents and children.

It has been a long and arduous journey for us and yet a very rewarding one. Today there are 25

EtonHouse schools and pre-schools in the Asia Pacific region and we are proud of each one of them. It is the hard work that each individual puts in and has put in for so many years that has contributed to where we are today. It is also the support of the parents and families and the children that makes EtonHouse what it is today - a dynamic learning community of global citizens who are always eager to learn new things, explore new frontiers and establish new standards of excellence in education.

The recent Reggio Children conference co-hosted by EtonHouse, the very first conference of its kind in Asia saw over 350 delegates from 15 different countries coming together for truly inspirational series of talks delivered by representatives of Reggio Children and the International Network of Reggio Children. It was a novel experience for a lot of us and made us reflect on the infinite capacities of children as thinkers, communicators, researchers, writers, painters, scientists, architects and many more endless possibilities. It all depends on the environment and the social context that they are brought up in and our image of them as competent and capable individuals.

On that note, I would like to thank and congratulate each one of you for your passion and hard work in engaging with children and supporting their development and for being a part of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for EtonHouse. There is indeed always more to do from here on but together as collaborators and co-creators of ours and our children's future, I am sure the journey will be a rewarding and enjoyable one, one that is full of challenges and possibilities.

I hope you enjoy reading the first quarterly newsletter of this very special year.

Warm regards,

**Ng Gim Choo**

Reference: Rinaldi, C. (2006). In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, Researching and Learning

# Sustainable Thinking in EtonHouse's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year

By John Cooley, Executive Principal, EtonHouse Singapore



As you will be now be well aware, 2010 marks a significant milestone in a success story that is EtonHouse - a story that began humbly on the Broadrick site in Singapore on March 12, 1995 and has since continued as an expanding narrative throughout China, India and Indonesia - and more recently, Malaysia, Japan and Korea.

For the founding and ongoing vision, continuing drive, expansion and depth of curriculum integrity, EtonHouse is very much the mid-teen child of Mrs. Ng Gim Choo, the school system founder and Director. Also of vital importance to this 15 years of growth and success have been Mrs Ng's fellow Directors, Mr Jimmy Oh and Mr Ng Hark Seng.

The theme of this 15th anniversary year is that of 'Sustainability', a perfect area of focus as EtonHouse consolidates its place throughout the entire Asian region, and seeks to address the greatest environmental, cultural, social and economic challenge facing humankind this century.

As David Suzuki, the great Canadian-Japanese environmentalist has stated in his advice to teachers on a sustainable curriculum (featured in the latest edition of *IB World*, the magazine for International Baccalaureate Schools worldwide):

'It has to start from kindergarten (and earlier) whether you're teaching history, mathematics or social studies, there has to be an underlying ecological perspective. It's simple stuff children love nature. ...it's genetic that we have an innate need to be with other species. If you show an infant a spider or a snake, they don't recoil in horror. They want to reach out and touch it... If you see a child watching an egg hatch, or a caterpillar pupa emerge as a butterfly, you don't have to teach them a thing. They just watch.

Individuals know that what they do is pretty trivial. But each one of us is a drop in the bucket, and if there are enough drops, we can fill any bucket. We've got to get on with changing the way we live.'

EtonHouse, Reggio Emilia-inspired educators and IB schools worldwide recognise the importance of David Suzuki's message. It

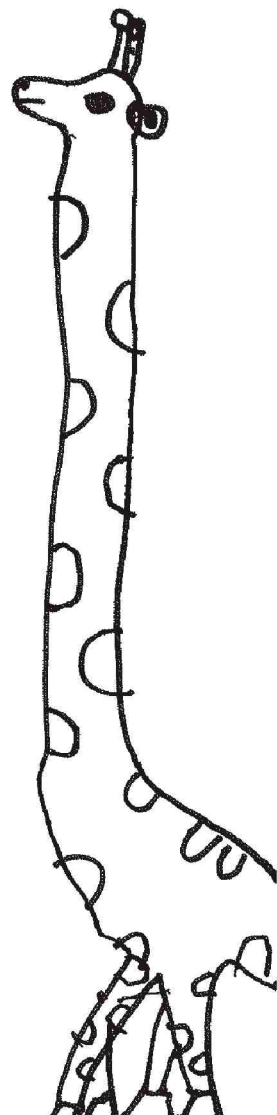


is not a matter of choice that we embrace sustainability as an underlying curriculum concept; it is a matter of the utmost necessity and urgency if we are to meet the challenges of the future.

This is why EtonHouse in Singapore is doing its very best to add to these drops in the metaphorical bucket. Each Centre has embarked on a range of green projects and initiatives that will engage every child, every member of staff and hopefully, as it progresses, every family. By each of us simply getting on with the task of making a contribution to a more sustainable world, no matter how individually insignificant, collectively, we become a force that is potentially irresistible.

Therefore EtonHouse very much looks forward to the celebration of its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year throughout the remainder of 2010, with a sustainability focus that will resonate from its classrooms and playgrounds into the local community and into the next 15 years (and beyond) of our planet's future.

**John Cooley**







Mr. Jimmy Oh (Chairman-EtonHouse) with Mrs. Ismail from MCYS



10th Anniversary – EtonHouse Walkathon

Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon (Minister of State for MCYS) with Joy Evans (then Broadrick Principal) and Mrs. Ng Gim Choo (Managing Director, EtonHouse)



Mrs. Ng Gim Choo (Managing Director, EtonHouse) welcoming Low Guat Tin, Associate Professor at NTU/NIE.



Celebrating 14 successful years - EtonHouse Motivation day



EtonHouse team at the conference



15th Anniversary-Reggio Emilia Conference

Speakers from Reggio Children

# Reggio Children comes to Singapore:

By Heather Conroy, Senior Director of Pedagogy, EtonHouse Pre-Schools



Speakers from the Reggio Children International Network

EtonHouse pre-schools in Singapore have been working with the inspirations offered by the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia for some years now e.g.

- Children have a right to play; to have a say in matters that affect them; to make choices. We have attempted to establish classrooms that are more responsive to children's right to be hands-on-learners; that offer real choices to explore a diverse range of concepts with a wide variety of materials.
- Image of child as a competent thinker and communicator. We value children's expression across a wide variety of 'languages' drawing, painting, sculpting with clay and wire.
- The cognitive challenges of working with diverse materials (the 100 languages of children). Each language has its own symbol systems or code for making meaning e.g. the visual arts is a language of line, shape, colour, symmetry and form.
- Documentation as a means of making children's learning and our teaching visible to others. At EH, class teachers maintain wall documentation which presents, through photographs of children engaged in the process of learning, children's comments and conversations, as well as teacher analysis/reflection, the thinking involved in current inquiry topics. Our newsletters and portfolios endeavour to capture the quality and complexity of children's thinking both as individual learners and as valued contributors to the group learning process.



Amelia Gambetti and Emanuela Vercalli from Reggio Children

- Teacher as researcher. Teachers as observers and documenters of the children's ongoing learning see their role differently to transmitters of known facts. Teachers as researchers co-construct thinking with children as their partners; they mentor and coach learners, rather than instruct and inform. The experience of studying their documentation, enhances teachers in being more intentional about their interactions with children.

It was therefore with much excitement that EtonHouse co-convened with AECES (the Association for Early Childhood Educators in Singapore), the first Reggio Children's conference to be held in the Asia Pacific region. Held 4-6th March, conference key note speakers, Amelia Gambetti and Emanuela Vercalli, travelled directly from Italy to share with over 350 delegates, the principles guiding the work of the world renowned infant/toddler centres and pre-schools of Reggio Emilia. Speakers from the Reggio Emilia International network richly extended the dialogue in terms of sharing their own work in exploring the principles of Reggio Emilia within their own settings of Australia, Korea, Sweden and the United States.

Hailed by Newsweek, as producing some of the best pre-schools in the world, Reggio Emilia continues to be a source of inspiration to early childhood educators across the world in terms of research based pedagogy and inspirational learning environments for young children. Delegates from Australia; China; Hong Kong; India, Indonesia, Malaysia; New Zealand; Taiwan; Thailand and Vietnam; attended the 2.5 day conference held at the Novotel, Clarke Quay. The conference was opened by the Italian Ambassador Anacleto Felicani and was also attended by Professor Ostelio Remi, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, Singapore.



Heather Conroy welcoming H.E. Ambassador Anacleto Felicani





## International Mindedness, Culture and The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme



### The IBO Mission Statement:

“The PYP promotes International mindedness in order to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring people who help create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

An effective PYP school has an inclusive ethos which values and reflects the diversity of cultures and perspectives within and beyond the school community.

An internationally minded person actively demonstrates a responsibility and commitment to making a difference in the world”. Standard A2 from the IBO Programme Standards and Practices states that a prerequisite of an IB School is that “The school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community”.

In 1968 when the IB was developed, international mindedness was seen as a key ingredient in how education could bring cultures together and create a more peaceful world. Today it is more important than ever. It is not just conflict resolution that can benefit from greater understanding, but industry, communications, what we buy in our supermarkets and what we wear on our backs. Through international-mindedness, the IB teaches students to take responsibility.

A key ideal of the PYP is that Internationalism must pervade all aspects of school life and be manifested in

- Attitudes of the students and staff
- The school climate
- The Curriculum.

We cannot however leave internationalism to chance. Like an iceberg the majority of culture is below the surface. We must explore not only the surface culture of food, music, dress, drama, crafts, dance, literature, language, celebrations and games, but we must dig deeper and delve into courtesy, conversational patterns, personal space, attitudes towards elders, concepts of cleanliness, social interaction, body language, notions of modesty, rules of conduct, courtship practices, ideals of child rearing and so on. If we limit ourselves to the former concept of surface culture we may lead ourselves to superficial appreciations that may in fact reinforce stereotypes rather than creating awareness of global issues and challenges.

‘Kathy Short, a mentor of the PYP and an American Professor of Culture, states that “All learners, adults and children, must explore their own cultures before they can understand why culture matters in the lives of others”. She further adds that a curriculum that is truly international offers all of us, educators and students, the best chance to enrich and transform our lives and our views of the world.



### THIRD CULTURE KIDS Are your children TCK's?

This is an increasingly common and modern phenomenon. We really notice “culture” only when we find ourselves out of our familiar cultural element. Third Culture Kids or Trans-Culture Kids, who are sometimes also called Global Nomads, “refers to someone who, as a child, has spent a significant period of time in one or more culture(s) other than his or her own, thus integrating elements of those cultures and their own birth culture, into a third culture.” Since the term was coined by sociologist Ruth Hill Useem in the 1960s, TCKs have become a heavily studied global subculture. TCKs tend to have more in common with one another, regardless of nationality, than they do with non-TCKs from their own country. (Wikipedia)

At EtonHouse Broadrick we see a lot of Third Culture Kids.

#### A Third Culture Kid

- Is a person who has spent a significant part of their development outside their birth culture.
- May be a person of mixed nationality parentage, living in another (3<sup>rd</sup>) country/culture.
- Builds relationships to all of the cultures while not having “full ownership” of any.
- Integrates aspects of birth culture and the new culture into creating a unique third culture.
- May possess some cultural dissonance. A TCK will possess a different view of their heritage culture compared with a child brought up in that culture.
- Perhaps the most famous TCK today is the American President Barack Obama.

“Culture is like the sum of special knowledge that accumulates in any large united family and is the common property of all its members” Aldous Huxley Novelist, Humanist and Pacifist.

Culture affects all our lives and until we understand ourselves, how then can we understand others?

*Ellen Fielder, VP Curriculum - EH Broadrick*

## Educator's Learning Journey

Towards the end of 2009 we, the educators at EtonHouse Vanda, established some time to reflect on our pedagogy to determine how close our values and beliefs about teaching and learning were in alignment with our current practice. Upon reflection, we perceived a need for some deeper thinking ...we initiated a further process of looking in, looking out, reflecting and pondering ...why in the past was our teaching so restricted? Attending classes, personal study, research, and attending professional development as a group with Heather Conroy, our Senior Director of Pedagogy, provided us with deeper understanding of how learning and teaching could develop.



We began to re-shape our professional development to provide teachers with multiple opportunities to connect new ideas with what they already knew, reflecting on our practice within a cycle of observation, analysis, documentation/reflection and planning. It was important to us that children's rights are respected; that children use a hundred languages to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings. In collaboration with the children as our partners in the learning and teaching process, we changed our thinking to be more aware of looking for possibilities, working on challenges, using mistakes as a learning experience (and persisting with those challenges) investigating our ideas, and inventing solutions to 'problems'

Through professional dialogue we took a step back to look deeply into our mindsets to redefine our roles as educators. At the beginning of the year, we demonstrated our commitment to the process of thinking about practice into a collective statement - our Declaration of Intent. The declaration stands as our 'mirror' through which we see our work.

### Declaration of Intent

This declaration serves as the collective voice of our teaching and auxiliary staff. We have each reflected on our own practice to establish the following statements that will guide our thinking and practice throughout the year.

### What do we want to be?

- An educator who builds on children's knowledge and interest
- I believe strongly in the teacher as a researcher. It is important for me to read and develop my knowledge about pedagogy and to upgrade myself in terms of qualifications and professional development.
- I am a facilitator, educator, motivator and role model to the children
- I am a friend and partner at work to my colleagues
- Someone who provides my best at work be it in teaching or other centre responsibilities, is tolerant towards others, gives support to others and displays professionalism
- An educator who inspires the children to always think for themselves & others and be interested in finding out and learning more.

### Experiences that we value

- Building relationships with children, parents and colleagues based on respect, trust and open communication
- Thinking together with others in collaborative partnership, engaging in dialogue
- Constantly updating oneself with new ways of thinking about teaching
- Active sharing among teachers, brainstorming in small groups
- Professional development sharing of ideas/teaching strategies
- Actively seeking feedback from others so as to constantly improve and challenge my own thinking
- Regular communication with parents and colleagues to build relationships

### What is the identity of the school?

- A cosy work and school environment where everyone feels part of the family and looks forward to coming to school
  - Learning and teaching is visible to all
  - Children and teachers are self-motivated in their learning
  - Sharing of information and knowledge happens frequently among teachers, parents and children
- As part of recent centre visits, our Declaration received much positive feedback in terms of making our intentions visible.





## We are committed to high quality: Heather Conroy - Senior Director of Pedagogy

Our teaching within EH preschools is driven by 8 key principles that inform the work that we do with and for children. These principles provide a guiding framework within which we make decisions about curriculum design; the establishment of our learning environment and interactions we hope to establish between teachers, children and parents. These principles draw inspiration from the educational project of Reggio Emilia, in northern Italy.

### Image of child:

At EH, we see children as strong and powerful learners, actively contributing to their own learning process; observing; exploring; hypothesizing and forming theories about how the world works. We acknowledge the child as a holder of rights the right to play, to be respected; to be supported in achieving their potential; to have a say in matters that affect them.



*The view we have of children is present in all that we do...in the way we present materials...the way we maintain our spaces and even the food that we serve...*

Wurm, J.P. (2005). Working in the Reggio way.  
St Paul; MN: Redleaf Press.

### Children as sophisticated thinkers and communicators:

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the preschools and infant toddler centres in Reggio Emilia proposed that children have a 'hundred, a thousand languages' with which to share their ideas with others. We acknowledge, with deep respect, the many different ways that children communicate their thinking to others through the process of drawing; painting; writing; composing music; exploring drama; sculpting with clay and wire, and construction to name but a few.

### The pedagogy of listening:

Observation and listening with great sensitivity to children's ideas, thoughts and theories, supports teacher's in building understanding about each child's learning. Listening is also a time of silence of reflection and analysis as teachers analyse observational data, they are able to project, to make informed decisions about the 'next step' in curriculum development.

### Educators as researchers:

When we practice the pedagogy of listening, observing with careful attention children's abilities, understandings and dispositions, educators become researchers of the learning process. As teachers study their documented notes in collaboration with colleagues, they have the possibility of studying and refining their teaching to best respond to children's thinking.

### Pedagogical documentation:

In Reggio Emilia, they understand documentation as a process of making visible the traces of the learning/teaching encounter. Documentation thus creates collaborative communities; for ongoing dialogue between child, parents and colleagues.



## How do young children learn?

We believe play and (rich) conversation form a rich context for learning to take place. Children construct or build personal meaning with and from significant others in their environment. The preschool then forms part of a system of relationships (child; family and the wider community). Curriculum must acknowledge the understandings (prior knowledge) that children bring with them to any learning encounter. 'Teaching' then becomes a process of building connections between what children already know and understand and what they desire to further explore.

What can be learned about a child's deep thinking, when we study excerpts of their conversations:

To the question posed by the adult: How do you learn?  
C (5) stood up confidently and rolled her hands down from head to knee... *I am me this is me... that is first, I am one. Then you have your heart - that is second; then your brain, third. These three work together to help you learn.*

## The environment as 'third' teacher:

Children have a right to a respectful and aesthetically beautiful environment, where materials are presented in such a way as to invite thoughtful engagement. Educators aim to create relationships within the environment (between children and children; children and ideas; children and materials)

## Alliances with parents:

We strive to form close relationships with parents, based on open communication, trust and respect for each other's contribution to the young child's learning. We seek to explore ways that parents can actively participate in their child's experience at preschool.



## ORCHARD contribution

Orchard reflection on the EH guiding principles as they impact on practice:

*The work of the educators in Reggio Emilia serves as a mirror for us to find out who we are, our own identity. At Orchard we continue to re-visit and explore these values on an ongoing basis. These reflections support our work; strengthening our programme and establishing a school of our time. We strive to create a democratic citizenship where diversity and perspectives are valued and /visible to others in all that we do.*

Anne VD, Pre-School Director, EH Orchard

Through collaborative dialogue, EH Orchard educators established a published statement reflecting their (shared) image of child (how they see children and their learning). This statement provides a thinking space for teachers to re-visit their day to day interactions in response to their belief statement.

## At EtonHouse Orchard, we see a child who:

- is unique
- is rich in potential
- is capable
- is a person with rights and responsibilities
- is active
- is a collaborator
- is making meaning
- is a contributor to the community
- is growing and learning
- is creative
- offers new perspectives

## Quotes from Orchard educators:

*As we re-visited our image of child, (I felt) supported in my ongoing work with children ...for all considerations and decisions as we establish our class environment.*

*How individuals view children...how our personal views affect our teaching and attending to children is something to continually re-visit.*

*Listening to individual voices...it reinforced for me the need to give children time to communicate their ideas and desires.*





## Off to a Good Start!

Newton has gotten off to a good start this year. The school opened its doors early January to lots of laughter and children running in through the gates eager to be back at school. They have enjoyed meeting up with their old friends and getting to know new friends. Classes are full and enjoyable places to be. We are pleased to report that even the youngest of our children have settled quickly and are doing very well. As the first term draws to a close, we are looking forward to opening up two new classes at the Pre-Nursery level for the start of Term 2.

On a sad note we say goodbye to our Kitsune (Foxes) class. These are the Japanese children who graduated K2 last year and have returned to our school for the first term while they await the beginning of the Japanese school year in April. Farewell and good luck Kitsune.



Across all of the EtonHouse schools this year there is a focus on 'Going Green'. This involves the three Rs of REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE. At Newton we are in our 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a whole school approach to this project. Each class decides on one thing to concentrate on in their own classroom, whether it is to remember to switch off the lights, use less paper, re-use plastic bottles or to recycle materials. The school's recycle bins are used to separate waste material and are then placed in a collection bin provided by the National Environment Agency. We have encouraged internet communication to reduce the amount of paper used, Aunty Jasmine in the kitchen has been asked to reduce and recycle food cans used and the office staff has been asked to turn off their air conditioner when not in use.



The critical aspect of this project is that it is not to be reminding children of what to do, but rather that it becomes embedded in the children's learning and so they begin to remind the teachers / adults of what to do. It is hoped that children will transfer this knowledge learnt at school to the home environment and with the support of the parents at home the message will spread further.

Going hand in glove with this the learning also engages children in being socially responsible and tolerant of cultural and individual differences. While these appear to be rather adult notions in their concept, it is remarkable to listen to children's very knowledgeable views on the subject. Children have presented assemblies using greetings, sung songs and given information in a number of languages. They have engaged in celebrations from other cultures and they have listened to stories, baked food and learnt about trends and traditions of other lands.

In maintaining a sustainable environment we are off to a good start in not only taking responsibility for our environment but also looking after each other with understanding, sharing and tolerance for all. Well done children!



## Promoting sustainability in 2010 and beyond

At EtonHouse Outram, we began our year with 'Sustainability' as a central focus. This focus has translated to awareness and positive behaviour and has become embedded in our daily curriculum and routines.

Here are some examples of children actively demonstrating awareness and responsibility towards supporting, sustaining and saving the environment.

The K2 children are nurturing a garden in their classroom. The children can be seen watering the plants and nurturing them as they remove dead leaves. They demonstrate their knowledge about the benefits of having plants in the class as Kai shares "plants give us oxygen!" and Shernice adds "the green bits are important!"

Our children are encouraged to make suggestions and problem solve as to how we can reduce waste in the centre. The K2 class has evaluated our use of tissue, David shared "we don't need to use tissue for fruits, we can re-use our bowl!" This initiative from our students has saved many tissue papers from being wasted and embedded the good habit in the children's routine of using reusable bowls/plates. They now often remind our guests too!

Our role model Yi Ting can be seen setting this example for her peers as she washes her bowl and then carefully adds her fruit into the bowl. She said "I only want 4 today" which captures the children evaluating portions so as not to waste food. The children demonstrating such roles and responsibilities leave positive impressions on the younger children in the centre.



### Our Nursery 2 planting team

Teachers share their culture and behaviour with children to further support their work towards sustaining the 'green' environment. One of the teachers introduced a celebration called Tu- B'shvat, which means the day that marks the beginning of the "Jewish New Year for Trees". Tu B'shvat marks the beginning of spring in Israel. It is also a celebration of connecting to our own inner-selves, to the social world of human beings and to the natural world and its resources. One of the traditions on this holiday is that school children plant trees in honour and appreciation of trees.

Ms Iris wanted to share this planting experience with the Zoologist N2 Team. The teacher shared this unique planting experience with the children for whom it was a meaningful cultural exchange, a hands-on learning experience which helped the children gain a deeper understanding of the concept of saving trees. This planting experience strengthened their connection to the planet and other living things. It also initiated dialogue and exchange of ideas and taught the children that we are connected in so many ways and saving the Earth is a shared responsibility.





## The Reggio Experience at 764 Mountbatten

In early March, the teaching and learning team at 764 attended the Reggio Emilia Conference conducted over 2.5 days at Novotel Hotel. The conference, organised by EtonHouse Education Centre (EEC) and the Association for Early Childhood Education Singapore (AECES) was attended by over 350 early childhood educators from the Asia Pacific region.



An important aspect of this conference was a visit to Reggio-inspired schools in Singapore, in which our school opened its doors to some 40 participants from Singapore, Korea, Australia, Hong Kong and Vietnam. A sharing session was held where we shared our teaching and learning philosophy and an inquiry project with the visitors. The visit ended with a tour of our physical indoor and outdoor environments where the visitors had the opportunity to view our on-going projects with the children through their work on display, as well as through documentations of the children's learning and thinking.

I thank and congratulate Ms. Dawn Ng, Ms. Charlotte Choy, Ms. Bey Hwee Kiang and Ms. Samantha Morier who helped facilitate this visit which was a successful and valuable learning experience for all.

## Reggio Reflections

The following are some reflections from the teaching and learning team on their participation in the Reggio conference:

*“The dialogue sessions were inspiring and deepened my understanding and thinking of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education – I particularly welcome the challenge for further thinking about the potential of the child, the organisation and quality of the physical environment and the promotion of the collaboration amongst and between staff and families.... I believe that a deeper understanding of these elements of the Reggio philosophy will make me more effective in leading the Teaching and Learning Team in the areas of pedagogical practices and curriculum content.”*

– Josephyne Ho, Preschool Director

*“I have struggled often enough thinking if along with being a teacher I am also a guide, facilitator, friend and co-learner all the while keeping the interests of the children in mind. This Reggio conference has helped me realise that learning is a life long journey and is not going to happen overnight. It has strengthened my belief that the children and I will grow stronger as a learning team with every passing day.”* –

Priya Deoruhkar, Class Teacher

*“..... I believe that educators should always create a meaningful environment for the children, where they are allowed to share their feelings, impressions with one another.... And I think that it is important that educators continuously communicate and document children's experiences at school. Hence, educators should keep on building an attitude of learning and embracing the values of collaboration.”*

– Jesslyn Chen, Assistant Teacher

*“Taking time to reflect, slow down the pace.... Rethink the inter-relationships between children, parents, colleagues and society at large... relationships within children's immediate environment - resources, materials, spaces, people.”*

– Bey Hwee Kiang, Class Teacher



Milestones always seem to be the perfect time to stop, reflect and to plan for the future. As EtonHouse celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Singapore it's hard to not think back on our own beginnings and adventures here in Suzhou and in China. The school is approaching its 7<sup>th</sup> year and there is indeed a lot to think about, celebrate, plan for and enjoy.

When we look around our campus, complete with tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools, Science labs and more rooms than we know what to do with, it seems difficult to imagine that we began our journey in much humbler surroundings. When we opened in August 2003 we occupied a handful of rooms in a Chinese Middle School building. It was old, cold, cracked and lifeless but it didn't take long to turn it into a vibrant, welcoming school full of excitement and enthusiasm. We learnt early in China that it isn't the body that makes a school, it is its heart.

As the years went by we were bursting at the seams the school was not only full of children but parents and community members too. Every corner was a place of learning and celebration an art exhibition in the library, a mattress with cushions in the corridor acting as a reading "corner", a pile of rubbish between a wall and a fence turned into a blossoming garden of sunflowers, regularly watered, weeded and measured by our Reception students.



Above all though we had, in our old cracked building, created a community a truly international community where students, parents, local and expatriate staff worked together to help, support and understand one another and to learn together.

This attitude has followed us to our new building and it is this spirit of community forged by learners, young and old(er), coming together in a new country, learning a new language and experiencing new adventures that remains the heart of the school. As we look to a future full of new challenges it is good to know that this spirit and feeling of community continues.





## Vivero International Pre-school PUNE

“Truly International ... with children from 13 nationalities” claims Vivero Pune Centre, which is leading by example having introduced a crucial paradigm shift in early childhood education in Pune city. Children are exploring farm animals and the local fire station and had a successful concert on 18-19 March 2010. Here are some encouraging words shared by Vivero parents:



Founder parent Mr. Sushil Chawla says “My daughter Seher instantly recognizes the white bungalow of the school building and points at it as 'My school VIVERO'. She loves spending time here and is excited about going to school.”

“Anna loved Vivero. The school was fresh and fun and the administrators, teachers and staff truly cared for the students' wellbeing. It was a bright spot in our Pune experience” said Heather Davison, mother of Anna Davison who was with us in KII and is now studying at Webster Elementary in Urbandale, Iowa, USA.

## Vivero International Pre-school POWAI, MUMBAI

The second Vivero International pre-school has now opened for admissions in the second centre situated at **Hiranandani Gardens** - a township in Powai, a northern suburb of Mumbai, India. The response has been tremendous and the enrolled children and the teaching team are waiting eagerly for the session to begin in June 2010.



## Serra International AUNDH, PUNE

“There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million” urges Serra International. Serra provides world-class Pre-School learning to parents of young pre-schoolers in and around Aundh - Pune. “Early years are crucial, because they determine whether your child becomes a passive or an active learner. We work to ensure that children are well prepared to enter the world of formal primary education -- an area which many parents believe is full of challenges.” said Ashwini Deshmane, Principal of Serra International, Aundh, is a senior and respected Educationist with 22 years of experience. In the second unit of the academic year, Serra Pre-nursery and Nursery children explore a range of rhymes and stories. The unit will be culminated by celebrating Literacy week from 5-8 April 2010 where children will dress up as their favourite book characters.



## Reggio Conference:

Members of the Edvance India team Anshul Arora, Archana Jamdar, Shalini Mukerjee and Monisha Pandit had the privilege of attending the three-day the Reggio Conference held at Singapore by EtonHouse and AECES. The team felt inspired, said Archana Jamdar Head Pedagogy “Using powerful images and dialogues about children in the infant toddler centre and the pre-schools, the experts - Amelia Gambetti and Emanuela Vercalli, helped us revisit our belief about young children and the teaching learning processes. The images made us think, ponder, question, examine and rejoice at some of our cultural values and understandings about young children.”



## An inquiry into food

To maintain the focus on 'inquiry' in our work, at EtonHouse Jakarta, we try to always start with a question e.g. in this case what do we really know about food? This question keeps, in the teacher's mind in particular, that inquiry-learning should be about exploration, discovery and thinking.

The children had discussed food previously

"What do you know about food?" asked Miss Jade.

"Tofu," said Juvincia. "Makes I tall."

"Yes!" said Miss Jade, "it makes you tall."

"Carrots," said Richard, "for your eyes."

"Rice," said Emir, "it gives you energy."

"So you don't get sleepy," said Julian.



"I want to try!" said Owen (K2), who was watching the men harvesting the rambutan. "I can use the ladder!"

"Where does our food come from?" asked Miss Jade.

"I go to the mall," said Anya.

"I go to the supermarket and then put it in the car and then take it home," said Matthew.

"Where does the supermarket get the food from?" asked Miss Jade. No one seemed to know. "Does anyone know where we get apples from?" asked Miss Jade.

"The tree!" said Nathan.

"Yes," said Miss Jade, "so, some of our food comes from the trees."

From the children's sharing, the teacher ascertained that children had many theories e.g. food comes from the mall; and that they knew we ate for a 'purpose' (other than being hungry). In inviting children's expression of prior knowledge, adults gain a better understanding of how to build bridges to new understandings.



Nathan (Pre N), Miss Tasia, Gabriel (N1), and Rina were all so curious to feel the Rambutan. "It has hair!" said Miss Tasia.

Living in a big city, like Jakarta, many of the children seemed to have little experience in actually growing food.

The next day the whole pre-school came together to experience the rambutan harvesting.

This incidental experience provided for the children a real hands on opportunity to 'harvest' a familiar fruit for eating. We can see through their language their sharing and enthusiasm to participate.

This experience can be followed up by inviting children to draw, or represent their thinking in another 'language' (other than oral speech). This opportunity to re-visit the experience e.g. drawing, invites children to reflect and think again about their learning



"Now, me!" said Amanda, who was watching Owen. "I want to try! I want a red one because they are sweet!"