

Important Reflections and Considerations and Further Research

Reflections on our Flag Project

We want to begin our journal this week thanking you for your feedback about our involvement in the recent petition to have the Aboriginal flag flown permanently on the Harbour Bridge. As you are all aware, this has caused some controversy in the media, not only about children not being capable of understanding their involvement in a process such as this, but also about adults ‘brainwashing’ their ideas and having their own agenda. We have been reflecting on this, not just as a small team, but large, and will continue to do so as we unpack these ideas further in consultation with our families.

A major influence in our work is the philosophies and practices of the schools in Reggio Emilia. These schools, founded by Loris Malaguzzi during and after the Second World War, recognised children as being strong and capable, just as we do. Founded during the period of fascism, they learnt “that people who conformed and obeyed were dangerous, and that in building a new society it was imperative to safeguard and communicate that lesson and nurture a vision of children who can think and act for themselves” (Dahlberg, 2000). In response to this work they created “schools that are living centres of open and democratic culture, enriched and informed by social encounters that let them go beyond their ambiguous and false autonomy and centuries-old detachment, and which let them abandon the prejudice of ideological imprinting and authoritarian indoctrination” (Cagliari et al., 2016). Peter Moss reinforced this ideology, reminding us of Malaguzzi’s words, “Early childhood education is first and foremost a political and ethical practice” and that the culture of schools should be “a place of possibilities, where knowledge and identity are co-constructed and learning processes are investigated, always in relationship with others... a place which is both a community in itself as well as an integral part of a wider community” (Gunilla Dahlberg & Peter Moss, 2006).

We are aware there is some debate about this concept, and that some of you do not feel that a preschool and the teaching that occurs should be political in nature. We are very sensitive to your needs and those of your children, wanting to create an environment and culture where everyone has a voice and can openly express their views. We were very grateful to meet with Sophie this week as your Lilly Pilly representative and discuss some of your ideas and concerns. This meeting was very productive, with two major outcomes evolving, one, to ensure families have the opportunity to share their ideas about projects that are evolving beforehand, so that we have a deeper understanding of our families’ views and ideas and can reflect on these in our planning, and to also always ensure that different perspectives are presented so that each child has the opportunity to be informed and make their own decisions.

We will be very mindful of this in future, and look forward to continuing to engage in rich dialogue with our families as we continue to think about and evolve in the way we work. I did want to leave you with some questions that Peter Moss posed when considering education as being a “political and ethical practice” and also a quote from the Regolamentoo School, in Reggio Emilia as I wonder how they will influence future decisions and directions we take.

What is the ‘diagnosis for our time’?

What is your image of the child... the educator... the school? How do we understand ‘Education’?

How do we learn?

What are the purposes of education?

What ethics?

What are the fundamental values of education?

What are your political questions?

What is your image of the child?

“Education is the right of all, of all children, and as such is a responsibility of the community. Education is an opportunity for the growth and emancipation of the individual and the collective; it is a resource for gaining knowledge and for learning to live together; it is a meeting place where freedom, democracy and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted” (Regolamento Scuole e Nidi d’infanzia del Comune di Reggio Emilia, 2009).

Any decisions we make need to be considered and thoughtful, just as we ask and expect our children to be each and every day. As we come together each day to meet and share ideas, thoughts and theories, we are always touched by those that say, “Maybe.....” These are children that have learnt through the way we work they can share and have a voice even when they are uncertain. We know how capable and competent young children are, we see and hear it everyday and want to ensure we provide an environment where they are heard and know they have the power to make change and difference in our world, to create a world of acceptance, inclusion and equity. We know that we are on a constant journey of change in our ever changing world and look forward to working with you in bringing these important ideologies to life!

Further Research on Flags

This week we have been continuing our research of flags and further refining our NNS flag. Oliver T was very excited to present to the class a map poster he had received from his family. The discussion that emerged from this was a very warm and welcome surprise, highlighting to us the children's interest and understanding of the work we have been doing.

Where is the Aboriginal flag? - Frankie instantly asked as she scanned the poster.

There is no Aboriginal flag — Oliver T explained.

Why don't you think the Aboriginal flag is there? - Anna asked.

Because there is not enough room - Laila suggested.

Because they are showing all the flags that are up - Frankie considered, thinking perhaps the poster only represented flags that are displayed.

The NSW flag is not here either - Oliver T shared, reflecting on and disputing this theory with the knowledge that the NSW is flown on the Harbour Bridge.

I think I know why the Aboriginal flag is not on the poster, it's because the Aboriginal flag just doesn't want to be on it- Frankie

reflected further, giving the flag an animate persona.

Why don't you think the Aboriginal flag wants to be on the poster? - Anna enquired.

It kicked off the poster and ran all the way to the Aboriginal people because it loves the Aboriginal people, because the flag is their friend - Frankie shared thoughtfully, a true indication of her incredible empathy and understanding of our First Australians and the importance of their flag as a symbol and representation of them as a people. The children's smiles as she shared this idea indicated to us the group's agreement!

I know why the Aboriginal and NSW aren't on the poster because people already know the flags and so we can learn the other flags - Alexander also considered another important idea in growing our understanding of flags.



These poignant words gave us a wonderful opening to talk further about our NNS flag and to consider how we can ensure it symbolises equality and inclusion. Last week we had begun to consider the colours of the hands on our flag.

I think the hands should be black - Frankie suggested.

Why do you think they should be black? - Anna wondered.

So they represent the Aboriginal people like on their flag - Laila thoughtfully shared.

I think they should be black so they are like the Aboriginal people skins and Maggie's wings - Olly D added.

We wondered though, if the hands were all black would they represent all people at NNS as they had hoped. The group reflected on this and unanimously agreed they wouldn't. So how could we reflect all people including the Aboriginal people and Maggie's wings?

We can do two black and two white and one brown. That's the colours of people skin - Laila suggested using skin tones.

Pink, white and black, because if an Aboriginal people came we could represent them on the flag- Frankie thought of a more



diverse range of colours.

If we leave one white it won't be as pretty as the other flags and not as colourful - Colin considered the impact of having white imagery on the flag.



Black, purple and pink...Because I like them - Charlotte chose colours she likes.

Not everyone likes pink and purple - Olly D thoughtfully considered using colours everyone likes, remembering the flag is for everyone!

Peach, purple, black, brown and yellow ...because those are the skin colours I know - Elise also thought of skin tones.

Maybe we can do yellow, red, pink, blue, purple and green...Because I like those colours - Suhanna suggested a more colourful spectrum of colours.

We want everyone to love it - Frankie reminded everyone.

I think we should put rainbow...Because I want them to be rainbow to be beautiful - Oliver T also liked the idea of bright colours.

If we do rainbow it will look like a whole piece of rainbow paper - Laila considered the impact it would have adding more rainbow colours.

If we do rainbow will it represent the Aboriginal people because that's what you have said is important to you? - Anna asked.

If we made it rainbow it would represent every people in the whole world - Laila shared, visualising this bright spectrum of colours for everyone.

We can put yellow in the middle and black on the top and red in middle like on the Aboriginal flag - William thought incorporating these colours and concepts would be a perfect way to represent our First Australians.

It was time to make a decision, but how?

A vote...It's when you put up your hand, to vote which one you want to do - Sienna shared her understanding of this important democratic process.

With one vote for rainbow colours, twelve for skin tones and eight for red, black and yellow (the teachers also voted!), the group celebrated their decision ready to begin work.

We look forward to watching the continued creation of this beautiful symbol of inclusion and acceptance.

Anna, Claire and Maria xxx