

2018 HIGHLIGHTS



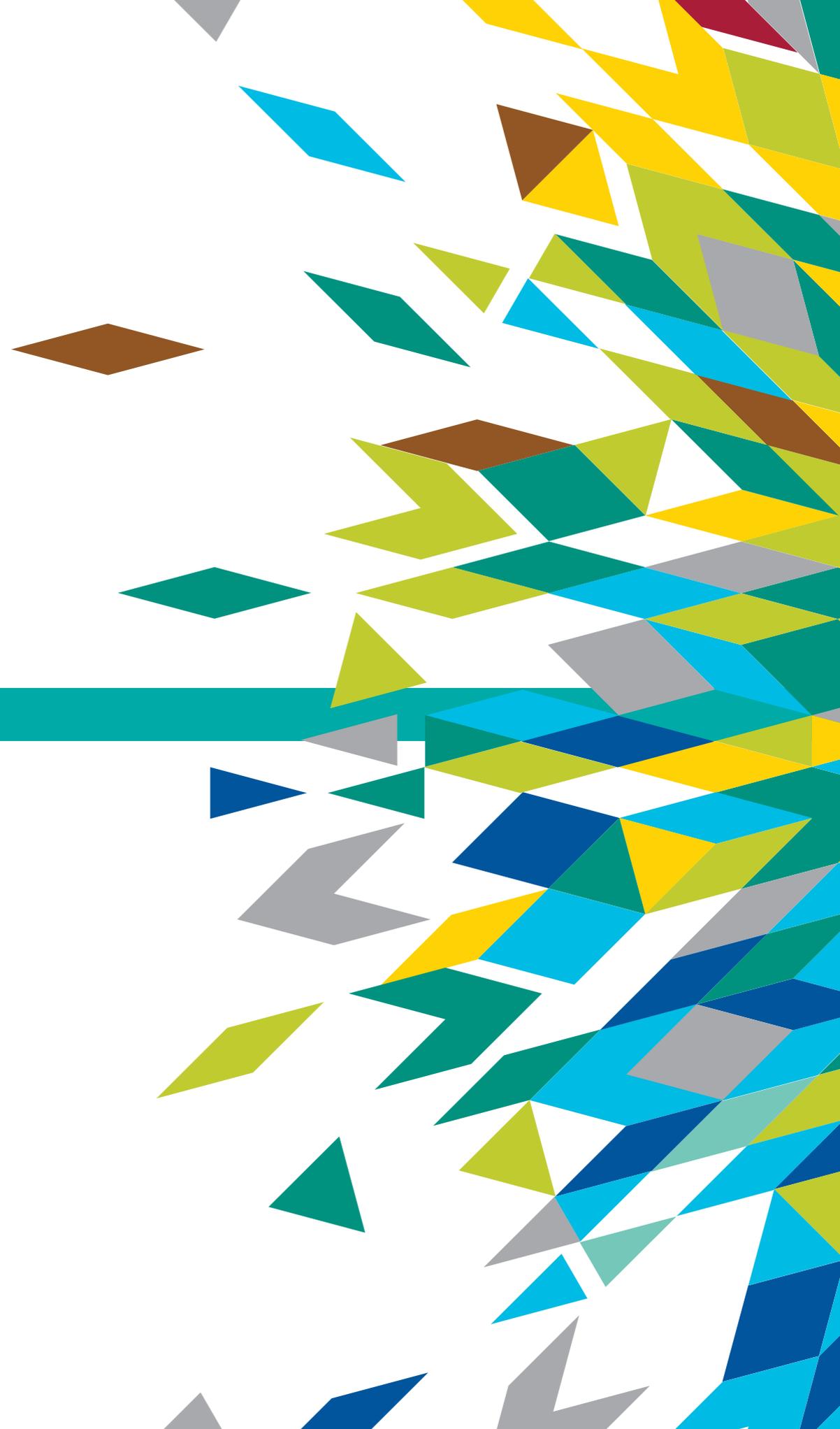
2018 highlights



Coming up in 2019

2018 highlights

It's almost impossible to capture a year in all its diversity. Instead, we've decided to highlight 12 key moments that shaped our path in 2018, and our journey ahead.



1

Collaborating with the GDE

A tangible expression of the strong bond between Reggio Emilia and Gauteng has been the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the GDE and AREA to collaborate in the provision of professional development on the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach for ECD practitioners in the province.

Staff at a few centres dotted across the province attended three full-day workshops on the approach in November and December 2018, facilitated by AREA, and are starting to transform their teaching practice and centres step by step and day by day. An AREA team of educators who're already inspired by and practising the approach in their own contexts will be visiting these centres and working together with these teachers throughout the course of the year. To ensure these centres are supported in their journey, various local and provincial government officials will be attending a three-day introduction to the approach in early 2019.

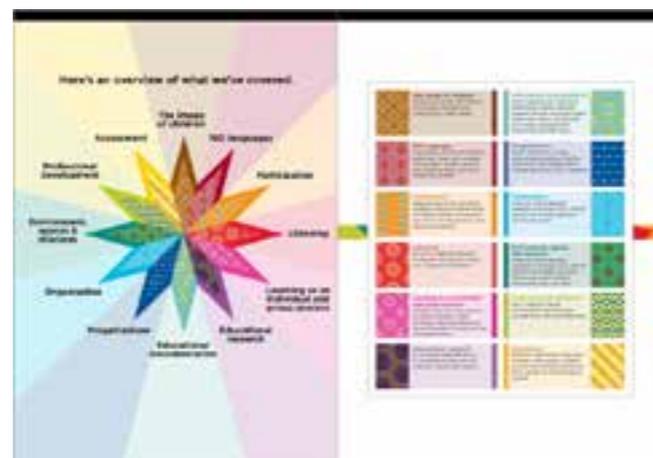
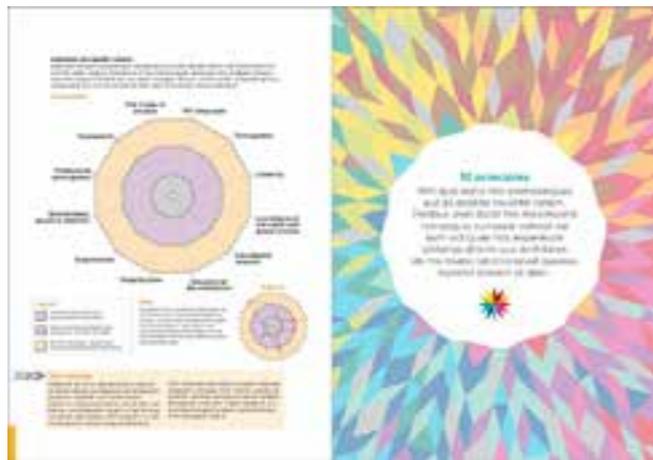


Children are now able to ask questions, and even to tell me more about nature. They are now more open in discussion than before – everyone wants to participate!

– Magdaline Tshabalala, Themba Phungula ECD Centre in Katlehong

[Our] parents are very excited ... they are now wondering what drives their children; they no longer want to be absent at school.

– Bongekile Precious Msibi, Land of Joy Day Care in Diepkloof



2

Publishing our own booklet

We're very proud to have published our first booklet on the Reggio Emilia approach and the ways in which it inspires teaching and learning. *Reimagine Education* is an invitation to take your teaching practice deeper, a provocation to relook (and maybe even rethink) the organisation of your own classroom or school.

In its pages, we've unpacked the 12 principles of the Reggio Emilia approach in a format that's easy to read (and hopefully understand). We take a big-picture look at the overarching theory of each principle, give you a sense of how the principle works in practice, and end with suggestions for how you might take inspiration from this principle in your own school or teaching practice. We've also included images from South African schools and teachers who are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and working to put it into practice in their own context – just to show you what's possible. [Find out more...](#)



3

Hosting Paola Strozzi (and two conferences)

Earlier in 2018, when we were still deciding on a theme for the 2018 conferences, AREA board members were reflecting on how the Reggio Emilia approach is still relatively new in South Africa. We're still collectively grappling with the changes it asks of us as teachers and as people - and how to make such a rich philosophy of children possible and sustainable in our context, with our children, in our schools - and not burn out. Looking back now, we realise how incredibly lucky we were to have Paola Strozzi with us as our keynote speaker.

Paola Strozzi has over 30 years' teaching experience in Reggio Emilia - but she brought so much more than just her experience. Her presentations at both conferences - one in Johannesburg North (at Reddam House Waterfall), the other in Johannesburg South (at Nova Pioneer Ormonde) - were poignant and accessible, and her heart for teachers immediately apparent.

We're delighted to be able to share extensive conference notes (30 pages of insights, tools and questions) with you. [Download them here](#)



To be creative, to work with other people, to debate, to innovate, not to be shy, not to be invasive - we can do this with children since they're born. We can learn to be competitive, or we can learn solidarity of ideas, we can learn collaboration. We can work with human nature or against human nature. It's up to us as a society. Work in school is not just at an educational level and a psychological level, but also work at a social level, at a political level.

- Paola Strozzi

4

Running two concurrent workshop series (and many more besides)

Each year, we run a nine-workshop introduction to the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach. In 2018, there was so much interest and demand in this series, that we ran two concurrent workshop series. Beyond Gauteng, we also hosted workshops at Mitchell House in Polokwane (on two separate occasions), at the Inkulisa Centre at Penzance Primary School in Durban for KZN participants, and at Oakhill School in Knysna.



In 2018, 380 people attended various AREA workshops (excluding those arranged for the GDE), and of these more than 120 were registered for our introductory course (consisting of nine workshops). To date in 2019, over 80 people have attended workshops and 65 of these are registered for the first introductory course.

5

Hosting Harvard and the Pedagogy of Play

In 2017, Professor Benjamin Mardell from Project Zero at Harvard's Graduate School of Education contacted us, expressing his interest in researching the [pedagogy of play](#) in South African schools. AREA helped facilitate connections, conversations and stayed in close collaboration - and was delighted when Benjamin Mardell and his co-researcher Lynneth Solis offered to present their emergent findings at an AREA workshop in late August 2018. For those of you who couldn't make the workshop, we'll be sending out the link as soon as the research is published.



Students at Nova Pioneer Ormonde, one of four Johannesburg schools involved in the Pedagogy of Play South Africa project.

6

Celebrating South African-Italian relations

Marina Castagnetti – who many of you might remember as the keynote speaker at [our 2017 conference](#) – was out in South Africa again from 23-25 October 2018, this time as part of the Italian delegation visiting South Africa for the SA-Italy Summit, and the annual celebration of Oliver Tambo's life. She was one of the keynote speakers during an ECD seminar that took place during this summit, and suggested ways [local ECD centres can embrace the Reggio Emilia approach](#).



Marina Castagnetti presenting at an ECD seminar during the SA-Italy Summit in October 2018

7

2018 trips to Reggio

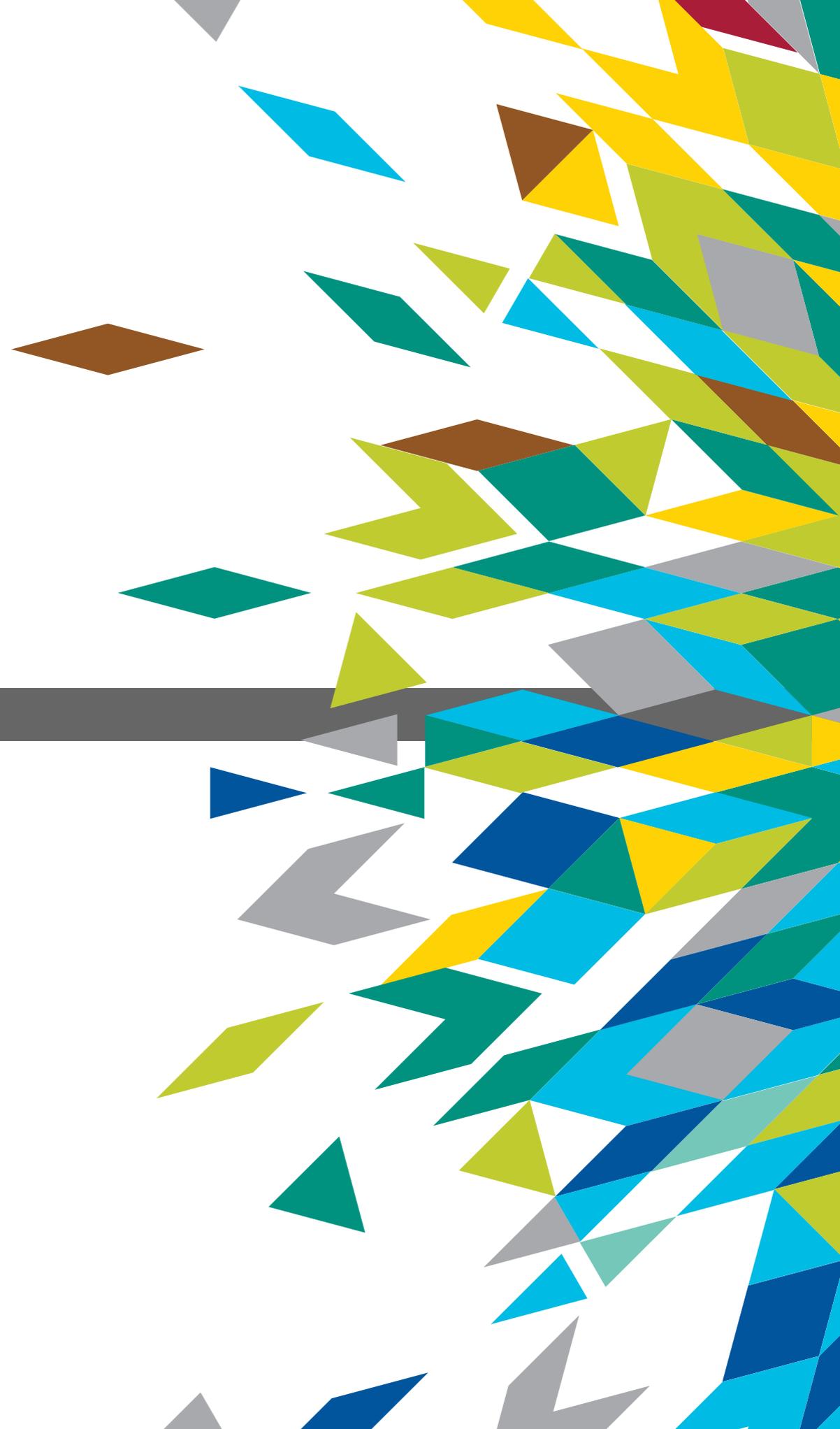
In February 2018, AREA participated in the annual network meeting and professional development of the Reggio Children International Network, together with representatives from 33 member countries. In April 2018, five educators from South Africa and three from Mozambique joined the AREA tour to participate in the Reggio Children international study group attended by more than 400 English speakers from countries across the globe.



Participants in the 2018 study tour enjoying aperitifs in Piazza Fontanesi in Reggio Emilia (from left): Karen Crooke, Aaron Scott Frontiera and Brooks Luscher (from American International School Mozambique in Maputo), Luciel Morgan and Nnenna Nwachuku (from Nova Pioneer group), Madri Steyn and Annalizé Blake (from KinderArk, Val de Vie Estate, Paarl), and Brendan Brady (from St Andrew's Preparatory School in Grahamstown).

Coming up in 2019

While these events take place in 2019, the inspiration, planning and preparation started early in 2018...



8

2019 trips to Reggio

We've been lucky to be able to offer you **two opportunities to visit Reggio Emilia** in 2019: one on the international study tour from 6-13 April, and the other as part of a in-depth study tour organised by our colleagues in the US from 30 March to 6 April). In February 2019, we headed north for a gathering of the **Reggio Children International Network**, during which time we investigated the possibility of organising a second South African study trip to Reggio Emilia in November 2019. More details to follow...



The February 2019 meeting of the Reggio Children International Network

I was so moved at the first of our 2019 workshops for the Gauteng Department of Education. So many educators arrived on a Saturday morning on the off-chance that they could attend. Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance estimates that nearly 800 people had to be turned away that morning! It spoke to me of the overwhelming desire and need for professional development in the Reggio Emilia approach to education.

- Des Hugo

9

Introducing teachers to the Reggio Emilia philosophy

Our workshops and professional development opportunities aimed at introducing educators to the main principles of the Reggio Emilia approach, and growing their teaching practice, continues. Our 2019 calendars are already booked with professional development sessions for the GDE, and our **nine-workshop introductory series**. Interest in the approach has been phenomenal and all our recent initiatives have been oversubscribed. For this reason, we're planning an intensive introduction to the approach over three full-day workshops later this year - so watch this space!

10

Ad-hoc workshops

We've had a number of requests for workshops specifically focused on the culture of atelier and the role of atelierista, and what Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching practice looks like in primary school. To begin this conversation, we've dedicated two Saturday morning workshops - on 27 July and 2 November respectively - to tackle just this. Registration forms are available on the website.

The atelier has an important, provocative, and disturbing effect on old-fashioned teaching ideas.

- Veia Vecchi

11

Beyond Gauteng

Reggio clusters in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have approached us about co-hosting and facilitating professional learning opportunities in these provinces. We're in conversation about workshops or mini-conferences in mid-to-late 2019. Please watch our website for details.



Educators from Oakhill School during a 2018 workshop in Knysna

12

Beyond AREA's main initiatives

The way the Reggio Emilia approach is taking root and growing in local contexts is the result of everyday, almost invisible interactions, conversations and collaborations. Here are traces of some of this work that you, our members, supporters, friends and colleagues, are driving:

- Karin Murriss, Rose-Anne Reynolds and Joanne Peers (who all presented at last year's conference) published a [paper on Reggio Emilia-inspired teacher education](#) in the *Journal of Childhood Studies*
- Somerset College hosted a mini-conference where several presenters at AREA workshops and conferences spoke - namely Catherine Collingwood, Lindi Bell, Karin Murriss, Joanne Peers, Rose-Anne Reynolds, and Tessa Browne
- Rachel and Phil Bowyer took a research-based sabbatical from April to June last year, and visited innovative and inspiring schools in Europe, the US, Middle East and Australasia (many of which were Reggio Emilia-inspired schools). They've been sharing their insights with the KZN cluster, and the full report on their trip [is available here](#).
- Each year we're humbled and inspired to hear more about the ongoing growth and development of Reggio Emilia-inspired schools and preschools across the country (and particularly in Gauteng, the Western Cape, KZN, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape). We know what an incredible investment of time, energy and resources this is, and the leap of faith it so often demands. To all the inspired schools and teachers out there, we celebrate you.
- The running of an organisation like AREA wouldn't be possible without our funders, and without our board. We'd particularly like to take a moment to acknowledge our board member Maurizio Mariano, who was [awarded an Italian order of knighthood in 2018](#) - the first non-resident Italian to be awarded this honour.



Photos from Awhi Whanau in New Zealand, a Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool that Rachel and Phil Bowyer visited during their research-based sabbatical from April to June 2018. [Find out more in their report.](#)