



# TEACHER REFLECTIONS

**MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE**

**WRITTEN BY EUNICE RHEE**

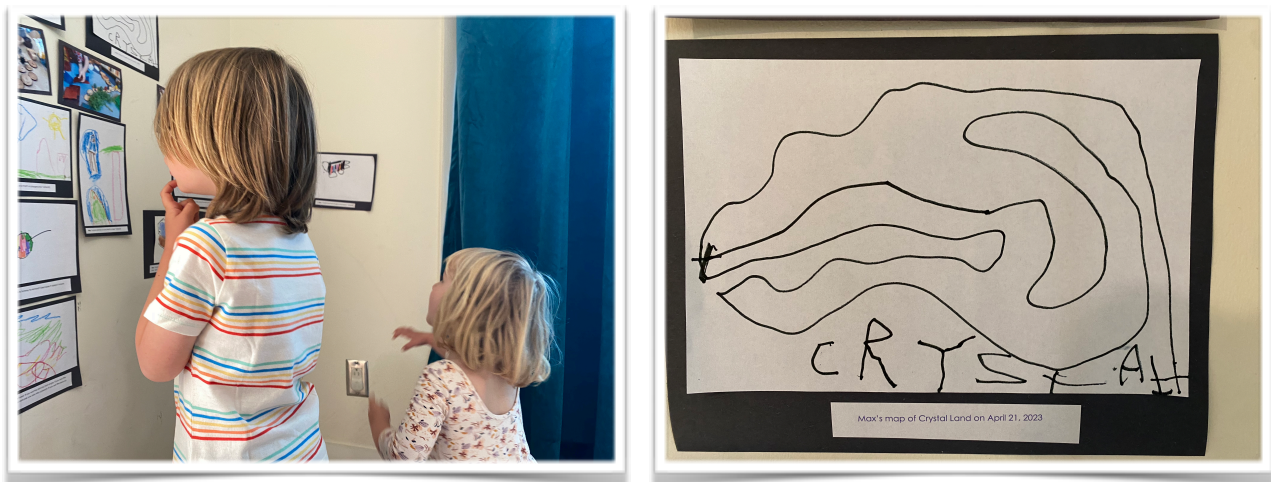
## Important Dates & Reminders:

- ✦ **May 12th: Mother's Day Breakfast** 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.  
Coffee and pastries will be served.
- ✦ **May 29th: Memorial Day, Holiday No School**
- ✦ **Week of May 29th: Max's Culture Share**
- ✦ **Week of June 5th: Kyza's Culture Share**
- ✦ **June 8th & 9th: Parent-Teacher Conferences**  
3-6p.m. No Extended Day afternoon.
- ✦ **June 16th: Father's Day Breakfast** 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- ✦ **June 22nd: Last Day of School**
- ✦ **June 23rd: Graduation & Picnic!** 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
- ✦ **June 26 - July 7: Summer Break, School Closed**



Unique to the early childhood education experience would be the Reggio Emilia approach to observations and documentation. It has the potential to serve many purposes during the children's learning experience. Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of Reggio Emilia, pointed out that through documentation children "become even more curious, interested, and confident as they contemplate the meaning of what they have achieved."

Documentation focuses on children's thoughts and ideas in the course of their work while at the same time giving careful attention to the aesthetic aspects of the display. Much like a story, a project may have a beginning, a middle, and an end that develops over time. As you saw from our daily communications, our recent weeks of inquiry and exploration have involved the concept and play of Crystal Land. In the last few weeks, Shanelle and I have been documenting the process of uncovering Crystal Land and it has been a tremendous gift of discovery. Documentation typically includes the children's artwork, photographs of the children engaged in the project, and comments and transcripts of conversations. We have included all of these on our "Living Wall" located in the library area inside the classroom which continues to evolve and inspire daily conversations, making the children's process visible and tangible.



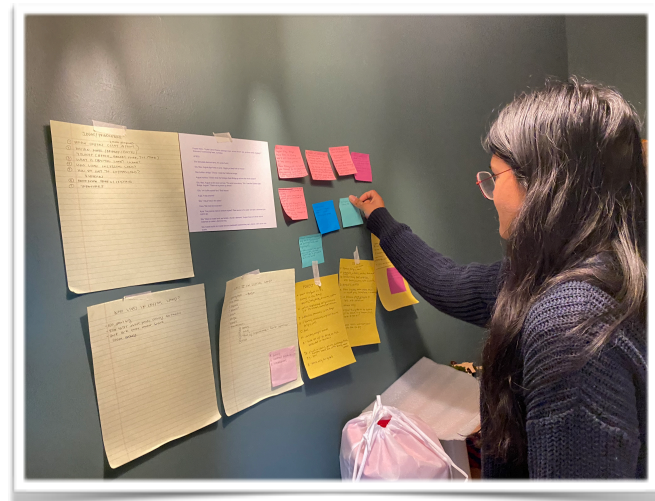
[Max saw his teacher adding to the "Living Wall" and said, "I love that you're putting everyone's art there."]

It also honors the children and gives them a voice through the collection and iteration of their artwork, dialogue, play, ideas, and curiosities. When their learning is documented, they may be inspired to revisit their experiences and dig deeper into their ideas. Displaying their work efforts, ideas, and learning in a beautiful and respectful way supports our value in children to be capable, thoughtful, and creative. It conveys to children that their efforts are taken

seriously, which can inspire them to continue their efforts and encourages them to work in a joyful and dedicated way.

Documentation has been an essential tool for communicating as a team at SLCC both to families and amongst each other. When we have tangible documentation of classroom experience, we can analyze our observations for elements of children's theories and interests, enabling us to plan for future child-directed provocations. It's important to carefully design an environment with an array of engaging, flexible, and open-ended materials that creates opportunities for collaboration, creativity, joy, wonder, and investigation. We want to provide provocations to learn about the direction of their intent and to inspire the children to go deeper into their idea. We may ask ourselves, *"What's behind the children's words?"* *"What about this particular idea has caught their interest?"*

Being an educator at SLCC, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of Reggio Emilia's approach to documentation. I have witnessed fascinating moments in children's investigations. Personally, the "Living Wall" has been a very useful tool as it is a reminder of designing provocations and morning meetings based on the children's genuine interests and curiosities. It helps me get to know and understand each child, enrich the children's learning experience, and reflect on our teaching practices' effectiveness. Pam Oken-Wright, an educator and a member of the editorial board of *Innovations in Early Education* described it as, "Like a mirror, documentation reflects our practice and our theory. Like a beacon, it lights the winding path of investigation." We have been constantly and actively observing, listening, and documenting their play and conversations and sharing our findings in our





weekly cohort meetings. Then we add all of these onto our “Living Wall” as a daily visual reminder to help support their paths of discovery.

It is through documentation that we are able to perceive ordinary moments as extraordinary. We may never know when what seems to be an ordinary event will prove to be a seed of something much bigger! We captured some quotes from the first conversations about Crystal Land that we would love to share with you all:

-**Elio** discusses diamond land and says, “It’s under Earth.”

-**Glo, Max, and August** dig a hole in the sand. **Max** says, “Digging a deep hole in Hawaii.”

-**Max** builds a bridge and says, “I made the California bridge.”

-**August**, curious, asks the teacher, “Does the Golden Gate Bridge go across the whole ocean?”

-**Elio, Max, and August** are on the lookout and imagine it as a boat.

**Max** says, “The wind is so strong.”

**Elio** then says, “I see the Golden Gate Bridge. **August** says, “There’s a big storm up ahead.”

-Moments later **Elio** says, “Oh it’s the Crystal Land. We landed! I found a diamond.”

-**Cosmo** hears and says, “We need an excavator.”

-**Kyza** asks, “Hey wanna make a rainbow crystal? We put it in water and take it wherever you wanna go.”





Each day after that, they continued this play and we have been scaffolding and following their lead. So far, they have designed maps, searched for crystals, and designed the different areas of Crystal Land (a beach, forest, fairy homes, and stores stores) along with the different ways one can travel and get to Crystal Land. In response, we began to integrate projects around their ideas.



Sharing documented work with our parent community is a great way for parents to participate in their child's learning and experiences in a more intimate and accurate way. For this reason, Shanelle and I value the daily communications of our indoor and outdoor explorations, morning meeting, and project work through the GroupMe app so the parents understand the play that their child is engaged in. It has been a delight when we have parents communicating to us how their children have been mentioning and playing out Crystal Land at home. We will soon invite our parent community to view the children's culminating project where you can see their imagination and ideas come to life! Until our grand reveal, please take a moment to view your children's work throughout the classroom.