
For the Classroom

Birthday Celebration Adventure Circle

~ Laurie Clark

I composed this circle knowing how challenging it can be for a class of young children to sit in chairs too long. With this in mind, I also wanted to honor each child's birthday with grace and depth. What emerged was a circle that included periods of sitting, alternating with integrative movement. Any of this "recipe" can be altered, for example shortening it for younger children, or making any other changes that fit the group. It is a lovely addition to have the children in the class make birthday cards a day or two before the celebration.

If the children are old enough, they can add a beautiful wish for the birthday child that the teacher can write into the card. These wishes from the children are often remarkable, straight out of the starry land, a real wonder! A watercolor painting can be folded into a cover for the cards, or another means of presentation devised. These cards are often kept and treasured by the birthday child.

It is wonderful if the parent(s) attend the birthday celebration and have a conversation with the teacher beforehand, which can be very valuable. The teacher can ask the parents to bring to the celebration two or three special events that happened each year of their child's life and a wish for their child. This wish can be very moving, as it is so rare in today's world for parents to be able to express their deepest hope in the form of a wish directly to their child. Another question to ponder is how the parents decided on their child's first and middle names. The teacher can explore the meaning of the child's name and bring it to the celebration as well.

Another possibility is to have the birthday child bring a gift from nature for each child in the class, such as pinecones, seashells, flower seeds, or beautiful stones. The birthday child delights in handing these gifts to their friends. The teacher will have a gift for the birthday child as well. The star necklace that is part of the circle can be the gift if the teacher wishes. Many more details can be added into the birthday story; this birthday adventure circle's purpose is just to bring some ideas and inspirations. Anything can be added, subtracted, multiplied or divided!

Items Needed:

- **Small Ladder** *There are ladders that have steps on both sides, which would be ideal. Silver stars can be glued onto the ladder or blue silks on the side of the ladder. The other idea would be for the child to climb up and the teacher helps then jump down the other side or simply to go up and down a ladder. If a ladder is not available, a climbing gesture can be used.*
- **A Golden Yellow Cloth About 3 Feet Wide**
- **A Key—If Possible A Golden One** *This can be a real key or one that is cut out and put on a ribbon*
- **A Star On A Ribbon That Is Worn Like A Necklace**
- **A Balance Beam, Or If You Don't Have One, A Ribbon Taped To The Floor**

"Someone's Birthday" and "The Stars Are Watching" song are from Nancy Foster's book, *Dancing As We Sing*. "Someone's Birthday" can be sung a day or two before the birthday celebration.

Someone's Birthday



To begin, the children and the teacher are seated in chairs in a circle. A small table can be next to the teacher with an unlit candle standing on it, along with as many beeswax stars as the birthday child's age. A flower that is representative of the season of the year can also decorate the table. Another possibility is to have a card from the teacher (either made by the teacher or a lovely postcard) that has a simple verse for the birthday child, either one composed by the teacher or one that is found that seems just right. This verse can be helpful to guide the

child along their path, warmed from the very heart of the teacher. It can be suggested to the parents that the verse be said in the evening when the birthday candle (which goes home with the child) is lit each night. The birthday child can wear a rainbow or starry cape and is seated in a chair covered with a golden or starry cloth, with their parents or parent beside them.

"The Stars Are Watching" (or another favorite birthday song) can be sung to begin the celebration.

The Stars Are Watching



The teacher then lights the birthday candle and asks the birthday child to come and put the beeswax stars onto the candle as the parents tell about each year of the child's life. The child's parents gave the child a beautiful name. (Parents say the full name of the child.) The teacher tells what the meaning of the name of the child is. The parents then can tell their child their special wish for them. The parents remain sitting while the children

leave their chairs and form a standing circle.

Repeat each movement:

Spoken: **Now clap your hands, 1, 2, 3, now stamp your feet (3 times) just like me. Turn around, touch the ground, put your hands around your knees, now jump up high and touch the sky and shout hurray, it is (child's name) birthday celebration today.**

Bilateral movement is practiced here by altering stamping feet, vestibular movement is used in turning around and proprioceptive movement with jumping from the ground below to an upright position.

All of the singing in the next verses can be sung to the tune of “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush” or to this tune composed by Lori Daniels:

The teacher leads the children holding the birthday child’s hand. The children climb up and down a small ladder or

Starry Ladder



make climbing movements.

Sing: Climbing up the starry ladder, starry ladder, starry ladder, climbing up the starry ladder, my good angel holds my hand and leads me to the starry land.

Cross-lateral movement is practiced in a climbing movement; the opposite foot and hand climb up the ladder much like crawling but in an upright position.

Left palm open, right fist knocks on left palm, with repeat, right palm opens, left fist knocks on right palm

Sing: Knock, knock, knock on the door of each star, door of each star, door of each star—knock, knock, knock on the door of each star, inside is a wondrous sight, a wondrous sight.

Opening each palm wide, getting stimulation from the fist ‘knocking’ on each hand and then closing the hand tight can be helpful with the retention of the palmer reflex.

Two children hold a golden yellow cloth to make a gate, the good gardener (one of the children) uses the golden key to ‘open’ the gate, the yellow cloth opens and the children go through.

Sing: Now we come to the golden gate, golden gate, golden gate, the good gardener opens the golden gate with a key made of sunlight bright, with a key made of sunlight bright.

A child can be Grandmother Star Weaver and give the child the star necklace. Make a weaving motion with one hand crossing over the other and then both hands rest crossed over the heart region.

Spoken: Grandmother Star-Weaver weaves blossoms of light, weaves for you a star, wear it over your heart. This dear one I give to you, it will give you love and courage so true. Opportunity to cross the vertical midline

Standing, shift from one foot to the other, or lie down on back with the hands holding the back of knees and rock back and forth.

Sing: There comes a boat with sun moon and stars, sun moon and stars, sun moon and stars, there comes a boat with sun moon and stars to take you to your home from afar.

Vestibular movement rocking back and forth in standing position, and even stronger stimulation when lying down and rocking

The birthday child leads all of the children across a balance beam with a rainbow cloth underneath or on the sides of it.

Sing: Across the rainbow bridge so bright, rainbow so bright, rainbow so bright, across the rainbow bridge so bright, made of colorful light, made of colorful light.

Balance and vestibular movement are experienced here
Birthday child goes to parents

Sing: Your parents wait with love for you, with love for you, with love for you, your journey has made you brave and true, brave and true, brave and true.

The children repeat this verse

Spoken: **Now clap your hands, 1, 2, 3, now stamp your feet, just like me. Turn around, touch the ground, put your hands around your knees, now jump up high and touch the sky and shout hurray, it is (child's name) birthday celebration today.**

Birthday cake or snack can follow, along with singing "Happy Birthday." It is fun to sing the happy birthday song in Spanish if you wish.

*Felix cumpleaños a ti,
Felix cumpleaños a ti,
Felix cumpleaños a ti, mi amiga/mi amigo
(or child's name),
Felix cumpleaños a ti. ♦*

Laurie Clark *has been involved in Waldorf early childhood teaching for four decades and is a prominent teacher trainer, author, workshop and conference presenter, and mentor. She and Nancy Blanning have co-authored Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures, Vol. 1 and 2.*