

The Many Faces of Waldorf Education



Welcoming in the Youngest Ones: New Dogwood Nursery Opening September 2024 at New Amsterdam School

~ Jeannie McGartland

Photo courtesy of Jeannie McGartland

Little ones—the world is full of them! Everywhere you look, there they are: bubbly newborns, newly-mobilized one-year-olds, and newly verbal two-year-olds. No matter who we are in their lives, they lay easy claim to our hearts' love and good will, simply with their joy and light.

Since its founding, the New Amsterdam School has brought the transformative benefits of Waldorf early childhood education to the Lower Manhattan community, offering programming for children ages 3-6 years old.

The nature of our modern lives means that there are many families in our community looking for longer hours of care for their children, especially with drop-off options. Families are searching to find a nursery

program aligned with their values, a beautiful place for their littlest ones to spend their days. After over a decade of creating a thriving early childhood program, the New Amsterdam School faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees are very excited to announce that beginning in September 2024, we will be supporting even younger children through our newly established Dogwood Nursery, the first Waldorf daycare in New York City.

Inspired by the early childhood centers leading this work in the Waldorf community, our faculty and staff are committed to bringing the magical, reverent care that is found in these classrooms to the East Village here in New York City. In the Dogwood Nursery program, we welcome children ages 18 to 24

months, and provide a beautiful homelike space that is child-centered and nurturing. With curriculum created to meet the development of the growing toddler, with a gentle daily rhythm, small class sizes, and an individualized approach that centers on dignity, respect, and reverence for the developmental stage each child is in. Children and families will not be rushed in their development and learning, but rather offered the experience of a slower pace of life, living in the present, from moment to moment. They will experience their teachers as patient models for imitation, who give them love, attention, and the freedom to learn, move, and explore. They will be nurtured by an environment rich in sensory activities and full of song, and will enjoy wholesome and nutritious foods.

A unique aspect of New Amsterdam's offerings is their close relationship with a neighborhood community garden. The children spend time in the garden daily, experiencing the natural elements throughout the seasons. Being immersed in nature and seeing a garden grow provides an abundance of opportunities for free movement, unrushed exploration, and gentle sensory experiences for the smallest members of our community.

As this classroom establishes, New Amsterdam School will also be looking to grow and support further Infant Classrooms in the coming years, for children ages 12 months to 18 months.

The need for aligned and affordable early childhood programs in our neighborhood is critical; 60% of our enrolled families receive tuition assistance each year. Faced with rising costs and a scarcity of subsidized or sliding-scale programs, many parents are left without viable options for their children. We believe that



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economic status should not inhibit a child's access to a quality education and access to green spaces and nature, which, unfortunately, is often the case. In creating this new program our mission is to create more equitable access to this unique, high quality early childhood experience for all children and families. Diversity and inclusion at early ages is essential to fostering tolerance and acceptance as adults. We envision a program that is truly accessible to all. ♦

Jeannie McGartland is School Director of New Amsterdam School in New York City.