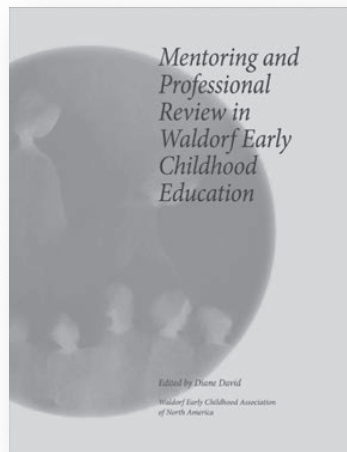


Mentoring and Professional Review in Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Edited by Diane David (WECAN, 2025)

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

The updated edition of *Mentoring and Professional Review in Waldorf Early Childhood Education* is a practical resource for Waldorf educators acting as mentors and professional observers or evaluators. This volume combines two WECAN books originally published in 2007, which considered mentoring and professional observations separately. It is updated and enriched by the editing of Diane David. The wise inclusions from the previous editions are as



relevant as ever and are enriched with three new articles. Articles give guidance on what to look for and how to describe what we see as both accomplishments and areas still developing. There is advice on developing productive conversations that inspire and encourage others in their striving rather than cause the teacher to feel deflated.

Writing a report is an accompanying responsibility for the mentor and evaluator. For a mentored teacher, the report is a

private summary of observations and suggestions. When a school engages an evaluator, an objective, informative report needs to be prepared for the institution. The report aims to describe how the essential qualities of Waldorf early childhood pedagogy, as described in Susan Howard's article "The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education" (included in this volume) and elements of the classroom morning are fulfilled. This is a professional document shared with both the teacher and school that is kept with the teacher's records. It needs to be as objective as possible, free from personal sympathies or antipathies.

Self-development of the educator is an essential in Waldorf education, as this volume emphasizes. The book also contains self-evaluation forms to be completed before the visit. All the questions on the form

are pertinent for the mentor and evaluator as well. Chapters in the volume by Andrea Gambardella ("Self-Education as the Basis for the Art of Mentoring") and Louise deForest ("Mentoring and Evaluating: Similarities and Differences") remind us that we must be working on the same things in our personal and professional life. If we are going to observe others, our "mirrors" must be clear so we can reflect back truthfully. Preparing for the visit can be a prod toward our own self development.

This volume includes practical lists and forms in the appendix, which can photocopied and used with each visit. These are great reminders of what we are looking for and great time savers.

The book opens by speaking about building relationship between one another as an essential calling of our times. Quoting from Diane David's opening words

seems a fitting way to close this short review of *Mentoring and Professional Evaluation*.

"The essence of our human experience is one's relationship with another human being. When a space can be created between two human beings—a point of stillness, where we listen, speak truth, share, and then come to a new or transformed idea—an enlightening and soul-filled experience takes place. And this takes some work."

While there may be checklists at the end of this book, there is nothing systematic about this process. To be a Waldorf early childhood teacher, whether experienced or fresh out of a teacher education institute, we know we must always put the child at the center of our work. Around this child we create an ethic of care, open ourselves to create resonance with another, and act out of responsibility. ♦