

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 69, Fall 2015

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WECAN

WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

This Fall *Gateways* issue we again dedicate to Celebrations of Life and Supporting the Life Sense. There are elements in life we know help support and encourage this “sense of well-being.” These include rhythm, predictability, reduced stimulation from the environment, good nutrition, warmth, contact with the natural world, harmonious relationships with the people around us, and a surrounding mood of optimism and peacefulness. Waldorf education strives to provide this for all our children. And wherever there are children, Waldorf education is called upon to provide encouragement to the child’s seedling life-sense that it is safe and good to be in the world.

Yet here is the paradox. We long for idyllic situations for all children, but our destinies put us in the hardest places—roaring big cities; war-torn countries; situations of poverty, abuse, and neglect; and always, the rush, nervousness, and overstimulation of modern life. The life-sense is threatened both by the lack of nourishment for body and soul and by over-indulgence that saturates but does not satisfy. Dr. Michaela Glöckler has suggested that the children of our time have resolved to incarnate into difficult lives because they knew that Waldorf education would be there to support their life-sense. We have to figure out how to do this in even the least likely, least desirable, least supportive circumstance. The children are depending upon it. So this issue of *Gateways* shares examples of how different teachers have approached these questions through their thoughtfulness, creativity, and ingenuity. We have to work with what we have and figure out how to bring the best of what we can to the children, no matter what our community or geography.

The first article you will read is reprinted from the most recent issue of *Kindling*, the UK Steiner-Waldorf Early Childhood journal and sister publication to *Gateways*. The last issue was dedicated to “Resilience.” The question posed in the issue was, “What makes it possible to bounce back from trauma, disappointment, hardship, abuse and neglect, loss and challenge?” The issue offers many pictures of supporting children so their resilience—and a healthier life sense—can grow. The article featured is “Adopted Children in the Kindergar-

ten” by a parent, India Cante. Her story of how she and her daughters’ Waldorf kindergarten worked together to create a safe place for her traumatized adoptive daughters is very moving and instructive. We will have more and more of these children in our classes in the future. But what struck me as so important to share with *Gateways*’ readers is that the approach of care and consideration offered to these girls is an archetypal reminder of how we would want to approach each and every one of our children. There is hardly any human being walking around today who is not traumatized in some large or small way. All children are hoping to be understood and accepted. Even our healthy, privileged scalawags have brought along some incarnational wrinkles they hope we can help them work with.

Being accepted and respected is essential for all of us. Our parent community is also looking for a healthy life-sense and sense of well-being. West Coast teachers Stephanie Skinner and Helene Brodsky Blake offered a workshop last year at Rudolf Steiner College to explore positive ways to invite parents into Waldorf culture and community. They also compiled a questionnaire which asked of teachers what kinds of interactions were most successfully received by parents. The warm-hearted outreach from these teachers is inspiring, and the suggestions are useful and practical. Included is a craft project they have done with parents that you may want to consider adding into your plans for upcoming parent meetings. What we do to encourage warmth and health with our parent communities supports both the individual and community senses of well-being. Stephanie and Helene’s contribution widens the whole picture of the life-sense for us.

And there are places like Brooklyn, where the Waldorf school stands right on the edge of an “undesirable” neighborhood that provides scenes we would prefer that children not see. But this is where they live. How can a sense of well-being possibly be supported in such an environment? Brooklyn kindergarten teacher Meggan Gill shares with us the picture of their urban reality with its challenges and its unique offerings. There are opportunities to interact with nature everywhere; we just have

to seek them out. The dense urban setting with shops and shopkeepers offers chances for community and relationship that those of us living in more homogeneous suburban settings might envy. I think you may feel this way when you read Meggan's story about her class's visit to the shoe repair man. This article helps us appreciate that there is no single "right way"—there are rather many right ways to present our education that are just different.

In a different setting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, kindergarten teacher Rose Maynard began to question whether her class was too exposed to open space and sky on their weekly nature ramble. Her consideration of the children's experience led to making some adjustments to this outdoor portion of their week. This peek at another kindergarten's possibilities and challenges gives more food for thought.

Helle Heckmann's classic book about her pioneering Copenhagen early childhood program, *Nøkken*, has been republished in a new, expanded format. To give readers a peek at its content, you will find the excerpt, "The Power of Imagination." Here you will find examples of how children's interaction with nature can enrich and expand the children's capacity for imagination. The adult's sensitive response to the children's observations and questions is also critically important, as illustrated by Helle's examples.

In "Awakening Intelligence," Janene Ping shares with us her research and exploration with other mainstream thinkers who acknowledge and work with Social/Emotional intelligences as well as the cognitive domain. She states in her preface that she entered into this study through a WECAN grant to see how our anthroposophical view of the child and these mainstream views connect and perhaps enhance one another. The sense of well-being has emotional and psychological ramifications as well as physiological ones. When the whole human being in body, soul, and spirit is acknowledged and supported in development, the life-sense in its more subtle expressions has a better chance to "hum." Thank you to Janene for the article and for taking a step out into the larger research world on behalf of Waldorf early childhood education. The future is calling for us to become part of this conversation in a bolder and more decisive way.

One of the ways the life sense is supported is through meaningful rhythmic events that repeat through time. This helps the human being, and espe-

cially the young child, have confidence that there is some predictability in life and that some things can always be depended upon. We see how our children love the rhythm of our days and weeks. The bigger expression of this rhythmic flow in time is the festivals we celebrate. An article by former *Gateways* editor, Stephan Spitalny, calls our thinking to task on a subtle but terribly important question about festivals. An online conversation last fall around Martinmas prompted him to compose this article about "The Question of Saints" in the kindergarten. Steve's contributions as a kindergarten teacher are marked by his insistence on being true to the essential archetype which stands behind each experience we bring to the children. Whether Saint Martin or the mention of any saint belongs in our kindergartens is a question he considers. Prepare yourself to perhaps be challenged about some familiar practices. We have to think our way through whether we are celebrating archetypal universality or tradition in our festival life. For our celebrations to deeply nourish the life-sense, the images must be true.

Though Waldorf education came initially to the US in the late 1930s, Waldorf early childhood as we know it today really began to burgeon in the early seventies with many intrepid teachers we know by name if not by reputation. Many of these courageous souls are reaching the threshold of retirement (whatever that might mean to a Waldorf teacher). *Gateways* wishes to reflect upon and honor these North American Waldorf pioneers. It is helpful to learn what has happened over the past decades to bring us to where we are as an educational movement. The treat you have in store this issue is an interview with Joan Almon, in which Joan reflects on the pioneering necessities of the early years and the remarkable accomplishments that now benefit us. She also challenges us to think about "What's next?" for children, for Waldorf education, and for our relationships with the mainstream world and other expressions of Waldorf education. Joan's thinking is big, wide, and inclusive. Her example is inspiring—as well as full of lots of fun.

For the Classroom includes a reprint of Steve Spitalny's lantern story from *Tell Me A Story*. In his article he speaks of stories that include archetypal images rather than specifics. This story gives us a good example of what that means. There are also movement vignettes to weave into circle times. These

were shared by kindergarten teachers Linc Kinnicutt, Jennie Salyer, and Gergana Minkova during a professional deepening course where participants wrote movement imaginations to support specific sensory aspects of incarnational development. We hope you and the children will have fun with these.

A new feature is a page about Resources. WECAN is now sending out an electronic digest of "Research, Studies, and Articles of Interest to Waldorf Early Childhood Educators." We thought it could be helpful to have the topics listed from the digest in our issues of *Gateways* as well as electronically. This page will also remind our readers of what is posted on the WECAN website as Resources for Teachers and Parents. WECAN colleagues have been submitting research that is too long for *Gateways* publication but which stand as very helpful resources for us to explain and validate from mainstream perspectives what we do. More about that will come in the Spring issue.

The theme for the Spring issue is one that is challenging, but is knocking loudly at our door—questions of gender. We have been giving consideration to the needs of boys. What is boy-ness? Is it biological, neurological, or fed by societal expectation? How do we help boys grow well and not be mad at them because they don't act like girls? What is girl-ness? The same questions apply but with the counter consideration of how can we encourage girls to be confident and assertive without being like boys? Added is the great mystery confronting us of transgender children. What is biology? What is "gender" anyway? What is destiny? What is individuality, in ways we may have never considered before? As you can see, the field is wide open for contributions of your questions, experiences, insights, enlightening research, successes and challenges. Submission deadline for the Spring issue is January 15. Please let us hear from you on this topic and any other topics you are eager for *Gateways* to explore. ♦

FOCUS: Celebrations of Life II

Adopted Children in the Kindergarten: My experience as an adoptive parent

— India Cante

Since the age of seven I have known that the path to parenthood and being united with my soul family would be through adoption. I have talked about adoption my whole life. I met my beautiful husband in Australia and after just three days together we were talking about our future family. He revealed that he too had the same feelings since childhood and knew his children would be adopted. Exactly fourteen years later, we met our little girls for the first time. Our two beautiful adopted daughters started kindergarten last September aged three-and-a-half and (just) five years old. At that time I had only been their mummy for a year.

Deciding to introduce our children to a new social environment was a big step for my husband and me, with a number of factors pulling us towards

making the decision. While we had originally wanted to keep the girls at home for at least two years, it became clear that the older child really needed the companionship of other children. Also, after nine months at home my husband needed to return to work and I knew I would need some help to offer the girls the most nurturing environment I could. Additionally the legal aspects of adoption take time, and as we still don't yet have full parental control, the state puts pressure on the parents for a five-year-old child to attend school. Thank goodness we knew about the Waldorf/Steiner kindergartens, as I know that a regular school simply wouldn't be able to provide the stage-appropriate care that our adopted children need. At a kindergarten open day, the wise words of a teacher to "keep the girls together" (they

had been each others' only consistent attachment figure) helped our decision. We then met their teacher and we knew we were making the right choice.

As I share our experiences I will keep names and places private. I must protect my children's dignity at all times. One day when they are young adults they may read this article. I want them to know that I try to write with grace and deep respect for their privacy. With this in mind I would like to share with you a poem I wrote to express how terrifying I felt their early lives had been. I can't go into the specific details of my children's past experiences but I believe the poem will give you a taste of their courage.

GooGooGagaa-Guantanamo Bay

*Hush little baby no one will hear you in your cell
Swallow your tears who can you tell
Orange playsuit is shackled with bile
Nappy lays sodden on cold unwanted tile*

*The hunger strike is held by another
Relief of warm food comes not from your mother
Sleep deprivation is a daily routine
Drugged up milk your only canteen*

*That noise that drives right through your ear
Reeks a melody pitched only with fear
Rocking comes not from a cradle pushed
gently by hand
But from knees clenched in motion your
heart beat so bland*

*Who will drive your campaign for freedom
This toddler life of doomed teardom
Candles not lit when your second birthday comes
League of empty kitchen pans are desperation drums*

*Captors drive you away again
The pick up van of guilt and shame
From cell to cell your transport drops
Till finally you hear the word adopt*

*The sentence so cruel has been given a pardon
At last you can play in life's wild garden
Smell the fresh air and breathe out the stain
Know here in safety you will remain*

My poem ends with the word "safety" in the last line. I would like to share my thoughts about the feeling

of "safety" for adopted children. Kind people often say to me that what children need is love. I am often told that the love I am giving is a true example of "un-conditional love." These remarks really made me think about love. I needed to break this down as what my experience has taught me is that there certainly are conditions to love. Steiner said "Love is wanting to do that of which one has gained an understanding." What happens when a child's past experience of love includes gut-wrenching experiences, which introduce a pattern to the child that the meaning of love is being abused and abandoned? If this is the condition by which love has been experienced how do we offer the child healthy love? The first thing I realized was that the initial love I needed to offer was the safety of love. Feeling safe is the key to supporting adopted children at kindergarten as they will have massive attachment issues. Adopted children really know what it is to feel unsafe and terrified. It is within the core of their experience. As a result of their past experiences their brain development suffers. The pathways of safe attachment don't form. The healing work we do needs to give the brain a different path to travel down so that the safety of love can be felt through body, mind and spirit. It is my opinion and experience that the first step with helping a child to feel safe and experience non-abusive love is attachment.

Understanding attachment issues with adopted children

It's a hard task for parents to hand over the care of their child to the teacher. Regular children will be attached to their parents, a process the teachers understand very well. But with adopted children who enter kindergarten they are often not attached to any adult yet. It is understood that initial attachment between an adopted child and his or her new parent takes at least two years. One way of looking at this is to realize that children need at least two of every season for the senses to register that they are now with the same parent and will stay in the same home.

Children who are adopted from the UK have been removed from their birth family because it is in the best interest for the wellbeing of the child. Most adopted children will have experienced abandonment, and the vast majority have experienced neglect, abuse, and hardships of unimaginable magnitude. This forms a vast contrast to the experiences of the majority of

children who enter the caring and compassionate world of kindergarten. Often multiple placements in emergency care and foster families mean that these children are left with a barrier to being attached. While as grownups we understand that emergency care and foster placements are a necessary process, the children see this through their fragile young eyes. However kind and supportive the carers are, from the children's perspective these temporary carers will abandon them as they are moved from placement to placement. The final move into an adopted home is terrifying for adopted children, as they expect the parents to leave them.

For our children we were their fifth placement into a new family, with my youngest only two years of age. Can you imagine how terrifying this must have been for them? Their precious little brains have been thrown into negative extremes from within the womb where the neglect began. As a result of their early years of trauma they have both had to develop severely unhealthy survival modes to cope with the huge amounts of stress in their system. My girls have opposite survival modes. One will go straight into fight or flight, and the other will freeze, completely silent and still. Both responses mean that a seriously harmful amount of stress hormones is flooding their systems.

Understanding these survival modes — “fight, flight or freeze” — and how they reveal themselves within the kindergarten environment was the first task at hand. The behavior may look similar to that of other children, but there is a massive difference in the building blocks that regular kids are standing on, versus the fragile and sometimes non-existent sponge-like blocks that adopted children wobble and collapse upon. Their foundation was built in terror and trauma, not the loving guidance of a consistent caregiver, and this paints a stain upon every path of development.

Let me give you some examples of how the survival modes challenged my children and how their loving teacher set about making a play plan to help them settle.

Transition to story time

Transitions are particularly hard for my older girl. Remember that these children have had multiple carers, all of whom (in the child's eyes) have abandoned them. So a simple move from outside play to

the outside storytelling place under a tree is a challenge for her. As the teacher sings a song to indicate that story time will begin, my daughter starts to hide, run, climb up a tree. She is in flight survival mode. Her feeling of “safety” has been taken away and now an unpredictable moment has triggered her fear center. She is being moved again, and so post-traumatic stress is hijacking her brain as her stress hormones pump up her tiny body and get ready to switch into survival mode. Her body feels under attack. As she dashes about pulling away from the teacher's hand and runs behind a tree to hide, her “flight” mode is in full swing. Consider how, without the knowledge I am sharing here and the thinking behind the behavior, this could easily look like any other child testing out the boundaries. In a way she is testing, but the test is about terror (feeling very unsafe), not the normal test of limitations.

So how can we help her to feel safe? It is all about making adopted children feel safe through predictable behavior patterns. This is what was put in place:

Before story time the teacher would prepare my child for the transition. Firstly a verbal indication; it is often necessary to be verbally explicit with adopted children as unlike other children within your kindergarten care, adopted children aren't expecting something nice and safe such as a story to happen next. Their past experiences teach them that something unsafe may happen. Therefore, they need a plan of action. First, to calm her stress hormones, my daughter needed to hang off something such as a tree, which helped to release some of the stress hormones that had been building up since the post-traumatic stress was triggered. Then the teacher gave her a little job before story time or something to hold during story time. Lastly, the teacher made sure that she was seated near to her to feel safe. By the fifth week of this type of care she was able to transition into story time without all of the added support. Her body had started to learn that story time was a safe and predictable experience. This was a massive step for her and a great achievement for the teacher and assistants.

Holding hands: being close to teachers and other children

For adopted children there is often an intimacy barrier. Something as natural as holding the hand of a teacher can trigger survival mode. In my daughter's case, “fight” mode (pulling the hand very hard) and

“flight” mode (pulling other children into the circle and trying to “fly,” get away from the situation of circle-time) resulted in disrupting the play. If we look through her eyes, she feels unsafe. She is being asked to hold the hand of an unpredictable stranger (her teacher or a child). What if this hand harms her, as her past experiences have taught her? Also, why should she trust this hand and allow the person to get close to her if — like every other grownup or child in her life — the person will just abandon her when she is forced to move on again (abandonment issues)? She is sensing a threat. Now her stress hormones flood her body. This flooding of the stress hormones would have been a regular pattern of experience in times of terror (feeling unsafe) — a very familiar pattern that’s hard to break. So how does the teacher help her to feel safe enough to join circle time?

One of the first things that can help reduce these “survival” reactions is by helping the body senses to be calm before the challenge of hand-holding arises. Prevention, rather than cure. Things like making sure she isn’t hungry or needs the toilet prior to this challenge are very important. Hunger and personal hygiene issues can trigger post-traumatic stress, so must be cared for with great attention to detail. Making sure she has had some upper body regulation, such as hanging off a tree or pushing something heavy such as a wheelbarrow, reduces the stress hormones). Also on occasion baby talk can help, as this appeals to the stage the brain has regressed to and can be soothing. The trauma happened when she was a baby and toddler, so in times of stress she regresses to that age stage and her brain responds well to actions that appeal to the younger brain. Leading her into the task by telling her whose hand she will be holding (normally the teacher’s until she settles) really helped. The last ingredient is the patience to let her allow this experience to be repeated until she learns it is another safe and predictable kindergarten experience. Now circle time is a joyful experience where she is able to feel in her little body. Her teacher tells me that my daughter loves to add on her own little moves here and there. How wonderful that she now feels safe enough to explore.

The relationship between the school, teacher, and adopted child’s parents

I am fortunate that I now have complete faith and trust in my children’s wonderful kindergarten teach-

er. In our house we call her a wise owl. But looking back to the early days I now realize that when I first met her I was in a very stressful place. I found it too hard to convey all of the fear I had about the girls settling at kindergarten. I had only been a mummy for a year and now I had to trust the healing of my girls’ trauma to someone I didn’t know. I didn’t even trust myself to get things right, so how could I trust another person? I also had moments when the transference of trauma and pain from my child to me was overwhelming and would make me react in an aggressive and completely unregulated way. I have never experienced such feelings or actions in my life and so this new and unwanted side of me really scared me. I was very worried that something might happen at school. I worked very hard at appearing in control, which means that I couldn’t really reveal how I was feeling. The transference from my child to me is called secondary trauma. Both my husband and I have experienced high levels of this secondary trauma. Secondary Trauma is a term used to describe the high levels of stress experienced by the adoptive parents (or caregivers) of a traumatized child. The term explains that the empathy needed to parent such a child produces psychological changes as though the parents/caregivers themselves have been exposed to the trauma. For example, brain function changes, parents can become less articulate, less emotionally literate, easily agitated, more angry, aggressive, and despairing.

The caring teacher listened to my every word and together we spoke with social workers and trauma experts to be as prepared as we could. We had mini meetings whenever possible and emails flowing back and forth. The teacher gave her complete dedication to the task at hand, but we were somewhat alone with our monumental challenge. While the school was very helpful and did all they could to help, they didn’t have any adoption policy or insights in place (something I would very much like to introduce to Waldorf schools). The lack of this policy and past experiences meant that the teacher and I would have to address issues as they came up. This creates a lot of additional thought and work at a time when stress levels are already very high. It would have been so helpful if we could have contacted other adoptive families and teachers within the Waldorf/Steiner community for insight and support, but adoptive families are rare. I do so hope that over time we can

encourage teachers and adopted families to share information in a confidential and appropriate way that may benefit others. If you have any experiences with adopted children perhaps you could get in touch with me and we could start a support network.

The last word must be about my girls. Their courage and grace is what continually inspires us to help them live their lives feeling a little bit safer every day. I am delighted to share with you that they are now able to experience joy that is free of fear at kindergarten. The future will bring challenges that are different from that of other families. However, when I reflect

upon the friendships both they and we have made and think about the multiple healing experiences that kindergarten offers, it lights up and settles my soul. I truly believe that every adopted child would benefit from a Waldorf education and will strive to use my voice to raise awareness of the school and its healing work. I can't thank their teacher and classroom assistants enough for showing my girls how to shine their little lights brightly. ♦

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Inviting Parents into Our Work and Play

— Stephanie Skinner and Hellene S. Brodsky Blake

*“A healthy social life is found only when in
the mirror of each soul the whole community
finds its reflection, and when in the whole
community the virtue of each one is living.”*

- Rudolf Steiner

Through the Garden Gate We Go, Working Together We Learn and Grow

Early childhood programs, be they in our homes or nestled within our schools, offer for many parents a first experience of the principles and practices of Waldorf education. These values are found living in the school community, a community to which most early childhood families are or have been brand new. In this way, early childhood teachers and programs play a unique role in their communities, as we are the gateway that opens to welcome new families, introduce them to Waldorf education, and invites them to become an intimate part of the school community. Our relationships with new parents and families establish an essential foundation for the years to follow.

We have found that, with this foundational relationship in mind, creating opportunities for parents to actively experience and discover for themselves the vital underpinnings of Waldorf Education is

invaluable. Inviting parents to participate and experience hands-on learning, while concomitantly sharing pedagogy, instills in the parent body a deeper security, investment, understanding, and commitment to Waldorf education. In order to enliven and deepen the commitment to working with parents that already exists in our early childhood programs, we facilitated a workshop at the National Early Childhood Symposium held in November of 2015 at Rudolf Steiner College, the results of which are found in this article.

Working with Our Hands, Hearts and Heads

The workshop started with handwork and crafting. For this workshop, we chose a project that, if used at a parent evening, would allow parents to make something they can use to bring beauty and reverence in their own home while at the same time experiencing

the kind of handwork their own children might be doing. Engage the will (hands) first by cutting rounds and sanding. Then the feeling (heart) realm is enlivened by working with copper (a warming, healing metal). Finally the thinking (head) is engaged as you select and create a pattern in the copper. This same idea of “hands to heart to head” is found as a guiding pedagogical principle throughout Waldorf education. We see this exemplified here in this particular craft project, and also in general when we bring parents into our classrooms or play yards to work; they learn by doing, which creates then a feeling and, then later we reflect on our experiences and what they might mean for our own lives. (Instructions for this craft can be found following the article.)

Collaboration and Co-creation: A Living Workshop

Together we gathered with twenty-five Waldorf teachers from across the nation, from early childhood programs in public and private Waldorf schools as well as home programs. They joined for a workshop that was described in conference materials as a “workshop that will explore the role of early childhood program as the gateway to Waldorf education and culture. We will share community building activities for parents, and make a copper and wood candle holder, perfect for a parent meeting.”

In the spirit of our times, in which we find that we learn best through experience and self-discovery, the workshop was in itself collaboratively co-created using an approach known as the World Cafe. This process allows wisdom to emerge from the group rather than directly and solely from the instructor. Often times through this process, both the facilitator and the participants garner new concepts, ideas and imaginations. Through World Cafe there is a propensity to assimilate these discoveries as their

“It’s never enough just to tell people about some new insight. Rather, you have to get them to experience it in a way that evokes its power and possibility. Instead of pouring knowledge into people’s heads, you need to help them grind a new set of eyeglasses so they can see the world in a new way.”

*- John Seely Brown,
A New Culture of Learning*

own. This results in a deepening commitment of the tenants of the topic at hand, the school community or other working group. It’s a wonderful way to work with parents at a parent night! We encourage you to learn more, and to try this model on your own.

For further details on World Cafe, including a description of how to lead one, visit www.theworldcafe.com.

Through the World Cafe, workshop participants actively shared the seasonal community building activities their school and individual classes or programs offer. We emphasized the role of the parents and teachers as being one of great responsibility, as we know that the child is, through imitation, modeling herself out of the outer deeds

and inner attitudes of the adults. Seeing parents and teachers work together is a wonderful and potent model for young children to take into their work and play, and into their whole being.

What kinds of things are we doing with parents in our classrooms around the year? Here are some of the ideas that were shared during the workshop when participants were asked what events and opportunities have been most successful. We hope you find inspiration! And, if you have any hesitations about bringing parents into the classroom or on to the play yard (we know it can be extra work!), we encourage you to give it a try. A day spent in the classroom can be eye-opening for parents, as they learn so much from observing us with the children, and are enlivened just as the children are through purposeful work and play.

- **SUMMER:** Home visits; craft groups; making “Little Ones”, birthday gifts, and classroom

supplies; work parties; picnics; nature walks; baking groups; preparing the classroom

- **FALL:** Lantern making in the classroom; making applesauce or jam together, and canning it for the winter; Harvest Fair and other festivals of the fall (Festival of Courage, Enchanted Walk...); parents carving pumpkins and roasting seeds in class
- **WINTER:** Book groups, craft groups; parent teas on the weekend; wet felting craft; potlucks and special presentations; holiday evening with a sharing of traditions and foods
- **SPRING:** Spring cleaning inside and out (many hands make light work!); end of year ceremonies and celebrations; working in the garden together
- **ALL YEAR ROUND:** Weekly hiking or walk days, with parent volunteers; monthly trips to the community garden; seasonal hikes to the same place in nature; an outdoor morning circle for parents and children, at the start of the kindergarten day; inviting parents for story, with an open door policy; having a parent volunteer or two to be “handy people” who come in when you need tricky repairs done; sharing of seasonal songs via CD or audio recording of some kind; inviting parents to share a project, such as woodworking, weaving, or sewing; birthday celebrations; inviting in, one at a time, each and every parent or family to spend all or part of a day, as a routine practice

Participants also discussed how they believe the values and principles of Waldorf Education are established in their community, and created a parent survey meant to shed new light on our work by including the parent perspective.

Parent Participation, Reflection and Response

The survey was sent to parents across the country from a wide variety of schools and programs which included private and public Waldorf schools and home programs. It is our hope that the responses will help us to more effectively create meaningful opportunities for parents to build community while also learning and transforming their own lives.

Which of the following community events have you found most meaningful and effective for building community at your school or program? Choose all that apply:

Work Parties.	32%
Parent or Class Meetings.	69%
Guest Lectures or Speakers.	31%
Festivals.	76%
Community Picnics	32%
Volunteering in Classroom.	36%
Crafting Groups /Making Little Ones	38%

Which of the following areas of your parenting approach or home life have been influenced by Waldorf Education?

Media use; media mindfulness	90%
Routine/rhythm in the home.	83%
Children's health.	47%
Overall understanding of child development	82%
Nutrition	42%
Understanding of First Grade Readiness.	41%
Spirituality or religion	20%
Festivals, celebrations	61%
Activities outside of school	27%

To which of the following experiences do you attribute these changes?

Parent nights, parent meetings.	66%
Articles, links, and other resources	82%
Parent-teacher conferences	65%
Work parties	10%
Festivals.	43%
Birthday Celebrations	27%
Time spent volunteering in the classroom	37%
Learning from other parents	50%
Class picnics.	11%

Overall results overwhelmingly suggest that festivals, parent meetings, and class meetings are essential opportunities for supporting the bridge between home and school and the creation of a healthy school community. Further results indicate that through these opportunities for social interactions, changes in home rhythms, media usage, and understanding child development are enhanced and more aligned with school expectations, values and policies. The experiential opportunities for parents, whether

“The model of community we seek is one that can embrace, guide, and refine the core mission of education—the mission of knowing, teaching, and learning... To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced.”

*- Parker J. Palmer,
The Courage to Teach*

seeking community, guidance, support and a deeper meaning and understanding in education. Parents often experience fear when they are left wondering about the whys, hows, meanings, and spiritual foundations of Waldorf education. Waldorf schools share a responsibility to provide this avenue of education beyond the child. Full inclusion of the parent and adult body is essential for the full health of not only the child, yet the school community.

Our survey results reflected over 100 participants from a variety of Waldorf settings. The findings further support the importance of community extending beyond the classroom. Festivals, interactions with teachers, salient articles, and meaningful work exemplify the foundation of a healthy collaborative relationship between teacher and parent. It is suggested that further data collection include a larger sample size across our parent bodies. Whether the child is within a private, public or homeschool setting, Waldorf education is needed more than ever as an antidote for our insta-paced, movement-less, media-saturated world.

We encourage you to expand your horizons with your parent body and share with us your experiences. Know that you are not alone as a teacher, as

with a teacher or other parents, are enhanced by articles and the sharing of current research and data.

Parting Thoughts

In summary, this living workshop on cultivating and creating community proved to be a rich resource for the deepening of our relationships to our parent bodies. Our collaborative work as teachers and parents is imperative on behalf of the health and well being of the children and the families of today. Parents are

parents desire to be in the classroom, too. We urge you to place renewed value on parent involvement, participation, and input as a means of building the healthy fabric of your community. There is an interdependence, be it healthy or unhealthy, that lives in, around and between us and our students and your families. Our work is to remove hindrances from not only the children, but also from the parents and within ourselves in order to be truly free.

What successes have you had in bringing parents into the work and play of your children's garden? How has this affected individual parents? How has this affected your community? We would love to hear from you and share your successes. Please email us! ♦

“Trust and confidence between parents and teachers is the foundation for success in the classroom. It is so important one can rightly call it the ‘second classroom.’ ”

*- Torin Finser,
A Second Classroom*

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Copper Candle Holder Craft



Directions:

- Begin by sanding the wood rounds until they are smooth. Set them aside.
- Cut the copper into a rectangle that is roughly 8 inches tall, give or take, and wide enough to wrap halfway around the wood round. Round the top edges and corners to create a pleasing shape.
- Choose a tin punch pattern from the collection you have gathered online. (You may draw your own, however, it is much easier to create exact patterns using a premade pattern. It is also a “stress free” way for parents who are less artistic to dive right in.)
- Tape the pattern onto the copper sheet, and lay it down on top of thick newspaper, a magazine, or cardboard.
- Begin punching holes by gently pressing a large nail or thumb tack through the holes. You can use a hammer if needed.
- Once completed, un-tape the pattern, and wrap the copper around the wood round, with nailing it in gently with tiny nails; go slowly, and try not to wrinkle the copper
- Roll candles so that they are slightly shorter than the copper itself
- Insert the candles into the pre-drilled hole

Materials:

- Wood rounds, roughly 5 to 7 inches across, 1 to 2 inches thick; the rounds should also have a candle-sized hole drilled into the center, about halfway down into the wood, where the candle will be placed. (You can do the holes or have the parents use hand drills.)
- Sandpaper
- Copper sheets, 36 gauge; available at craft stores like Hobby Lobby
- Small nails and/or thumbtacks
- Hammers
- Tin-punch patterns; you can find them online or get patterns at a craft store
- Masking tape, to tape patterns on to the copper
- Newspapers or magazines, for use under the copper while punching the designs
- Candle wick, square braid
- Sheets of beeswax for rolling candles
- Small boxes of matches; it can be a nice touch to give small boxes of matches that you have decorated to the parents to take home with their new candle

A favorite source for candle wick and wax:

Ruhl Bee Supply

17845 SE 82nd Drive
Gladstone, OR 97027

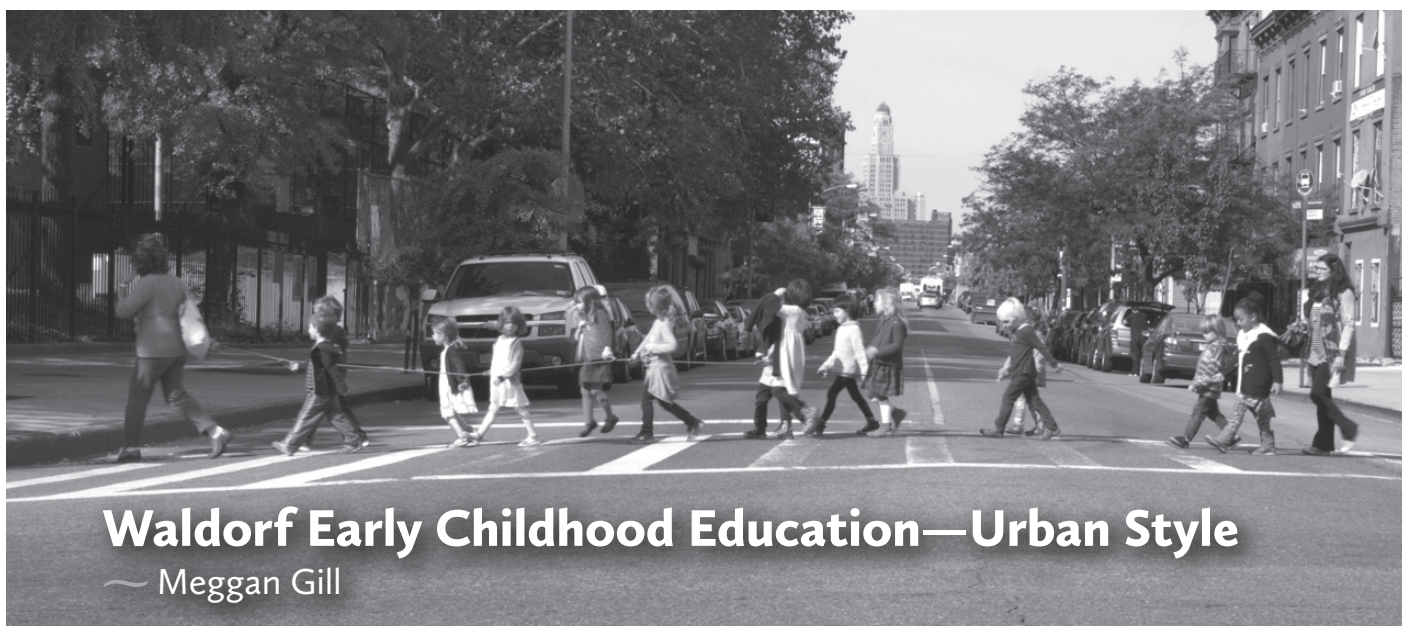


Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Waldorf School

Waldorf Early Childhood Education—Urban Style

— Meggan Gill

Waldorf schools.

These words ignite imaginations of beautiful classrooms, gentle teachers, and outdoor fields and gardens. Waldorf families are typically striving to guard their children against the ills of society that come in the form of materialism, commercialism, over-stimulating environments, and over-scheduled lives. The young children are invited to wake slowly to consciousness, coaxed by their natural development, the soft spoken adults and the wonder of nature around them. Waldorf teachers will go to great lengths to prepare the space for the children: lazuring the walls with natural pigments, making toys by hand, and wearing naturally made, thoughtfully chosen clothing. They go to sleep and rise early to meditate and review the story that they've memorized word for word. Waldorf parents are most likely serving on multiple committees, striving at the heels of their dedicated teacher, feeling guilt if everything isn't made from scratch or if at some moment they buckled under the pressure and let their child watch a movie. They squeeze school events into their busy mainstream lives, jobs and families. Everything, and I mean everything, is carefully considered in this thoughtfully prepared environment.

For many years, I worked in a rural school with six lovely acres on the edge of a small city, endowed with a small forest area, an open field, rich soil, and historic buildings. We went out our front door to the "apple garden" freely and with

ease—this play area was just for the kindergartens. If we ventured out the other door, we could visit and feed the neighbor's horses or tromp over to the ripening blackberry patch. At Michaelmas, a real horse carried St. George into the field; at the Advent Spiral, a parent hosted us in the open air barn while another played the harp; and May Faire was an idyllic picture of nature in bloom. It is, and remains, the picture that most people have come to relate to as a "Waldorf School" and shows why many families will relocate to experience this.

What about the urban Waldorf school? If you've been to New York City, you may wonder: How could you possibly keep children guarded from commercialism and media or provide them with an authentic nature experience? Isn't it noisy, dirty and fast? Isn't that the opposite of what Waldorf says is best for children? Where do they play, run, climb trees? What sorts of children and families come to this school? What are "city kids" like? Is it not in fact, an oxymoron to have an Urban Waldorf School? "I thought Waldorf Schools were about being natural," people ask me. I have a good idea of why people think that. We've been defined by our own web sites, our own conversations, our own views. So, while I understand the value and beauty of the bucolic life, I have really come to appreciate the qualities of the city and what city children teach me. And this is what I want to share with you.

I had the fine fortune of studying with Ann Stahl, one of our oldest and wisest teachers still working in

our midst. She asked us soon-to-be teachers: What is, in fact, the definition of a Waldorf School? Is it the crayons, the walls, the songs? Or rather, is it the teacher, the striving, the intentions that the children are imitating?

"We are, after all, dealing with what will live in the future, not in the present generation ... In us has to live what only the following generations will bring to outer manifestation. Something of prophetic becoming one with the future development of humanity has to live in us." These are words spoken by Rudolf Steiner at the opening ceremonies of the first school in the city of Stuttgart, Germany in 1919.

In Brooklyn, on the way to and from school, young children navigate a variety of loud sounds, the presence of strangers, and countless images. Sometimes, they walk to school or get a "car service," but more often they take the subway train or metro bus. On weekends and short vacations our children enjoy their upstate country homes, and on longer breaks travel the world, Europe, or the Cayman Islands. They know about the twin towers, what googleplex is, and the dangers of drinking the tap water. The lives of our children's parents are not typically marked by clocking into Monday-to-Friday jobs, affording a steady schedule and paycheck. Instead our parent body consists primarily of writers, actors, musicians, artists, filmmakers, financiers, and lawyers, working project to project, ambition to ambition. Also, with ours being one of many private schools that New Yorkers can choose from, most people do their due diligence in regards to a Waldorf school's stance on media and have already made these choices for their own life and health even before having children. So, while many of them work in media, many have TV-free homes.

As with many Waldorf schools, our large, brick building, also known as the "castle," is an oasis. We have rainbow colored walls; dedicated, inspired teachers; and beeswax crayons. We have rooftop beehives, a developing postage-stamp-sized play yard and garden terraces on each corner of the building. We've gone to every extent possible to ensure the quality of the air, water and any other material to make sure it's as hazard-free as possible, even though our neighborhood has been historically referred to as the "lead belt." Our classrooms, in fact our whole building, has been laboriously transformed on the inside to look more like a Waldorf school and less like

the Catholic school it was for many years, which had stood empty and minimally cared for over 25 years. True to the footprint of most New York buildings, our classrooms are small, and every bit of storage space is thoughtfully used, no hoarding allowed. When I have a visitor or a parent in the classroom, I have to instruct them to move to different parts of the room during different activities. We also spend a bit of time daily rearranging our furniture to provide for more movement space and have designed cleverly configured tables to allow for different activities.

Our daily nature walk consists of crossing intersections and playing in a community playground where three or four other neighborhood schools and daycares frequently come. There are climbing structures and cement but also a rim of grass with seasonal wildflowers and tall ginkgo trees. The children are happy to collect bottle caps and lost hair beads, which they lovingly call "treasures" and leave in the gnome homes decorated with a few dandelions, sticks, and the coveted random piece of plastic.

Around our school live community members, primarily of Afro-Caribbean descent, and a growing number of gentrifying young hipsters, living inexpensively in order to attend the local, prestigious art college. On any given day, we see some people who are on drugs and/or mentally disabled, trudging along talking to themselves or just standing in utter stasis. We pass the needle exchange bus parked outside the church and religious altruists passing out literature. We hear a variety of loud emergency sirens, car alarms, pumping stereos, and personal squabbles on the street corners. We walk past construction sites, condemned buildings and trash bags that line the street curb. Sometimes we even see a rat scurry out or step in some dog poop.

When the children in my class are big enough and ready, I take my kindergartners on the subway train most Fridays to our local, 526-acre city park. Here we bask in the comfort of tall trees, watching autumn turn leaves from green to gold and red. In the winter, we have the place to ourselves. Then we spend time throwing chunks of ice into the lake, "skating" on frozen-over fields, and then drink tea from a thermos while we watch the ducks that also stayed for the winter. Boldly comes the New York springtime with a plethora of blossoms, covering the ground and the trees. The squirrels offer us plenty of entertainment as we hike to the big field where we spend the day

watching the clouds pass overhead. Then it's time to head back. Pulling them along on our rope-train, I feel the tangible weight of the city on the children come again with the subway platform, the cement under our feet, the street corners, and the rush of the city. It's a long day, but oh, so worth it.

I find that I LOVE working in an urban school. Why?

One of the biggest surprises that I've had moving to the city is that being around so many people brings the children a beautiful sense of belonging. We know our neighbors, young and old, and of many, many races. We greet our crossing guards, our cobblers opening shops, building superintendents sweeping the sidewalks, and construction workers who are already at work for the day. These are real people engaged in real work, and it is through watching their activity that we understand the world. For example, in New York, where we primarily walk everywhere, people must re-sole their shoes frequently. This past winter my class was doing a circle about a cobbler and all the (Brooklyn) townspeople whom he would help. So we went one morning into our local cobbler's shop, "Magic Joe's," owned by an older Jewish man who had been resoling my shoes for a long time. We burst into his store bringing tea and homemade bread, sang our songs and danced our dance for him. He was so touched that we made this connection that he asked me if he could give something in return to the children. A few days later we returned and he gave each of the children a clementine and a very warm thank you. Here, nature isn't handed to us. We have to cultivate our human nature and good will to create opportunities for the children to experience life in its purest form.

In regards to relating to the earth, its creatures, and the cycle of life, I have found again to my surprise, that the children, at least in our community, are very sensitive and observant. An unexpected benefit of having small indoor spaces and public transportation is that the children, as part of their lifestyle, are outside—walking, climbing many stairs and frequenting our abundant parks. They experience themselves in regards to the changing weather



Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Waldorf School

and develop their will forces to fully dress in winter clothes, learn when to shed them, hydrate when hot, and rest when they are tired. A daffodil, a snowflake, a bird's nest, a clap of thunder, or a sweaty, hot day are noticeable and perhaps leave an impression of natural processes against the backdrop of sidewalks, bricks and bustle that suburban children may take for granted. Once, while walking along our street and singing a classic song you may know, written by a famous folk singer who happened to be a grandparent at our school, a child looked up and said, "There it is!" Sure, enough! A mother mourning dove was "nesting in the branch on the tree and the tree in a hole and the hole in the ground, and the green grass grew all around, all around! And the green grass grew all around!" Magic.

It is true that our city children tend towards the nerve-sense/intellectually-awakened spectrum of development. You likely know what these children are like in your own classes; we just have more of them. To respond to this, we, as teachers, must find ways not to diminish their experience or feel pity for the children because of the demands of their environment. We have to be creative about how we offer them opportunities to breathe, to feel secure in themselves and their bodies, to experience variety in movement, and to encourage rhythm in and out of the classroom. This requires us to examine closely who they are, what their home lives are like and to bring acceptance and balance to those qualities. It means that the children speak and are spoken



to more than most Waldorf early childhood teachers would prefer, and we have to find ways to meet them in that, softening their experience with our ability to truly listen to them and lovingly guide their parents as well. It means that sometimes they have changes in their home rhythm because a parent is on Broadway or traveling to Europe or staying in a hotel while HBO is using their house for filming. It's our job to create rhythm, predictability, and a classroom culture filled with kindness and clear expectations. While we cannot grow wheat and thresh it, we can make butter and bring the buttermilk to the dog who "works" in the parking garage across the street. While we can't always control the influence of the people we meet each day, we can make Valentine's cards for the public school crossing guard, "Ms. Chichi," who diligently helps us cross the busy intersection. We look for things we can do; we focus on what's good.

I have learned that an urban Waldorf early childhood program is not essentially different than what is found in other Waldorf Schools. We are all striving to provide the same essentials for the children's healthy development. No matter where we are or how much nature surrounds our school or who are the families that come—we are all striving to see and meet the children. We are all doing to our best to be creative with the space that we have, the dynamics and skills of our faculty and the challenges of our times. I think often of an excerpt from *What Is Waldorf Education? Three Lectures by Ru-*

dolf Steiner (SteinerBooks, 2004):
 "The possibility was granted to us to place what was to become the first Waldorf school in a city, in the very life of a city. There was no question of first insisting on the right outer conditions for the school. What mattered was to achieve what had to be achieved through the principles and methods of our education under [the] given circumstances."

I feel fortunate to be working in an urban school with colleagues who inspire me in their creativity, bravery and ingenuity. Together we meet the future, the future being created before our very humble eyes.

Our welcome is always extended and our door is always open to colleagues from afar who would like to experience our urban Waldorf life.

I leave you with our one of our Faculty Verses:

*Have courage for
 the truth. Sharpen
 thy feeling for
 responsibility of
 soul. Imbue thyself
 with the power
 of imagination.*

- Rudolf Steiner

Meggan Gill is currently a lead kindergarten teacher at the Brooklyn Waldorf School. She moved to New York City six years ago from Olympia, WA, where she began her work at the Olympia Waldorf School in 1997. Her interest in how to address the needs of urban children with Waldorf Education has been a main theme for her since she began her teacher training at Sunbridge Institute in 2008.

Expansion and Contraction: From the Big Sky to the Forest

Rose Maynard

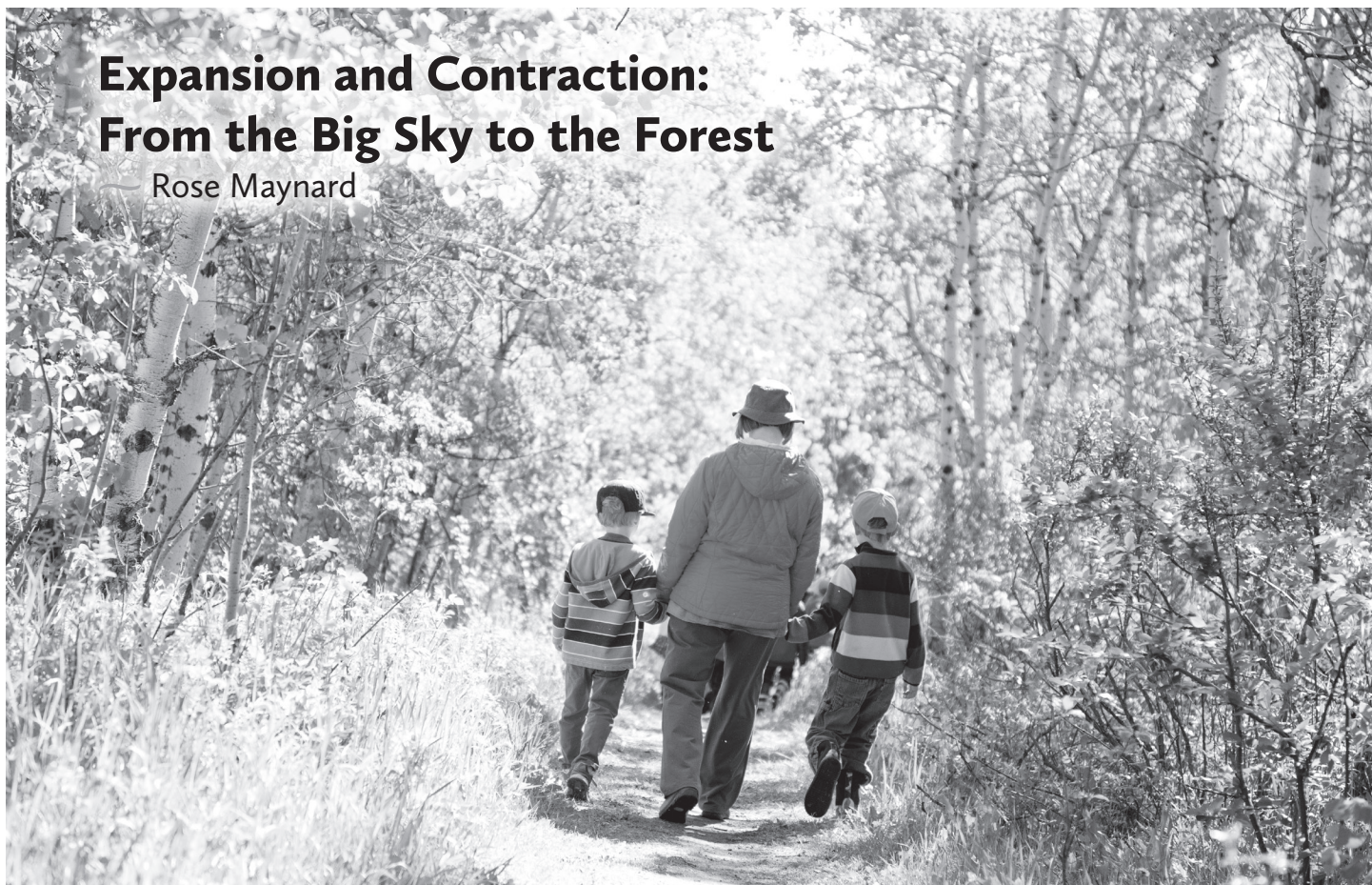


Photo courtesy of Rose Maynard

A few years ago, I began a daily ritual of gathering my kindergarten children for a walk right at the beginning of our day. The school I teach at, the Calgary Waldorf School, is situated at the edge of the city in a fairly new suburban neighbourhood. Ten minutes west of the edge of the city one encounters the rolling foothills of Alberta. Forty minutes west of the edge of the city one encounters the Rocky Mountains. My kindergarten class and I walk under expansive, constantly changing skies. Some mornings blue and soft pink colours greet us. Some mornings the sky is lined with bands of clouds. Other days one sees miles of grey. Many days in the winter, one cannot see much of the sky as snow falls and falls and falls. When it is clear, however, the sky hovers wide above us.

Over the years, many mentors from other lands joined my class on our walks. Although I find comfort in Alberta's big skies, my visitors often noted this never-ending sky above and wondered about the effect on my students. Their remarks inspired some reflection on my choice for our daily route.

I became very conscious to balance out our walk by searching out groves of trees for balance and protection. The children, my assistants and I now start the day with meandering across the field behind the school, greeting the morning sky. But after meeting the morning colors, we quickly dip into a quaint neighbourhood path lined with trees, bushes, and gardens. Each day as we make the transition from the field with the big sky above us to the path lined with trees, the children seem to ease into the walk. The trees, the bushes, the gardens, and wee chickadees and house wrens in this moment of forest embrace us, soothe us, and massage us. The link between this addition of a wooded area and the children and their sense of wellbeing is observable.

I, of course, have not been the only one to notice the therapeutic effects of nature and especially of wooded areas on young children. In fact, shortly after committing to our daily walks, a Waldorf colleague from New York visited our school to speak on her forest kindergarten. Sigrid D'Aleo brought



slides and stories of her days almost completely outdoors in the woods of Saratoga, New York. After hearing her, I could not help but wonder if I could take my children just a little deeper into nature. I already felt the children settle and calm as we wandered through our neighbourhood groves of trees. What would they be like if we were completely surrounded with trees and foliage? Instilled in our routine was our daily walk and not far from the school there were, indeed, miles of trees. To take the class to the woods would mean that most of our day would be outside. I started to plan for a longer walk, an extended play and the addition of food and water. Could I actually incorporate forest days into our suburban city Waldorf kindergarten? How interesting that my search for protection from our big sky was now leading us to the woods.

One Spring morning, five years ago, my assistant Vivian and I committed to a longer walk, to carrying backpacks and to a morning outdoors. I found a spot twenty minutes away that was completely wooded.

This spot was at the top of a hill, at the edge of our suburban forest called the Paskapoo Slopes. At this spot, a teepee shaped structure made of deadwood had been built, and it was big enough for adults and children to go inside. (I am not sure who built it, but I am ever so grateful). The walk to the woods was surprisingly easy as the children did not balk at the extension of our walk or at the slightly different route. When we dipped into the trees I recall Vivian and me breaking out into satisfied smiles. When we released the children into free play into our chosen area, I recall a wave of joy washing through the group. I will always remember one little fellow finding an especially thickly wooded spot and lying under the branches and the leaves. The woods seemed to provide another layer for him, and it was as if he needed a little “cocooning” so to speak.

Forest days are now part of my kindergarten practice. We make our way to the woods when the children have gained stamina through walking daily and when the weather permits. Walking to the woods is usually effortless as it is only an extension of our regular walk, and we go first thing in the morning. (The return trip is harder after an hour of play and this is when we stop for water and food breaks.) Alberta’s big, beautiful, expansive skies inspired a search for the opposite, which proved to be the therapy the children craved. Nature’s embrace instills calm and a sense of wellbeing in the children. There is something quite special when playing under a canopy of leaves. It is truly difficult to find the right words to describe the mood shift in the children as they slip into the world of the trees. Ruth Ker writes that a healthy sense of life “tells us that we are okay in our body, that it’s a safe place to be. This sense helps us to feel at home on earth” (*Gateways*, Spring 2015). I believe that my forest days support the children’s sense of wellbeing, their sense of life. The trees as an extension of the earth provide the experience of protection and feeling safe which allows the children to feel that much more comfortable in their bodies. ♦

Rose Maynard *has been affiliated with the Calgary Waldorf School for almost 24 years. Rose trained with Janet Kellman and Rena Osmer at Rudolf Steiner College, and in 2011 completed her Master’s of Education in Early Childhood Education from the University of Alaska South East. For the last five years Rose has been planning and implementing Forest days with her class.*

The Power of Imagination

— Helle Heckmann

The following is an excerpt from the new WECAN edition of Nøkken: A Garden for Children, which describes and celebrates a remarkable indoor-outdoor program for children ages one through seven in Copenhagen, Denmark. The healing power of nature is a theme throughout the book, and here Helle Heckmann connects it with some important issues around imagination, play, and toys.

Little Johanne, one year old, is standing, looking at a tree for about ten minutes. She raises her hand slowly. Out comes the forefinger. She touches the tree carefully, then a bit more courageously, then with the whole hand. She is caressing the tree.

Karoline (also one year old) has been watching Johanne. She walks over and strokes the tree, still looking at Johanne. Together they laugh. They run away from the tree, and return to stroke it again and again and again.

Undisturbed, they spend an hour with this experience. This is what childhood is all about: an identification with the surroundings. Letting the surroundings become a part of oneself. The unchangeable, the safe, the ever-existing. This, only living nature can give.

“Are you hungry?” The question is asked by Sarah, age three. We (including twenty-four children from one to six years old) are out on our daily walk to the graveyard. Autumn is rapidly approaching. The wind blows refreshingly. We are all dressed well: lots of woolen clothes underneath the raingear. Sarah is poking in some soil and mud. Skillfully, she picks up a lump and shapes it in her hand. She finds a leaf that fits exactly as a serving dish for the mud ball, a hint of pebbles and a feather completing the dish. “There you go”, she says seriously. “Would you like a drink with it?” “Yes, please” is the answer. “Magnus, could you help me for a minute?” Magnus is busy putting leaves on a stick. “Does it have to be right now?”

“Does it have to be right now?” Sarah repeats, looking at me expectantly. “No, I can wait until I’ve finished eating,” I answer. The children carry on with their doings, undisturbed.



Photos from Nøkken by Helle Heckmann (WECAN, second edition 2015)

The wolf is coming—perhaps

“Helle, Helle, come and have a look.” Asbjorn, five-and-a-half, comes running short of breath. “We’ve seen some tracks—I think they are from a wolf.” Immediately we run to look at the tracks. Several of the older children are on their knees studying the large tracks of some paw. They are eagerly chatting. Knowledge is communicated between the children. In the end they are silent and turn to me. What do I have to say? I now produce a wolf-tale, which is no more than it claims to be, and which does not comment on the tracks on the ground at all. The children are listening, their eyes are totally clear, their ears are pricked up, their mouths half open. Around us the wind is blowing, other children are climbing the trees or romping about, other adults are cutting wood, but we are far gone. When the story ends we return to the present. I leave their circle, and the children continue their exploring of nature.

What makes it so important that Sarah and Magnus can sit in a puddle underneath a tree in which the wind is blowing, and in deep concentration cook



dinner?
What do
they shape
when they
shape the
mud balls?

To me it
is definitely
themselves—
their inner
organs. Mud,
soil, sand,
water do not
have defi-
nite shapes,
they have
the ability to
constantly
change. This
is exactly

what the three-to-four-year-olds need: an identifica-
tion with the surrounding world. Getting dirty is a
sign of health.

The four elements of earth, water, air and fire
are the basic elements that children are nourished
by and grow from. No shaped toys—be they wood
or plastic—can compete with these materials. The
seriousness with which the children play, the deep
concentration, speaks for itself, and shows how im-
portant this “playing” is. Nobody needs to fight about
anything; there is plenty of mud for everybody.

Asbjorn’s discovery shows the five-to-six-year-
old’s curiosity towards the surroundings. They wish
to explore, to conquer the world, but at their own
level. They discover something, investigate it, use it,
leave it, and transform it.

The process is the most important. Imagination
changes reality—reality is changed by imagina-
tion. Had I said, “it’s a dog track, obviously not a
wolf track,” I would have spoiled the atmosphere
and ruined their experience. I do not deny that it
is a dog track, because I never lie. I enrich them
by telling them about something that exists in the
same world as they do, in the realm of imagina-
tion, on the edge of reality. Of course, the children
know that it is not a wolf track, but this is not what
they asked about. They see whether I am able to
grasp their world, and get carried along, that I as
an adult can nourish their imagination, that I can

create a soul meeting with them by telling them
a story, and not a long scientific explanation.

The simple and the true

To meet the children where they are, on the child’s
own ground—that is the art of education. To under-
stand that the child’s play is most serious, because
through playing, the child grasps life. Through
playing, the child imitates the adult world. If the
children do not have the possibility of imitating the
basic functions of life through play they will have
no possibility of understanding life. If Sarah does
not experience her mother cooking (one of the most
important actions in life), she will have difficulties
copying this situation later in life. She will have no
inner images of how to approach it. If Sarah is not
allowed to imitate this where she is—that is, in the
puddle—she will not adapt a basic sense experience
of her imitation. The important action of work-
ing the inner out in an imitation of mum and dad
(the surroundings) is what playing is all about.

Whatever is available serves as a toy, the simple
unprocessed materials that can do anything your
imagination wishes them to. The stick that is a horse
is transformed into a sword and so on. The only lim-
its are those of the imagination. The best toys are the
tools used in the household or in crafts. The simple,
the true. They do not fool the senses, and they have
the qualities they promise the senses.

Most toys are total abundance, a way parents
and grandparents can buy the child’s affection when
they do not have time to spend with the child, or are
bought for their own sake or needs.

The abundance of the children’s room must be
every parent’s or child’s worst nightmare. I’m bored.
I’ve got nothing to play with even though the shelves
are full to the brim. Dust-collectors, a useless mess.
Where is the love for the teddy bear, the doll, the car?
The present that was given in love and did not drown
in abundance is hard to find. The child does not need
the toys; the toy factories need the child! ♦

Helle Heckmann is the founder of the Danish
child care center Nøkken and the author of *Nøkken:
A Garden for Children and Childhood’s Garden*
(both published by WECAN). She is active in teacher
training and mentoring around the world, and
recently started the website slowparenting.dk to
meet the needs of parents as well as care givers.

Awakening Intelligence

— Janene Ping

Author's Note: *For the last three years, I have been working with a WECAN grant that was designed to build dialogue between Waldorf educators and those working with Social/Emotional learning models and contemporary research. It has been an interesting process to try to integrate the various streams of thought in the following article. It is my hope that with our continued exploration into contemporary research, anthroposophical knowledge of the human being will be further enriched. Our understanding and articulation of the learning processes inherent in whole child education is essential for our work in today's world.*

When one really can take the time to observe and consider the engaged inquiry of self-motivated learning in the young child from birth to age seven, one may witness a higher intelligence working within the wisdom of child development. Imagine what it would take for us as adults to consciously plan and accomplish physical, emotional, social and intellectual achievements parallel to those that the young child is capable of in the first seven years! From total dependence in infancy upon the caretakers and environment into which the child is born, the healthy child becomes able to walk, talk, think, and direct the will of its own individuality. One might compare the young child's achievements in this area to the equivalent of having earned a master's degree in the foundational process of incarnation!

Where does this higher intelligence spring from? How do we understand the foundation necessary for these stages of learning to healthfully unfold? What can (or should) we do as caretakers of young children to support their growth? These, of course, are questions that live in the hearts and minds of parents, caretakers and educators of young children.

Let us take the premise of "higher intelligence" as a first exploration of these questions. Does "higher" refer to a spiritual capacity directed from an angelic hierarchy that perhaps bestows the wisdom of an evolutionary process? For many of us who have direct experience of the existence of the human being having a bodily, soul, and spiritual nature, this is a comfortable premise. The view of body, soul, and spirit as being integrated within the whole human being may be held within many world religions and spiritual streams, but it is not (yet?) universally held as common "scientific" understanding — even though brilliant thinkers like Albert Einstein have

referred with reverence to a spiritual stream working within the laws of the universe.

Rudolf Steiner brought the work of spiritual science into the realm of intellectual inquiry with guidelines for methodical inner practice. Steiner was an astute observer of the human experience of the soul and spirit. Inspired by the work of Goethe, who developed a science of phenomenological observation, Steiner was a fore-runner to contemporary research in the fields of psychology and neuroscience that are now opening the doors to a new understanding of how the physical body, mind and soul are connected. This is extremely helpful for those of us working with anthroposophical indications of human development. We now encounter philosophical and scientific streams of twenty-first century inquiry that work with an understanding of multiple intelligences. It is fascinating to explore these streams as complementary to Steiner's view of the three-fold and four-fold nature of the human being. To bridge the two we must be able to distill an essential understanding of human capacities revealed by anthroposophical research as well as contemporary scientific and philosophical exploration.

At birth, the physical body of the infant is born. This body is a vessel that houses a distinctly unique human individuality. Deeply embedded laws of growth and development, both universal and individual, govern the formation and function of this physical body. Modern science has given us a very detailed picture of the beauty and intricate complexity within its manifold systems. Dissection, examination, study, combined with intuition, inspiration, and devotion to the phenomenological observation have unveiled worlds within worlds! Yet we know that without life force, *and* that pulse

of *light* that sparks the beating of the heart, the individuality cannot live within the body, no matter how beautiful or loved it is.

What is this life force and its accompanying energy of vitality or illness that surges through all living things? In answer one can picture the etheric body moving within the stream of time and space. The etheric works within life processes with rhythm and repetition and resulting relational patterns. It informs the intelligence of immunity that governs the health of an individuality. It influences the habit body and the child's ability to "feel at home" — or not, in the physical body. Within Waldorf early childhood education the teacher works strongly with an understanding of this etheric stream as the foundation upon which healthy development and intelligence rests.

In her exploration of *Truth and Health*, Dr. Michaela Glöckler quotes from the German magazine *Stern*, "For centuries the body and the soul of the human being were seen as separate, independent units. It is now established that they are closely connected. The body is healthier when the soul is doing well. By way of neurotransmitters as chemical messengers the mind-soul disposition of the human being influences (health)." Dr. Glöckler then points to documentation of the psycho-neuro-immunological research that reveals the integrated relationship of emotional, ethical, and immunological intelligences that live and work within the human individuality. The term *mind-soul* is key in our modern inquiry of understanding both the astral and the ego body. In identifying the capacities of each, we realize that both are integrated within our conscious experience of self. In one exploration, the definition of mind-soul is: the subjective, first-person experience of identification of awareness and meaning.

When we expand our understanding of intelligence — the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills — we can come closer to the truth of what all education must embrace if it is to responsibly serve human development and evolution. Waldorf education has been striving to serve multiple and interrelated intelligences of thinking, feeling, and willing for almost a century now. To understand any intelligence we must bring focused attention to its revelatory manifestation. This attentional focus can be channeled in many ways: observation, study, comparative conversation, research techniques, re-

flection, and also with capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition. We may look at various intelligences of skill and knowing in singularly defining terms, yet we must keep in mind their complex and interrelated realities.

Within *thinking* there is an intellectual intelligence that utilizes rational logic. Often intellectual intelligence emphasizes premises and laws that are measured by factual evidence. Emotional Intelligence lives in the *feeling* life of the human being — with the understanding that the physical body and the mind both influence, and are influenced by, the emotional experience within. Feeling life is individual and subjective, but it is also relational, as it influences, and is influenced by, others. The interdependence of individuals within any social context (when two or more are gathered) requires the knowledge and skills of Social Intelligence. *Willing* can be defined as the intelligence of the "locus of control" or the individual's ability to channel motivational capacities and forces towards the achievement of a goal.

Through multiple intelligences we can explore other ways of knowing:

- Kinetic Intelligence is related to movement, dominance and coordination, and utilizes both early developmental reflexes and autonomously directed motor skill.
- Sensory Intelligence enables us to cognize ourselves and the world through attention to sensory experience.
- Creative Intelligence is the capacity to manifest new thought, structure or form.
- Instinctual Intelligence informs a subconscious and contextual interaction with the world upon which survival depends.
- Immunological Intelligence is inherent in the body's ability to maintain health.
- Ethical Intelligence could be said to be that which discerns between what is morally right or wrong.
- Mystical Intelligence relates to a reciprocal connection between the soul and that which is mysterious within and beyond ourselves and spiritual in orientation.

These intelligences inextricably weave together our understanding of ourselves, each other, life, and the

universe. Each individual's "IQ" varies in ability level for skill and understanding within them. Some intelligences touch upon cognitive thinking within the right or left hemisphere of the brain. Some intelligences are deeply embedded in the subconscious or rest within our inherited physical body. Some intelligences live outside of our individuality, yet we can still access an understanding of them through focused attention that requires discipline and practice. When we achieve this, dualistic definitions of "self" and "other" disappear and our understanding unites with a universal or more spiritual intelligence that informs all of creation.

When we look back upon the engaged inquiry of self-motivated learning of the young child, we can observe that healthy children learn through the intelligences that surround and work within them — and in the first three years these are not yet intellectual. By observing young children, we witness that other primary intelligences form a foundation for the emergent intellect. Mystical intelligence is perhaps the first — it is present in the newborn's gaze. It lives in the trust the infant has for her mother or caregiver. Instinctual, kinetic, and sensory intelligences are also foundational in the process of incarnation.

In the next three years of life, from the third to the sixth year, we can learn about the child by observing the universal capacity for play. In this realm, we can identify that the learning process is engaging creative intelligence, as well as emotional and social intelligences. Through play the "being-ness" or archetype of things is explored. A stick can reflect the branching out of a tree, or the stick can be transformed with unlimited potential into other "things." In play, the child learns capacities for communication, collaboration and cooperation. The young child "digests" life experience through its imitation and recreation. Dramatic play explores feelings born from familial roles or social relationships. Play can also be a healthy way for children to create situations for the therapeutic "working through" of life experiences. The research of neurobiology has identified how instinctual intelligence, upon which survival depends, works within neurological patterns that reflect safety and comfort or danger and fear. These are foundational patterns that inform our emotional and social intelligence. Rhythm and repetition of safe, healthy life experience builds capacity for security and resilience. Trauma disrupts this capacity and creates

patterns of "fight or flight" that can repeat themselves when relational stress or anxiety is experienced. By being able to re-create safe situations in which that initial trigger of stress or anxiety can be healthfully integrated, capacities for resilience are developed. This, of course, requires the conscious supervision of an experienced therapist, teacher or parent.

Childhood is a time when foundational intelligences are key developmental motivators. Curiosity to explore the world through true sensory experience is natural. The need to move and tumble, climb and balance, roll and swing is essential! Transformation of self and the world through creative play is magical. The child's ability to learn through these multiple intelligences is rich and beautiful. We must understand and respect this foundational capacity for joyful learning. As Steiner reminds us, all education is self-education. The capacity for all intelligent learning increases when the individual is enthusiastically attentive and engaged. The more we understand these complex intelligences and how they are interrelated, the more we can meet educational needs of the whole child, and advocate for our children's innate capacity for learning to be enhanced. In Waldorf education, Steiner developed a holistic curriculum that works within relational developmental capacities. In this age of the awakening consciousness soul, our collaboration with others who recognize these multiple intelligent capacities will strengthen the gift of learning what it means to be truly human and help the evolution of humanity to be realized. ♦

References and Further Reading:

The above article shares an exploration of thoughts that were inspired by anthroposophical study of the works of Rudolf Steiner, attendance at conferences held at the Garrison Institute (see below), and 26 years of early childhood teaching at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in upstate NY.

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A puppetry and storytelling enthusiast, **Janene Ping** celebrates entering her 26th year teaching Kindergarten at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. She has enjoyed leading adult education workshops at the Center for Anthroposophy, Sunbridge College, and the Rudolf Steiner Institute, and is currently a faculty member of Sophia's Hearth. In the summer of 2016, she will host the third bi-annual Collaborative Puppetry Conference at Hawthorne Valley.

The Question of Saints

— Stephen Spitalny

Last fall around Lantern Walk time, a flurry of questions and replies were exchanged online in a Waldorf early childhood list. This sparked my thinking about festival celebrations in early childhood programs in general, as well as about this particular festival, Martinmas. Many Waldorf early childhood programs and kindergartens celebrate this festival by that title, named for St. Martin, and tell stories about the saint and his deeds. I would like to question that practice and offer some ideas.

One of the foundations of Waldorf education for the young child is to bring the archetype rather than the specific. What is the archetype of festival celebrations? A festival celebrates the coming together of earthly and cosmic forces. Communities of human beings come together in celebrating the harmony of earth and cosmos, of matter and spirit. These seasonal celebrations mark the changing of light, the relation of the earth to the sun, and the connection to what is universal in the cycle of the year. Festivals celebrate points in the year when earth-spirit and world/cosmic-spirit meet.

How is the celebration of a saint different? What is a saint? A saint is a specific human being whom others have come to consider as holy and as living in service of high ideals and divinity. Often saints

are human beings who started out as very imperfect human beings yet who had radical transformations. The point is that a saint is a particular human being. What the young children need, what we can provide them with in our early childhood programs, are archetypal images of the activity of becoming more human, such as those found in fairy and folk tales. Young children are nourished by archetypal images of human-ness rather than specific human beings

To support young children, festivals can be celebrations of the seasons, especially in relation to the sun. Festivals can provide a connection for the children to the natural world around us. The festivals fall in an annual rhythm that can be strengthening to the physical body of the young child. Festival celebrations can also be community-building experiences for young and old.

The kindergarten focus can be on celebrating the divine spark that lives in each of us and upon the divine creator powers of the universe. A powerful guiding image is the light that streams toward us from the sun and stars and the warmth and love into which we can transform that light. That is the central theme around which the variations of individual festivals revolve. It is important that our celebrations are so universal that no one feels excluded. A goal

is that all the families will inwardly experience that each festival speaks to them personally. Through celebrating what is universally human and universally cosmic, the spiritual is celebrated, rather than the specifically religious. Kindergarten festivals present archetypal pictures of divine truths. Festivals for the older children often celebrate developed human beings such as saints. Saints are saved for the grade school years.

I celebrated only a few major festivals in my kindergarten. They include Michaelmas, Lantern Walk (not Martinmas), Evergreen Spiral Garden and an end-of-year Bridge Festival. Each child's birthday was also celebrated. In a sense, every day is a festival in kindergarten, but parents were invited only to these.

I often did celebrate a Lantern Walk evening with my kindergarten. We would make various types of lanterns from year to year and then gather at some dark, outdoor spot and sing lantern songs and walk around with light only from our lanterns and the stars. I would hold it on a non-rainy night when the moon was not very bright sometime in November. I never mentioned anything about St. Martin—it was simply our “Lantern Walk.” For me an integral part of a festival is a story, and in this issue is reproduced one I told for our Lantern Walk (previously published in a past issue of *Gateways*).

The Lantern Walk was part of a late fall celebration of the shortening of days and lengthening of nights that culminates at winter solstice. I tried to make festivals for the young children reflect the human in relation to the cycles of seasons, without any explanation. We just experienced and let the images the children take in do all the “talking.”

Why are saint stories and fables from various cultures told in Second Grade in a Waldorf curriculum? It is because the children in second grade are beginning to become aware their own dark side. Story images act as a guide to overcoming these baser characteristics. Saint stories appropriately wait until second grade. Kindergarten is about the archetypal activity of becoming human.

When considering a festival calendar, there are various possibilities. Some teachers try to honor many religious and spiritual streams by celebrating a mix from different traditions. I prefer trying to contemplatively and creatively get to the essence of a festival and present its universal qualities in celebration of human becoming. The latter approach is by

far harder. It requires us to be creative and awake and think for ourselves. I vote for this hard road to find the universal element in each festival because the rewards are profound. Among the possible rewards are greater senses of community and inclusion when all families feel acknowledged and spoken to through the festival celebration.

In closing, I would like to broach the subject of the “Christ Impulse” that people refer to as standing behind the Waldorf school movement. Some people use this as justification for celebrating festivals with a Christian tinge. Steiner called the “Christ impulse” a universal unifying and connecting impulse that can be active among groups. He also explained, “In the future, it will not matter much whether what Christ is will still be called by that name.” Here is how Dr. Steiner described this “Christ Impulse” in a lecture on January 9, 1916, published under the title *The Universal Human*:

This is one of the meanings of the Mystery of Golgotha: the attainment of the unity of humanity from within. Externally human beings are becoming more and more different. The result will not be sameness but differences all over the earth, and human beings must exert all the more force from within to attain unity...Such differences will always exist because human beings will only gradually be able to attain unity. At the same time, different groups will fight each other tooth and nail about everything concerning their outer life. These are setbacks from earlier epochs that run counter to the Christ impulse, rather than in harmony with it.

Indeed, here we have a very profound meaning of this Christ impulse. Based on true knowledge, we can say it is Christ who keeps human-kind from being fragmented into groups...

In the future, it will not matter much whether what Christ is will still be called by that name. However, a lot will depend on our finding in Christ the spiritual uniter of humanity and accepting that external diversity will increase more and more...

We have to be able to face calmly and courageously the increasing diversity in human nature because we know that we can carry a word into all these

diversities that is not merely a word of speech but one of power. Though there may be groups that fight against each other and though we may even belong to one of them, we know that we can bring something that will express: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" into every group. We know that this "Christ who lives in me" will not lead to the forming of groups; rather, it will bring about the spreading of the glory of the name "human being" over the whole earth....

You are called upon to help in this development, which will lead to something appearing to people in bright clarity, something we cannot yet express because we do not have words for it in our languages, yet something spiritual science works toward. When you feel you belong to such a spiritual stream, and feel at home in it, because you see that it is necessary for human evolution, then you have a right understanding of our spiritual movement – you belong to it in such a way that you rightly understand the greatest of its goals based on your increasing understanding of the contrast between Christ and Lucifer-Ahriman. You understand that this contrast is vital and had to exist...

And again, in Lecture 2 of *The Inner Aspect of the Social Question*, given on February 11, 1919:

...If we expand our interest to embrace with inner tolerance, everything human, and say to ourselves: "Through the fact of my birth I am a prejudiced person; only through being reborn into an all-embracing feeling of fellowship for the thoughts of all men shall I find myself the impulse which is, in truth, the Christ Impulse. If I do not look on myself alone as the source of everything I think, but recog-

nize myself, right down into the depths of my soul, as a member of the human community" – then, my dear friends, one way to the Christ lies open. This is the way, which must today be characterized as the way to the Christ through thinking.

After taking these words to heart, through many long meetings and subsequent, lengthy word-smithing, the Santa Cruz Waldorf School reached agreement on an inclusiveness policy. I offer it as a compass for your consideration towards a new culture of community, connecting, and unity, toward which our festival celebrations can contribute.

A Guiding Principle for an Inclusive (Waldorf) School Culture

A core principle is the creation and maintenance of a school culture that is welcoming and inclusive to families and individuals from all religious traditions. We reflect a balanced and universal spirituality of the human being and nature in our developmentally appropriate curriculum, classroom decoration and festival life. This worldview is based on the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, though anthroposophy is not taught to the students. By the end of eighth grade each student will have experienced the panorama of major world religions within the language arts and history curricula.

The strength of this principle rests on the clear and open communicating and working together between teachers and parents. ♦

Stephen Spitalny, a past editor of *Gateways*, has taught kindergarten at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School in Santa Cruz, California, for more than twenty years.

Pioneers: Joan Almon

Joan Almon is distinguished in North American Waldorf Early Childhood education as one of the prime “movers and shakers” of our movement. Having “blundered” into Waldorf education in the early 1970s, she stands as a visible and striving educator who learned by doing, initiator of “kindergarten training” opportunities when no formal trainings yet existed in North America, researcher, founding member with others of what has become WECAN, and co-founder and director of the Alliance for Childhood in recent years. She is a strong advocate in early childhood education for the rights and needs of children everywhere, not just in Waldorf programs. Encouraging opportunities in our times for healthy, free play is one of her most earnest commitments. Joan has also served as co-general secretary for the Anthroposophical Society in the US.



As a “child of her times,” Joan Almon became acquainted with spiritual paths in her years of living in San Francisco. When she moved to Baltimore on New Year’s Day of 1971, she soon encountered a small spiritual community that wanted to open up a preschool the following fall. Three teachers were needed, and she wanted to be one of them. Yet by her own description, she knew nothing about education. The program opened the next October with fifteen children. Everyone thought it went well. The parents were happy with the teachers’ innovative, experimental approach, which changed things almost daily. Five or six children cried each day, but the teachers thought that this was just normal.

One of the teachers attended a conference on alternatives in education and met Werner Glas, a prominent European Waldorf educator and teacher trainer in this country. He advised that if they wanted to keep the spirit of childhood alive, the teachers should look into Waldorf education. From the Waldorf initiatives in Washington DC and Virginia, Joan and her colleagues gleaned what they could. What they learned one day they instituted the next. There was no formal kindergarten teacher training in North America and only one kindergarten book in English, the classic by Elizabeth Grunelius. This pioneering spirit suited Joan just fine. She loved being guided by practicing teachers, seeing something for a brief time and then running with it. Rudolf Steiner’s indications were there, and different people implemented these indications in different ways. Each developing

teacher then had to figure out things her own way.

A lucky encounter brought the little school into connection with Ilse Kimball, a eurythmist who had worked with Marie Steiner, and her husband, artist Mulsby Kimball. Mulsby came yearly and lectured, mentored, and did artistic work in Joan’s kindergarten. With artistic work and a predictable, daily rhythm for the class, Joan’s children became far less tearful and began to open like flowers to the sun. They drank deeply everything that Waldorf education offered.

In 1975-76 a kindergarten training began in Detroit. Prominent European Waldorf kindergarten teachers began to come to this country to teach in the institute. These included Elisabeth Moore-Haas and Johanna-Veronika Picht. Willi Sucher, who developed Astrosophy from Rudolf Steiner’s indications, was also there. Joan went for six weeks and got to know Johanna-Veronika well. Joan had been troubled by how she had seen teachers organizing the children into a group activity each day. This seemed too directive and confining to Joan. Johanna-Veronika explained that in Europe the teachers did not organize the children in this way. The teachers just “did” and the children imitated. This was a liberating revelation that kept Joan in the Waldorf circle and imitation became the guiding principle for her future work.

In 1976 Joan’s husband, Clopper, returned from a trip to Germany with a book for her—Freya Jaffke’s book on toymaking. The toys and playstands were a revelation to her. Knowing some German, she would translate a page and then run to where she had her

craft supplies and make what she was reading about. This was typical of how things were done in these early days. There was not a lot of buildup before trying something and not a lot of depth of understanding to begin. This was learning by doing.

In 1978-79 came an opportunity to spend a year in Europe and observe Waldorf teachers there. Werner Glas had told Joan to make acquaintance with Bronja Zahlingen in Vienna. She ended up spending three mornings a week in the Vienna kindergarten. By June, when she was invited by Nancy Foster to teach at Acorn Hill in the Washington DC area, where she and her husband lived, she was itching to again take a kindergarten class and accepted the offer.

During her time in Europe, Joan had come to meet many of the “greats” there—Dr. Helmut von Kügelgen, Margret Meyerkort, and Freya Jaffke. She also got to know Elisabeth Moore-Haas better and became very close to Bronja Zahlingen. These contacts gave her a foot in the door to the European Waldorf early childhood movement.

As Acorn Hill was establishing itself, the state of Maryland (the school’s licensing agent) began to require that each teacher have twelve university credit hours in Waldorf education. It was not clear how to satisfy the state’s requirement, but Joan had contact with a professor at Towson University who agreed that Acorn Hill could bring master teachers from Europe and the university would supply the credit. Thus began a very rich time for Acorn Hill with these great teachers. Acorn Hill was looked to for guidance by younger Waldorf initiatives. When a time came that the university no longer was interested in granting these credits, the state of Maryland had fortuitously passed a rule that schools could run their own internal trainings and supply credits. So Acorn Hill was able to develop its own internal training. This ran for a number of years, offering anthroposophic studies, arts, and pedagogy. Then the Associate Teacher Training programs began in Sacramento and Sunbridge, and these programs met many of the training needs for early childhood teachers.

In the late seventies Werner Glas and Charlotte Dukich brought forth a proposal to form a Waldorf kindergarten association that would be part of AWSNA. The proposal was turned down. But at an AWSNA conference in Toronto in 1984, Joan and Susan Howard invited kindergarten teachers to meet about creating an association within the early childhood community of teachers. Johanna-Veronika Picht

was the European liaison who guided the group toward forming a professional association of individuals at first, rather than institutions. At the organizational meeting, Joan was tapped to become the chair, as she had more time and flexibility than other founding members. But from the very first, Susan Howard, who stepped in as WECAN coordinator when Joan went on to other things, and Joan worked closely together along with many other teachers. Over time, what began as the Waldorf Kindergarten Association became the present-day WECAN.

The connection to international Waldorf early childhood was strengthened through an international kindergarten conference in Dornach in 1984. One hundred American teachers attended the conference on travel grants. Joan took on a new role at this conference. All lectures were in German with no English translation. There was great frustration among the English-speaking teachers and Joan was asked to do the translating. She took notes during the morning lecture and gave a 5 p.m. summary in English. It was not ideal but the best one could do at the time. [There is now simultaneous translation of lectures transmitted through headsets in each of the major languages represented at Dornach conferences.]

The richness brought by the European master teachers also introduced some interesting challenges. Each teacher had individual and unique ways of interpreting and bringing forth the indications for Waldorf early childhood. Different styles began to emerge across North America linked to different master teachers. When teachers introduced to Waldorf pedagogy by these different European teachers encountered one another as colleagues, some tensions—and even some clashes—arose about which approach was the right one. Joan and Susan Howard saw that divisions were opening up in the kindergartens. So the first North American kindergarten conference was held in Wilton, NH in the late 80’s. Presenters were Dr. von Kügelgen, Werner Glas, Freya Jaffke, Margret Meyerkort, Bronja Zahlingen, Johanna Veronika Picht, and Elisabeth Moore-Haas. It was astonishing and liberating to the audience to see how each presenter took hold of anthroposophical truths and worked with Rudolf Steiner’s indications in different ways. The puppet play performances, which were a major part of the conference, were very different yet all true to the indications as well. The gift teachers took away from this conference was experiencing that there are many ways to do the right thing.

With all this accomplishment behind her, Joan's concern for healthy childhood for children everywhere—not just for those in our Waldorf programs—called loudly to her. In 1999 she co-founded the Alliance for Childhood in the United States. Its mission is to “promote policies and practices that support children’s healthy development, love of learning, and joy in living.” The Alliance has advocated for play and play-based early education, and it speaks out strongly against the overuse of screen time. Joan served as the director of the US Alliance for twelve years and is still involved with its projects on play and is part of the international working group of the Alliance.

When asked to reflect upon what stands out to her as accomplishments through these incarnational years for Waldorf early childhood education, she mentioned:

- The development and availability of Waldorf early childhood training programs is a huge step and benefit for our work. The first teachers did what was necessary with limited resources and tools. The foundation that trainings now give is essential to meet the complex needs of children and families in our time.
- The founding of the Kindergarten Association and its development into WECAN has been critical. There is now a way to communicate among schools and colleagues. We can carry forth our deepening of the work through association and can now work closely with AWSNA, as well.
- The early newsletter, now *Gateways*, has been here from the beginning of the Kindergarten Association and is an important resource for our continued pedagogical growth.
- Imitation has been deeply studied, understood, and applied. This is critical for understanding and supporting development with the young child.
- First grade readiness has now received much attention and study. Children are being more thoughtfully and successfully enrolled in the grade school at developmentally appropriate ages.

In the category of “unfinished business” or concerns as we move into the future, Joan made these observations:

- Rudolf Steiner gave a few indications for early childhood education that are based on the anthroposophic understanding of the human being and child development. Teachers then took up, formed, and infused these indications with their own individuality. But we do not want to codify them into “the Waldorf way.” There is a strong tendency in mainstream education to move toward formulaic approaches to education. We do not want to fall into that same trap. Like the Waldorf pioneers, we have to study but also watch the children and see how they respond to our efforts. We have to guard against any temptation to become “programmed Waldorf teachers.”
- The times are calling for wider out-reach toward and interface with the mainstream early childhood world. Waldorf has much to offer and should be more prominently represented. We will do well to put attention to having Waldorf presentations at state and national conferences with other early childhood streams. We need to be present and truly active to be seen equally alongside Montessori and Reggio Emilia. Development of videos and books to represent the education to mainstream colleagues is a priority. [We do have our new brochure and video presentations are under production.]
- Waldorf education will benefit from cultivating supportive relationships among all programs—both independent and public charter schools. All pedagogues working out of Steiner’s indications, no matter what setting, deserve support and recognition. [Since this interview with Joan, AWSNA and the Alliance of Public Waldorf Education have entered into an agreement of understanding, opening up this door.]
- Developing relationships and conversation with our school colleagues, especially Waldorf high school teachers, will benefit everyone. Appreciation and respect for one another’s work can arise out of dialogue so we can recognize how each educational level mutually contributes to human development and wholeness.

Since her retirement as director of the Alliance for Childhood, Joan is once again more available for Waldorf activities and conferences, recently assisting with Waldorf teacher training in China. Thanks to Joan and the other intrepid Waldorf pioneers for plunging forth with so little resources and such dedicated energy to serve the needs of young children. ♦

Transitions

Monique Grund, founding teacher of the San Francisco Waldorf School, retired in June, 2014 after 35 years with the school and after 57 years overall of dedicated involvement with Waldorf education. Born in Breslau to German parents, she was sent to Dornach to live with two aunts, a eurythmist and a stage actress active at the Goetheanum, in the difficult times after the Second World War. She remained there for ten years, attending the Waldorf School in Basel. Upon graduation from high school, she moved to France to help families establish a Waldorf School in Chatou, École Perçeval. There she met René Querido, who became her mentor.

After 20 years as a class and language teacher at Chatou, she came to the US in 1978 on a one-year sabbatical and never left. René Querido convinced her that she should found a Waldorf school in San Francisco. The initial small kindergarten class expanded to two in a year's time, and 1980 saw the school with three kindergartens and a first grade. Her wide experience in so many teaching capacities enabled her to mentor class and subject teachers, but she has always remained a kindergarten teacher. In a tribute to Monique in the Fall/Winter 2014 issue of *Renewal*, Monique "describes early childhood as a time of crucial growth and development, the most important time in the life of each child, a time that requires love, dedication, and devotion. 'I felt very strongly, having come with this conviction that I had received in France, that the kindergarten is the root. I felt that the root needed to go strongly, deeply into the soil.' "

Monique loves storytelling and puppetry. Out of this arose the founding of the Magic Lantern Marionette Theater. A short documentary film, *The Movement Art of Puppetry and Performance: The Story of the Princess Mermaid* can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/princessmermaid>.

If one has had the pleasure of meeting Monique, one is immediately impressed with her enthusiasm, vitality, joy in her work, and dedication to the needs of young children. Thanks to the article featuring Monique in *Renewal*, Fall/Winter 2014 for many of the above details. ♦

Diane David, long-time teacher at the San Francisco Waldorf School, retired in June, 2015. She began at the school first as a parent, enrolling her two oldest children in the kindergartens in 1980. Subsequently all six of the family's children have gone through the school, the youngest two through high school. She began in the kindergarten in 1987, assisting Joan Calderera and began leading her own kindergarten class four years later. Her career has spanned 28 years, and she still loves working with the young child!

During that time she was widely involved with the school, serving on the College of Teachers. Additionally she found that working with Waldorf teachers-in-training deepened her understanding of the young child, and so she has been involved with the two local teacher trainings and will continue with that work. Diane has collaborated artistically along with Monique Grund and other colleagues to create the Magic Lantern Traveling Marionette Theater, whose performances she treasures.

An unexpected theme or subject of inquiry for her in the kindergarten has been death. A little boy in her kindergarten, William, was diagnosed with leukemia at Christmas time in 1996. Diane supported him and his single mother in whatever ways she could as his teacher and as a student of anthroposophy until his death 15 months later. William's death was an opportunity to delve into questions of what is the purpose of coming to earth. What happens before and after this earthly journey and how do we help those who are left behind? Out of these questions she has looked more deeply at the kindergarten child's birthday story. This summer, two weeks after the last day of school, her own six-year-old granddaughter, Teal, died accidentally. Diane reflects that the journey into these questions around death will continue as she goes into this next phase of her life. Family will be a focus, but she will not leave the Waldorf kindergarten too far behind. ♦

For the Classroom

The Golden Lantern

— Stephen Spitalny

This story came to me when preparing for a Lantern Festival. I told the story and wrote it down several days later. Since then, with colleagues, I have revised it and edited out words that seemed unnecessary, particularly adjectives and adverbs. The movement and the story, are the important part for me, not the soul coloring that adjectives and adverbs bring. I feel that this is a true story of a spiritual reality and potential that lives in every human being.

Once upon a time there was a girl named Sophie. Her eyes were shining. Her mother and father had died and she lived alone in a house at the edge of the forest. Her sole inheritance was a golden lantern. The light of the golden lantern was always shining.

Whatever Sophie put her hand to went well. Each day she brought fresh water from the stream for cooking and washing. She tended her garden. She collected fallen branches for her fire. She always took the golden lantern with her. The creatures of the forest were her friends. They were made welcome in her house and what food she had she shared with them.

As she grew older, the light of her eyes grew dim. One evening in Fall when she was in the forest and it grew dark, she noticed that her golden lantern was not shining as brightly as it had been. Over the next days, she saw that the light of the golden lantern was growing dimmer and dimmer.

One evening when Sophie was gathering wood for the fire, she met a traveler and asked him, "Why are you going through the forest with no lantern and yet the way is bright for you?"

"I am the king's youngest son. I live on the other side of the forest at the foot of the mountain of the Sun. I have come to see the girl with the golden lantern and shining eyes because they do not shine as brightly as they once did."

"Oh, but it is only my golden lantern that is growing dim," she said. "Will you help me rekindle it with a spark from the sun?"

"If that is your wish, come with me," he said.

He held out his hand and together they went through the forest. At last they came to the foot

of the mountain of the Sun and began to climb. They climbed higher and higher and higher. The stars were sparkling and smiling as they made their way toward the top of the mountain. When they neared the peak and reached a small plateau, the prince said, "You must go the rest of the way by yourself. I will wait here."

So, Sophie went on. It was a steep climb and she had to crawl on her hands and knees. Finally she reached the peak of the mountain of the Sun. The first rays of dawn were at hand and reds and yellows and purples and pinks were dancing across the sky. And then the sky filled with golden light, and the warm face of Father Sun was shining over the world. Sophie called out, "Father Sun. My lantern needs kindling. Please send a spark of your light that it may brighten my way in the dark world."

Father Sun looked down and said, "My light is always shining even when you cannot see it. It is always with you. So, look at your lantern, my child. Look, it shines brightly. And as long as the light shines in your heart the light in your lantern will shine. And all will be well." Then Sophie's eyes were shining again.

"Thank you Father Sun," Sophie said, and she started down. When she came to the prince she saw his eyes were shining. Then she took his hand and they went down the mountain.

Together they returned to Sophie's house. Then the wedding was celebrated amid great rejoicing. And the golden lantern shines its warm light into their home and never grows dim. ♦

Originally published in Gateways, issue 38, Spring/Summer 2000, and reprinted in Tell Me a Story: Stories from the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN, 2013).

Movement Vignettes

Big Wave – Gergana Minkova

For expansion and contraction—

The tide comes in and the tide goes out,
The tide comes in and the tide goes out,
The tide comes in and the tide goes out,
But when the big wave comes, we run right out!

Movement directions: Everyone holds hands as the circle contracts toward the center and then expands outwards. When the big wave comes, the children may run around and away from the circle but are called back with the repetition of this verse.

Grandpa Frog – Gergana Minkova

Near the pond is Grandpa Frog
with two babies standing by.

Grandpa shows the babies
how to catch a fly:

One halibut

Two tadpoles

And one fly for lunch.

Then the babies try.

In squatting position, knees outside of elbows

Hands placed diagonally on the floor

Hands pointing straight forward on the floor

Hop straight up, hands reach up and clap over head

Same movements only smaller

Gergana Minkova is an early childhood teacher at West Side Waldorf School, CA.

Gathering Nuts – Lincoln Kinnicutt

There was once a squirrel with much to do
He had to collect nuts for winter, two by two.

Sometimes nuts from the top of the tree
Would fall down just as light as can be.

Sometimes nuts from the top of the tree
Would drop down just as hard as can be.

Down and around went the squirrel
All the way to the ground
And stuffed his cheeks
With nuts
Without a sound.

He dug them in the ground
And patted them just so.

Then back up the tree he went
And curled up in his nest,
Rocking and swaying,
Just so he could rest.

Stretch arms up as a tall tree
Lightly touch from head to toe
Stretch arms up as a tall tree
Thump hands on the ground

Twirl around
Crouch on the ground
Puff up cheeks

Motion of digging in the ground
Pat the floor

Grasp knees with the arms

Rock back and forth

Lincoln Kinnicutt is an early childhood teacher at Potomac Crescent Waldorf School, VA, and Washington Waldorf School in Washington, DC.

Noisy Storm – Jennie Salyer

This circle vignette is to help the child feel him- or herself into the limbs and body before beginning focused, deliberate movement. This imagination also has wonderful sounds to engage the child's interested listening.

Boom, bang, boom, bang.	<i>Stomp feet</i>
Rumpety, lumpety, bump	<i>Clap hands</i>
Zoom, zam, zoom, zam	<i>Slap thighs</i>
Clippety, clappety, clump	<i>Stomp feet</i>
Rustles and bustles	<i>Rub hands together</i>
And swishes and zings!	<i>Slap thighs</i>
What wonderful noises a thunderstorm brings!	

Fairy Dance – Jennie Salyer

In the East, a castle was filled with golden light	<i>Raise hands in circle above head</i>
A fairy ball for one and all was to be held that night	<i>Spin once on tiptoes</i>
The fairy folk all cleaned the hall	<i>Rub hands together, palms parallel to floor</i>
And dress all to a "T"	<i>Fingers touch top of head</i>
Suits and dresses, curling tresses	<i>Rub arms, legs and twirl fingers in hair next to face</i>
From the biggest to the most tiny.	<i>Stand on tiptoes, stretching up, the Crouch down to touch the floor.</i>
One little fairy (say a child's name)	
Curled up in a rosebud for a rest	<i>Wrap arms around body, squat down, tuck head</i>
While her brothers and her sisters prepared for the guests	<i>Sweeping motion, shifting weight from side to side</i>
When the clock struck nine,	<i>Count to nine while clapping</i>
The guests came through the door	<i>Dancing, swinging arms, shifting weight side-to-side</i>
The rosebud uncurled to take a look	
And "plop" (say child's name) fell to the floor.	<i>Squat down and touch floor</i>
The little fairy began to cry	
And said, "I'm not ready for the ball!"	<i>Fists to eyes, rubbing to suggest crying</i>
A wise one gave a wink and in a blink	<i>Wink</i>
He/she was the fairest one of all!	<i>Spin once and jump</i>

Jennie Salyer is a lead Kindergarten teacher at Santa Fe Waldorf School.

Resources from WECAN

An important part of WECAN's mission is to create and gather resources for educators, and we would like to direct *Gateways* readers to some resources of which not everyone may be aware. (Please note that if you are not a computer user, you may request a printed copy of any of our PDF documents from the WECAN office. Contact Melissa Lyons at (845) 352-1690.)

On our website, www.waldorfearlychildhood.org, look in the center of the menu bar for "Resources for Educators." Here, in addition to the current WECAN Books catalog, you will find:

- A PDF of our Healthy Organizational Practices document (in two parts)
- A PDF of the new document Guidelines for Observing School Readiness
- Links to the Research Digest email newsletter

In the newsletter, which we aim to make a regular offering, we gather a digest of recently-published research and thoughtful analysis and commentary on subjects that touch upon various facets of Waldorf early childhood education. For example, in the March edition you will find:

On Play:

- Four Crucial Ways Playing Outdoors in Winter Benefits Children
- Five Ways to Let a Little More Risk Into Your Child's Day and Why That's a Good Thing
- Study: Less-structured time in children's daily lives predicts self-directed executive functioning

On Early Intellectual Stimulation and Reading:

- Requiring Kindergarteners to Read - As Common Core Does - May Harm Some
- Report (PDF): Reading in Kindergarten: Little to Gain and Much to Lose
- Too Much Information Destroys Childhood Innocence
- Why Preschool Shouldn't Be Like School

On Media Exposure and Electronic Device Use:

- Using iPads to Pacify Children May Harm Their Development
- For the Children's Sake Put Down That iPhone
- Study: Patterns of Mobile Device Use by Caregivers and Children During Meals in Fast Food Restaurants

Links to all of these online articles and reports can be found by clicking on "Research Digest – March 2015" on our Resources page. If you would like to subscribe to the newsletter, click on the "Join Our Email List" icon found at the bottom left hand corner of our website, fill out the form, and be sure to click the "Research Digest" box at the bottom.

We intend to continue adding to the Resources page on a regular basis, with a Best Practices with Parents document coming in the next few months.

Elsewhere on the web, many other resources are available. Here are a couple of pages that we would like to especially call to your attention:

International News

It is inspiring and heartening to learn of the burgeoning international initiatives for teacher training and Waldorf early childhood education around the world. Recent updates are available on the IASWECE (International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education) website, www.iaswece.org. Please consult the IASWECE website to learn more about these global initiatives.

The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily Marionette Performance Video

Goethe's fairy tale of "The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily" was developed into a large-scale marionette play for an international kindergarten conference at Pine Hill Waldorf School twenty years ago by Joan Almon and others. This past summer the initiative was revived and presented again on the same stage at Pine Hill. A video of the performance is available at www.centerforanthroposophy.org/about/the-green-snake-and-the-beautiful-lily-video/

Calendar of Events

A selection of WECAN member-sponsored events coming up in the fall and winter months is listed here. For more events, view our online calendar at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org. To submit or update an event, contact publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Personal and Professional Development Courses and Workshops

October 10, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Singing Games for One and All! A Focus on the Kindergarten Years** workshop by Anna Rainville. Contact 603-357-3755, cynthia@sophiashearth.org

November 14 and December 5, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Understanding Children's Behaviors and How to Work with Them From Toddler to Kindergarten Age** Two-part workshop with Jane Swain and Susan Weber. Contact 603-357-3755, cynthia@sophiashearth.org

January 9, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Applying Rudolf Steiner's Seven Life Processes to Welcome Parents over the First Seven Years** workshop with Susan Weber. Contact 603-357-3755, cynthia@sophiashearth.org

Conferences

November 6 – 7, Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto: **Waldorf Development Conference, Unifying Humanity through the Christ Impulse** with keynote Dorit Winter, contact 905-764-7570 or info@rsct.ca for more information.

November 6 – 8, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Early Childhood Symposium: From Heaven to Earth: The Challenging Journey from Birth to Seven**. Contact 916-961-8727 or rsc@steinercollege.edu for more information.

February 5 – 7, 2016, WECAN, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **2016 Early Childhood Educators Conference**. The theme for the conference is **Nurturing the Sense of Life in Children and the Adults Who Care for Them** (third in a three-year series); our keynote speaker is Barbara Baldwin, therapeutic educator from Australia. For further information: contact conference@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

February 12 – 14, 2016, WECAN, Portland, OR: **Northwest Early Childhood Conference**. The theme for the conference is **To Enkindle the Soul of Another: A Format for Child Observation** and Laurie Clark is our keynote speaker. For information, contact Karen Humber at Karen@routablesolutions.ca.

Trainings

September 18 – October 24, Sound Circle Center, Seattle WA: **Early Childhood Immersion**. Contact Kimberley, information@soundcircle.org.

November 19 and March 17, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Open Days: Early Childhood Teacher Education**. Meet Program Director Susan Howard, Director of Education Anna Silber, core faculty, current program students, and learn all about Waldorf early childhood teacher education at Sunbridge Institute. To register, visit www.sunbridge.edu. For information on our next Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education cohort, enrolling June 2016, visit www.sunbridge.edu or contact Ayla Dunn at info@sunbridge.edu or (845) 425-0055 x20.