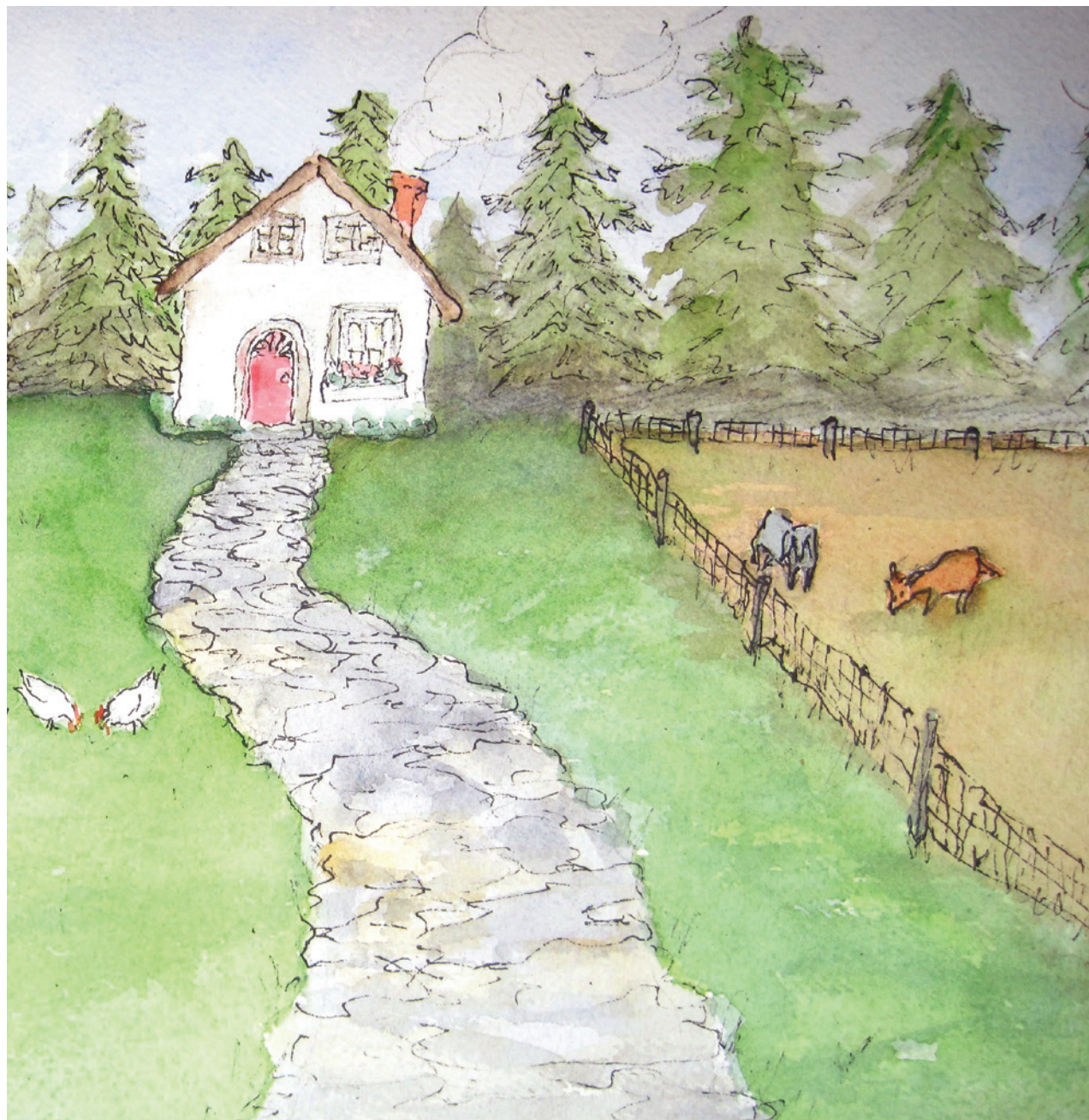


Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 70, Spring 2016



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CORRECTION: In the Fall 2015 *Gateways*, two items were not attributed to the original authors. "Big Wave" comes from the book, *The Breathing Circle*, by Nell Smyth. The verse, "Grandpa Frog" was authored by Alice Stamm.

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WECAN

WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

Waldorf early childhood education is dedicated to offering experiences of goodness, beauty, and protection to young children. We know that they come from the spiritual realm with innocence and openness to the world. We want the little ones to be able to open up to complexities of this world slowly and not be overwhelmed by its complications.

But we also know that each seemingly new soul comes into earthly life with a biographical past from previous experiences and a pre-birth intention to work through unfinished business. Each resolves to come to new experiences that only living here and now can provide. What a complex world these newest messengers from the spiritual world have come into! And what complex intentions they bring along to unfold.

Increasing numbers of children are coming towards us with aspects that rattle and challenge the ways we have customarily thought about our human experience. It has been traditional to categorize people into groups by race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sex, and so on. While these categorizations may have made sense in former times, we witness the injustice and suppression people have experienced by being frozen and imprisoned within stereotypical thinking. Assumptions are made through these group classifications that do not honor the true being, the true self of the individual standing before us. The individuality is always crying out, “Do not judge me or think you can understand me by what you see. Look and listen beyond and within the externals and know me.”

Transgender and gender-fluid children carry this cry strongly and deeply. We have children coming into our Waldorf classrooms whose physical, biological bodies do not match their feelings. They announce with clarity and conviction that their bodies—and consequently the role expectations assigned at birth—do not fit. It has been assumed that biology dictates gender. But these children are proclaiming that it is not as tidy as that. While there do exist inclinations toward maleness and femaleness, there

is also otherness. The children are calling upon us to stretch our thinking, our accepting, our affirming of this otherness in ways we could never have expected.

This issue of *Gateways* is dedicated to opening up conversation with others and within ourselves about gender and what that means. The relevant articles are best viewed as just the beginning of the conversation. We must be bold in our thinking and our responding to these “signs of the times” for the children’s sake, even as it rattles us.

The four lead articles of this issue are focused upon gender discussion. The first two come from Waldorf teachers about their experiences with embracing transgender children in their schools. To protect the privacy of the children and families, the authors remain anonymous and the schools are not identified. We thank these colleagues for their selfless and generous descriptions of how situations have been met in their school communities. The more we can study and avail ourselves of available resources listed, the better prepared we will be when a complicated issue of difference comes toward us.

We want to stretch our attitudes and concepts to recognize gender-fluidity and step out of any gender assumptions about how a child will or should behave. We don’t want to confine anyone’s identity with a gender stereotype. Yet we would be foolish to deny that there are inclinations and expressions of “boy-ness” and “girl-ness” that are also true. Our daily experience confirms that boys lean toward being physical and active, even rowdy, and girls are generally quieter and more inward, sometimes to the point of secrecy. These are neither deficits nor virtues. They just are. We want to honestly accept what comes along as a biological inclination with understanding and tolerance. To that end, one teacher writes about her experience with a challenging group of very young girls. In “Nine Dancing Princesses,” Susan Bruck of the Chicago Waldorf School, describes a year when the least attractive side of little girls’ exclusivity dominated her class. It is reassuring to read how the teachers did not “fix” this but learned to

accompany the girls through this challenging time.

We also feature a condensed version of Louise deForest's article on "Girls and Boys" from *You're Not the Boss of Me!* Louise's description of the different energies brought by the boys and girls in her classes is classic. It helps to recognize the truth of the archetypal gestures of these different orientations. Each individual goes through male and female incarnations as Rudolf Steiner describes. There must be some important purpose to experience femaleness and maleness for our growth and development. We want to see through to the eternal individuality of each person but not deny nor try to erase the gender differences that enrich our lives.

Other sections of *Gateways* take us to the classroom in different ways. The story of another Waldorf kindergarten pioneer, Marjorie Thatcher, is honored on these pages. Her journey to Waldorf education through New Zealand, Canada, England, and back to Vancouver to teach, is an interesting story. The founding of the West Coast Institute for Waldorf teacher training with Dorothy Olsen is one of the gems of her contributions to our work.

Another burgeoning focus in our early childhood pedagogy is work with children from birth to three. This is still a new frontier in many ways. How we sense our way into the right mood for holding these very little children is an important question. Magdalena Toran, parent-child teacher and WECAN board member, shares her inspiration on this subject.

We are delighted that Freya Jaffke's book, *Play with Us!* has been translated into English and is now available from WECAN. One game, "Bridge of Gold," is shared to give a taste of the many activities in this volume. There are games for indoors, outdoors, parties, and for developing motor skills. The book has some soon-to-become favorites waiting for our classrooms.

"The Three Little Pigs" share their adventures in a circle from Laurie Clark. Fun movements and lively shrewdness from the third little pig that outsmarts the wolf will delight the children at circle time.

Laurie also shares insight into some archetypal wisdom about the fever process that stands behind this well-known tale.

International news comes through a report about Waldorf education in Israel, where the IASWECE delegates gathered for their meeting last fall. Thanks to Louise deForest for keeping us abreast of the work in other countries and cultures. The information shared is impressive by any standard. The accomplishments of our international colleagues in non-western cultures are a tribute to their dedication.

Review of Cynthia Aldinger's new book, *Life Is the Curriculum*, finishes out this issue. The book describes the essentials that LifeWays has identified for children at home and in home-care and small group settings. The book is written in a style that helps the reader experience the reassurance, rejuvenation, and satisfaction that comes to the children when caregivers follow the book's suggestions.

This issue only supplies an introduction to questions of gender diversity. Consideration of transgender issues has barely begun for our times. The articles in this issue only open the door a crack. There is much to learn. If we search the internet for information about transgender identification and gender-fluidity, we see a staggeringly large, new vocabulary emerging to describe different gender experiences. And we used to think that having just two genders was challenging enough! We invite more contributions on the gender question to help expand our understanding of what the children are bringing to us. *Gateways* will continue to share contributions as they come.

Our fall issue will focus on sensory development and health. How well our senses are working—or not—profoundly affects our experience of the world. We invite your research and experiences upon how we can understand and support our children's development in this way.

Wishing you each new energy and enthusiasm with the return of spring. ♦

Gender Diversity in the Early Childhood Classroom

How do we meet the transgender and non-conforming children in our classrooms today? With love, acceptance and an open mind.

Four years ago, at a local Waldorf school, an application arrived. This application was eventually routed to my desk, with a sticky note: please call parent. Little did I realize that we were about to embark on an entirely new journey. I called the parent and we set an appointment for later that week.

When the mother arrived for her appointment that day, she carried with her two applications: one for a child called Sean, one for a child called Bella¹. We spoke for over an hour about her daughter, who was born a biological male, and wished to live her life as a female. The child was enrolled in her current school as a boy, but wanted to “socially transition” to life as a girl, and the family wished to start over in a new school setting. The parent suggested that I contact Joel Baum at Gender Spectrum. I said we’d be in touch, and I began my re-education.

At the same time, there was a child enrolled in the kindergarten whose given name was Taylor, a name that is often chosen for either a male or a female child. Her parents referred to their child as “she.” The child, however, insisted she was a boy. She dressed in boy’s clothing and wore her hair shoulder-length. Occasional arguments among her classmates were easily settled: Is Taylor a boy or a girl? Taylor is Taylor, the teacher firmly stated, and all were satisfied with that answer.

In the high school, meanwhile, a rising ninth grade student, who had been known as Nora to her lower school classmates, was posting on social media sites that she wished to be known as Niko. She cut her hair short, began shopping in the young men’s department, and asked to be called only Niko from this point on.

The young child often appears androgynous. Depending on the way the child is dressed (in “girls’ ” or “boys’ ” clothing), the length of the hair, the toys clutched in the child’s hand, or the color of the child’s accessories, we make assumptions about gender. We see a child dressed in pink and say, “What a beautiful little girl!” If the child is in blue, we acknowledge what a strong and handsome fellow he is. Many parents have consciously chosen to use less traditional colors to dress their babies, and do not limit toys to dolls and trucks. Even chain discount stores are moving away from labeling aisles as “Girls’ Building Sets” and “Boys’ Building Sets.”

“Boy or girl?” is often the first question asked of new parents. The baby is heaped with color-coded gifts. What happens when the female child grows old enough to speak, and begins stating firmly, “I am a BOY!” or the male child exclaims, “I am a GIRL!”? Gender identity emerges in the child as early as age two, and is often clearly—and firmly—expressed by age four. Gender identity is one’s self-conception of one’s own gender. It is unique to each one of us. It reflects how we feel inside and may be congruent to one’s assigned or biological gender (cis-gendered) or incongruent (transgendered). The more appropriate question, then, is: “What is the anatomical sex of the baby?” The answer as to gender will have to wait until the child is a bit older.

Gender expression is more about how the individual expresses masculinity and femininity. Tomboys, “girlie girls,” and now, “BoyGirl” and “PrincessBoy” are all ways of showing oneself in the world. Clothing, backpacks, and toys can reflect the child’s view of himself or herself in the world. Certain gender expressions are still strong in the culture (pink is for girls, only boys play with trucks) although thankfully we are moving away from such narrow confines.

Every child and every family is different, as is every teacher, school, and community. After working with several families, we can offer a few guidelines,

¹ I have used pseudonyms for the children in this article to protect their privacy.

culled from our work with Joel Baum at Gender Spectrum and the Ackerman Institute's Gender and Family Project, as well as many of our own experiences. We offer these with all gratitude to the courageous children and families who are leading the way.

General Guidelines

"Insistence, Persistence, Consistency" over time is the rule of thumb. Is the child consistent in her gender expression? A week or two of dressing in a specific way or asking to be called by another name is not indicative that the child is transgender; the young child may perhaps be "going through a phase." It is over the course of time that one pays greater attention to the gender expression of the child.

"Acceptance is Protection." The Ackerman Institute uses this phrase for their work with families and schools. The child who feels accepted for who he or she is will thrive. Teachers and parents must stay alert to signs of teasing, bullying, or exclusion, and put a stop to it. The children are on the frontlines of normalizing gender diversity and need the support of all the adults in their lives.

"We make assumptions all the time about what is in one another's underwear," states Joel Baum, very succinctly. He makes a clear point that may guide anyone through the very complicated maze of gender identity. At the heart of the matter, every individual has the absolute right to privacy.

"Options for all, requirements for none." No child is forced to use a private bathroom. Biological males identifying as female are not required to use the boys' bathroom. This child may use either the private bathroom OR the girls' bathroom, and the same goes for the biological female identifying as a male.

"My right to dress and identify as I choose trumps your discomfort with my choice." Although this is not so much an issue with younger children, often parents or older students may bring up that there is discomfort around using the locker room with a gender-expansive or transgender classmate. See the above guideline about options: the individual who is uncomfortable is free to use the private bathroom.

Gender diversity is not contagious! A gender non-conforming child in your class may pique some interest among the other children (is Taylor a boy or a girl?) and even some "trying out" of behaviors or ways of dressing. Ultimately, each child finds the gender expression which feels right to him- or herself.

Find ways of grouping children other than by boy or girl. Be mindful of your own language.

Discuss a "Plan B" with the child's parents. In spite of the best efforts and attention to privacy, at some point the child will be "outed." Now what? In the case of a student who is new to the school, to find that he is "really" a girl may come as quite a surprise. For a child that has been enrolled in the school, where everyone knows the "tomboy," the surprise may not be as great, but the same questions arise: is my child safe? Do I want my own daughter/son in a locker room with a boy/girl? What if my son "likes" her, but she's actually a biological male? Where will this child sleep on the class trip? And of course, how do I explain this to my child? What language do I use? The parents of the transgender child have grappled with these questions for themselves and perhaps with extended family or close friends.

Gender is different than sexuality. Identifying as a male, female, or gender non-conforming individual has nothing to do with one's sexuality. They are entirely separate issues, and outside the scope of this article.

In the early childhood classrooms, children are allowed to be whomever they wish to be and to express their inner experiences of male and female however they wish. Children come to school to learn, to have new experiences, and to grow into free, upright individuals. Teachers and parents are in the unique position of being able to support our youngest members of the school community in this manner of finding their way. It is an honor to be able to work with children and families who are simply trying to live authentic lives, true to themselves. It takes a lot of communication and willingness to stay open. Most of all, it takes welcoming a new way of being in the world. ♦

The Transgender Child

As educators, many of us are awakening to (or have been jolted into) awareness of the needs of students identifying as transgender. While anthroposophy offers some understanding of gender fluidity, we find few resources, either mainstream or anthroposophical, to guide our paths in educating the transgender child—or, perhaps more importantly, in educating the class organism in such a way as to let the transgender child flourish alongside peers who are not led to question biological sex.

As a step toward opening thought and dialogue about this subject, we asked teachers of students identifying as transgender from early childhood through lower school to share some honest human experiences. The teachers offered responses to questions from the Editor exploring their classroom experiences with gender fluidity, specifically with regard to children who identify as transgender. We feel that their experiences offer incomparable insight to others approaching this topic for the first time, or encountering a child among the growing numbers of young children questioning biological sex for the first time.

The transgender identity can be a challenging, sensitive topic. To preserve the anonymity of the students we have omitted their names and kept the teachers and the schools at which they teach confidential.

Teacher 1, an early childhood educator, chose to offer a summary of experiences in the classroom over the course of a few years.

As an early childhood teacher, I have had two students who have been gender-fluid during their time in kindergarten. Both children identified with and were drawn to the transgender aspects of themselves from a young age, in dress and in what they perceived to be the appropriate attitude of their chosen gender. In each case, the child's parents were open and flexible to how the child was expressing gender¹. Neither child had yet explicitly identified as a particular gender. Later, both children at different

points in elementary school identified themselves as transgender.

These children were my first personal exposure to gender fluid and transgender people. These children and parents taught me a great deal about the wide range of experience human beings can have with their biological sexes and the genders they identify with and need to express.

I have always said, "We can be anything we want to be in kindergarten." It is a place where all things are possible. As kindergarten teachers we strive to be completely accepting of children's spiritual individualities, and to find ways to support them becoming who they are meant to be. Children in kindergarten are so open-hearted, flexible and willing to accept each other in all their many differences. Except for occasional confusion about what pronoun to use or how to answer classmates' questions of whether they "were a boy or girl," it was easy for these gender-fluid children to feel happy with themselves and accepted in kindergarten.

I found the parents of other children in the class to be accepting. But most of us adults were in need of education. Having not been exposed to gender issues, we had a lot to explore and understand. I consider myself to be an open-minded, liberal, modern person; however I was made aware of my own assumptions regarding gender and the need to expand my way of thinking and open my heart further. It is important to become conscious in our work with archetypes in the kindergarten. Of course there remains truth in the archetype of the feminine and the masculine and this is important too. However it is essential we expand our kindergarten life so that each child can find his or her truth represented, so that each individual is reflected in the whole. I became aware of simple ways that I made assumptions as I was speaking to the children particularly in the use of "boys" and "girls" and the use of "he" and "she". It takes practice to become conscious about gender in our language and in our thinking.

The process is not always smooth. Some families might feel better met by school programs that expressly work with transgender children as part of an explicit focus on social inclusion. Children transitioning into a transgender identity later, beginning in the high school years, may face an emotionally tough

¹ For instance, a boy might perceive girls as being more sensitive and compassionate; a girl might perceive boys as being more rough and pushy; and children of either sex might perceive their transgender selves as behaving the "opposite" of what their biological sexes would suggest as "correct."

time, no matter how accepting their classmates might be. Waldorf schools can prepare in many ways to support students first identifying as transgender, along with their families.

Our faculty has had a gender expert come and work with us in faculty meetings. Again it was new for most of us, especially older colleagues. Younger colleagues have often had experience with how to meet gender fluidity in college. This is an area where parents and younger colleagues can lead the way. It takes practice to work with gender and pronouns in our language and educational habits. Even the practice of identifying bathrooms by gender can be difficult for children first identifying as transgender. We have met this particular issue by now having a gender-free bathroom on each floor. It is community building to do this practice together.

The more that we can open our hearts, minds and habits to accept children as they are and include their way of being in our education the more these children will find their place to shine in themselves, in their lives, in our schools, and in the wider community.



Teachers 2 and 3, both lower school teachers, offered direct answers to questions put by the Editor.

How was the student's transgender identity presented to the other students and parents? How was it received?

Teacher 2: The parents of the student spoke to the other parents of the class at a first grade Parent Evening near the beginning of the year. It was a very straightforward, warmhearted presentation. The parents of the child were totally supportive of their child's gender fluidity and newfound desire to identify as transgender. Since all but one set of parents in the class had been together through three or four early childhood years, this came as no surprise. It was very well received. Everyone was very supportive. The child had been a beloved classmate since toddlerhood and was well known to everyone except the one new family, who were also very supportive.

I did not make an explicit announcement to the first graders. I simply started using new gender pronouns according to the family's wishes when referring to the transgender child. The children themselves had unconsciously used both he/him and she/her when referring to this child in early childhood. They naturally

understood that this child was gender-fluid. When I heard comments or confusion on the part of the children in first grade, I simply said that who the child was in body was different from who the child was at heart, and that what's in your heart matters most. (The child's parents and I had worked out this language before school started.) I also told pedagogical stories about beings who felt in their hearts that they were other than they looked, and how these beings eventually were accepted and embraced for how they felt and acted based on what their hearts told them. I heard the children say occasionally: you know, so-and-so is like this or that being in the story.

Teacher 3: Prior to entering the class, I met with the parents and a small support team, and we developed a plan to keep the student's biological sex private, and not share this with either the students or the parents of the class.

We discussed that parents are able to enroll a student, check off a gender box on the application, and then no one questions that student's identity. In this case, the parent was sharing both the biological sex and the identified gender. It was clear that most of the time we do not actually know "for sure" what the "biological gender" of any student is!

During a gym class, the student was "outed" at which time we went to plan B. I spoke with the parents, who wrote a letter to the other parents in the class which the school sent out. There was never a conversation in which the class as a whole spoke about this—just as we would not speak about any student's personal life to a whole group of children.

The reception and openness of both the parents and the students was remarkable. There was only one incident in which the student was put down by another peer, and that issue was resolved through peer-to-peer conversations as well as a conversation with the parent.

What was your personal response to the student's transgender identity? What did you have to adjust in your own feeling and thought life to approach the issue?

Teacher 2: I felt like I was entering a new world, but I was excited about the prospect of growing into this world, expanding my worldview. My main concern was that I would be able to do a good job of meeting the child's, the parents', and the class's needs. I met



Photo by Margaret Loescher from *A Year in the Woods* (WECAN 2016)

with the child's parents and with the family's counselor over the summer. This was enormously helpful. I spoke at length with the early childhood teachers who had worked with the family over the years. I read as much as I could and attended a lecture on gender fluidity and transgender children at a local college. I realized that I needed to quickly learn a good deal of new vocabulary. I thought a lot about what gender fluidity and transgenderness might mean in terms of anthroposophy. How do we understand this in light of females having male etheric bodies and males having female etheric bodies? Is this all part of the process of moving away from old forms (of family, gender, nationality) and toward more and more individualization? Are these children out ahead of us, bringing us new news from the spiritual world of great import? I didn't find it difficult to embrace. I was extremely grateful to be living in a place where there is widespread openness to and support for the LGBTQIA² community.

² A common acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual," which attempts to encompass all human gender identity choices.

Teacher 3: When I was first asked how it felt to have a transgender student, I responded with, "I do not know much about this, but I am willing to grow and work on the parts of myself that may need to grow!"

I was very open and willing to have a transgender student. My only concern was how I would talk about sex and relationships with the group of students. There were a few uncomfortable decisions that I made when speaking to the girls about puberty and menstruation, which I would do differently now that I have more experience. Having a transgender student has given me the opportunity to examine my core beliefs about gender-related stereotypes. I am sure that I have learned as much, if not more, from my student than my student has learned from me!

What do you feel has been most helpful, both on the practical and soul levels, for you and for all involved?

Teacher 2: I mentioned some of the things above. It was also really helpful to have the family's counselor do a presentation on gender fluidity for the faculty and staff. This was something the counselor did for many schools. She was wonderful. I also did a presentation out of my own research and experience for the faculty. Another key is keeping in good touch with the parents of the child—how am I doing? Is your child feeling met? People's views and needs change over time. You have to keep growing with this.

Teacher 3: Meditate on what gender means and how powerful it is when a child can say he/she is not his/her biological sex. What wisdom! Part of my understanding of my own gender meant that I could have a baby grow in my womb, that my breasts were able to create milk to nurture a growing baby. It also meant that when I was in college in a predominantly male field, I had to work harder to prove myself. It meant that there were certain ideas and expectations that society had for me that I could work with or against. For my transgender student, these physical realities and societal realities are different.

I had one person share with me that in the course of incarnating, transgender people actually hold onto the memory of their previous lives, especially gender, and bring that into this life. I enjoy meditating on that thought and holding an image of my very wise student bringing that ancient wisdom.

Be willing to love and be imperfect—just as in any relationship!

What advice would you offer to other teachers encountering transgender students?

Teacher 2: Tune into the particular family and work very closely with the parents of the child. Every situation is different. Some parents want people to know about their child's transgenderness and some don't. Some parents are supportive of the child's fluidity and some aren't. The child's parents don't always agree on how they see the situation. Know the laws of your state! State anti-discrimination laws regulating education of transgender students vary greatly. Discuss this in the faculty/staff meetings (be sure to include staff)! Look for ways to make your school more welcoming and inclusive to all people, not just one particular child or family—gender-neutral bathrooms, for example, are helpful in this regard. Include books about gender-fluid or transgender children in your library—have all teachers read them. Explore ways to embrace gender fluidity and transgenderness in the curriculum through the elementary and high school years—find those stories that give helpful images. There are characters and people in

stories and biographies that we normally tell who are gender-fluid. We need to identify more of these stories. Talk with young people—the older elementary students, high school students, and young faculty members (in their twenties) are much more at home in this world (and fluent with the vocabulary) than the older folk. Get discussions going. Be open. It's exciting! There are good questions about humanness and human relationships.

Teacher 3: Let the students lead the way, because they actually have a stronger feeling for their own identities than is usual for young people. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable. This younger generation is more gender-fluid and comfortable with sexual identity than previous generations. I think this comfort is their gift to us! ♦

For further reading, recommended by contributors to this article: *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Essays on Human Sexuality and the Education of Youth in Waldorf Schools*, Douglas Gerwin, ed., Waldorf Publications, 2014.

Nine Dancing Princesses

— Susan Bruck

A few years ago I taught a nursery class which consisted of nine three-year-old girls, although one boy joined us mid-year. Our administrator nicknamed the girls "The Nine Dancing Princesses." We often think that boys present more challenges in our early childhood classes, but this particular group was the most challenging one I've had in my fourteen years of teaching. In this article, I will share my observations, reflections, and ongoing questions.

Here is a snippet of a typical play time with the princesses:

Six girls dance together as they sing "All the Single Ladies" by Beyonce. This is definitely not a pentatonic song, nor is it in the mood of the fifth. Lizzie¹ sits in my lap and cries. She tells me about

a nightmare she had about lots of bad men breaking into her house with guns and bombs who wanted to kill her and her family. Carlie is with my assistant teacher, Ms. Kate, who is bringing a tub of water into the classroom for dishwashing (sadly, we don't have sinks in our classrooms). Sarah is still home in bed and won't arrive for another hour or so.

In their enthusiastic dancing, Jessica bumps into Terry and Flora. Terry falls to the ground and starts to cry. Flora pushes Jessica back. A loud argument ensues. I put Lizzie onto my rocking chair. She starts to cry very loudly. By the time I get to the girls, who are only a few feet away, I hear the words I came to dread that year. "You're not invited to my birthday party." Jessica bursts into tears. By now Ms. Kate is back and is passing out little pieces of dough to most of the girls. There is a little arguing about who gets to

¹ To protect the privacy of the children, I am not using their real names.

sit next to her but nothing too exciting. I put an arm around Flora and Jessica and pull them close.

"Mommies and daddies decide who will come to birthday parties," I say.

"My daddies said I could invite whoever I want," is the reply.

"Come help me knit," I say as I take their hands and get my knitting basket. The basket contains my knitting, which this year was often full of holes, and lots of little balls of yarn as identical as I can make them. There are also some extra wooden needles and sticks. The three of us sit on the floor near my rocking chair, and I give Jessica and Flora each a little ball of yarn and some needles. They immediately start poking the sticks into the ball of yarn and winding it around the needles. I offer the same to Lizzie, who is still sitting on the rocking chair. She declines but climbs onto my lap and holds my hands as I knit.

"All the Single Ladies" was the theme song for that year. It was a funny, inappropriate song to hear coming from such little girls. It was also an interesting choice as they entered their threes and experienced their first feeling of being separate from the world as singular beings or, dare I say, "single ladies." I do suspect, however, that these girls experienced this separation earlier. I could tell they felt very alone and were very sensitive. And it showed in the classroom. There were few moments of harmony during this year. Most of those came with teacher-led activities like circle and story time. And there were also moments of amazing creative play as well.

The other refrain for the year became "You're not coming to my birthday party," followed by the uninvited one bursting into tears even if she had just said the same thing to someone else. Four of my little girls—Flora, Jessica, Terry and Janie especially—fought over everything and nothing. They didn't believe the word "no" applied to them, but felt free to use it with their friends and also their teachers. These girls experienced life in extremes of joy, anger and sadness; there was no middle ground and they switched among these extremes with great speed.

With my other classes, as I got to know the children I could generally see when a child was getting overwhelmed, hungry, tired, or about to lose it. I could usually stay close enough to intervene if necessary. But I couldn't keep up with these children. I felt sad to see them struggling and often frustrated that I couldn't provide them with more comfort.

Some of them had extra challenges. Lizzie, the girl with the nightmares, often arrived late after dropping off her brother in one of the mixed-age classrooms. Delivering him to class was quite a trial, and she was exhausted by the time she arrived. She often sat in my lap and told me about horrible nightmares, although sometimes she just cried. Her mother was shocked when I told her about these dreams because her daughter had never mentioned them at home. Her mom did start dropping her off before her brother, which helped somewhat, but she was still a troubled child. My gesture with little ones and their families is generally one of welcoming them into my classroom, our school and Waldorf education. I like to take time to get to know them and let them settle into their time at school and in life. I usually don't recommend outside intervention. But I did encourage Lizzie's parents to get an evaluation for her.

Sarah, the one who arrived late after sleeping in on that typical day, wore the same velvet party dress to school for months—when she came. She had a hard time waking up in the morning. Her mom often didn't bring her at all or brought her halfway through the morning. She was very particular about what she wore. In winter she refused to wear a coat, boots, hat, or gloves when we were dressing to go outside. I started carrying her winter gear (and sometimes her if the ground was wet) outside when I realized that she would put everything on when she felt the cold.

The remaining three girls were easy-going and sweet as could be.

I had been teaching either the nursery class or parent-child classes for ten years when this group came along. The year before, I had had a class with mostly boys. They argued a lot, especially over a wooden disk they named the "greener"; and they loved to play with guns. I worked hard to redirect their play. We started our day in the playground. I would playfully pat them down for weapons when they arrived. It made them laugh and eventually the gun play transformed into other more acceptable forms of play. I worked hard with that group, but I wasn't bothered by their behavior. I knew that these were natural forms of play and interaction for young children, especially boys.

But the meanness of the girls bothered me. I hadn't seen this kind of verbal fighting much in such young girls. They pushed my buttons more than any other group I've worked with. Although I didn't

express my feelings in the classroom, I'm sure they could feel my discomfort on some level. I worked with meditation to transform my own feelings but didn't completely succeed. I also worked with my daily rhythm to try to meet them where they were. I had always started my day outside, feeling that it was good for the children to have a chance to run and play after what may already have been a stressful morning of getting ready for school and driving through morning traffic. I started out the year the same way. But as the cold weather settled in, which happens early in Chicago, I decided to start the day inside. We had only been able to use the playground from eight to nine and then we were inside until noon. I noticed that the outdoor time didn't really help them settle down, and the three hours that followed felt like a long time indoors. I felt they needed the warmth and boundaries of being inside to make the transition into the school day.

To start the day, parents brought children to the door. I greeted them. My assistant washed their hands in warm lavender water and dried them with a soft towel. They gathered around Ms. Kate and me as we waited for all the children to arrive so we could start our circle time, which was now at the beginning of the morning. This was usually the best part of the day, although a couple of the girls cried almost every day when they got dropped off.

Free play was the most difficult time. Because I couldn't tell when they might switch from dancing to fighting, I spent free playtime near them. That wasn't hard; my classroom was very small. They loved to help with whatever activity was going on. Ms. Kate and I tried to both have an activity going on during playtime that they could participate in. I usually kept mine very portable, with supplies I could keep either in a basket or my apron pocket so I could move quickly when I needed to. I had the knitting basket with knitting needles and yarn for me and lots of little balls of yarn and some extra knitting needles for the girls. I sat on the floor or in my rocking chair and knitted. Four or five girls often sat with me on the floor or my lap as we knitted together. They really liked this. They had to stay next to me with the knitting needles, but the balls of yarn often were used as strings of lights to decorate houses for parties. When the parties started they came around and offered me, and everyone else, wine or beer. I generally opted for tea.

We also sewed together. They helped me pull the needle through the wool felt when we made heart shaped lavender sachets for Valentine's Day. Whenever I sewed I had loosely woven fabric, wooden needles, and doubled thread, already knotted, for them to sew however they wanted. Having everything prepared ahead of time was essential, as was having enough for everyone to have their own. We played with wool fleece, fluffed it, felted it, or turned it into indoor snow. And we did lots and lots of washing. We washed the dishes, the napkins, the placemats, the toys, the stones, the furniture, the chairs, the doors. My classroom was never cleaner.

In my inner work that year, I often contemplated this quote from *The Kingdom of Childhood*²:

In so-called 'good children,' as a rule, their bodies have already become heavy, even in infancy, and the spirit cannot properly take hold of the body. Such children are quiet; they do not scream and rush about, they sit still and make no noise. The spirit is not active within them, because their bodies offer such resistance. It is often the case that the bodies of so-called good children offer resistance to the spirit.

In the less well-behaved children who make a great deal of healthy noise, who shout properly and give a lot of trouble, the spirit is active, though of course in a clumsy way, for it has been transported from heaven to earth; the spirit is active within them. It is making use of the body. You may even regard the wild screams of a child as most enthralling, simply because you thereby experience the martyrdom the spirit has to endure when it descends into a child-body.

I appreciated their struggles, although I'm not sure I ever reached the point of enthrallment. I loved them immensely and observed them carefully to see how I could best care for them. I had my colleagues come in and meet them as well. They supported me with love and encouragement. I had been teaching long enough at that point to know that some year's classes were just harder than others. I generally resisted the

² Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood: Introductory Talks on Waldorf Education*, Anthroposophic Press 1995, Page 8

urge to blame—myself, the parents, the children, the world—and instead asked myself what I could do to support these girls who were struggling to find their way into their bodies and the earth.

I also often thought about this quote from *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*³:

Thus the joy of the child in and with his environment must be reckoned among the forces that build and mould the physical organs. Teachers he needs with happy look and manner, and above all, with an honest unaffected love. A love which as it were streams through the physical environment of the child with warmth may literally be said to 'hatch out' the forms of the physical organs.

The child who lives in such an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who has around him really good examples for his imitation, is living in his right element. One should therefore strictly guard against anything being done in the child's presence that he must not imitate.

I did love them for who they were, even though it bothered me when they were mean to each other. I did my best to infuse the environment with warmth and joy even though I often didn't see the results in the children at the time. Our work together and being close to my assistant and me seemed to have a calming influence on them. Even though my preference is to let the children play and work out their disagreements by themselves as much as possible, I intervened a lot that year. The children didn't seem to be able to find their way through yet.

I also worked with the parents, both individually and in parent meetings. After I told the children that mommies and daddies decide who comes to birthday parties, I realized I should make sure that the parents and I were on the same page. We might not have been at first, but when I explained the situation the parents worked with me. I spoke with them about the importance of providing rhythm and lots of warmth for their children. We read *Simplicity Parenting* by Kim John Payne and discussed it. I felt it was especially

important for the adults caring for these girls to avoid what Kim calls the "four pillars of too much: too much stuff, too many choices, too much information, and too much speed."⁴ It was good to work together. We all needed support to take care of these spirited, strong girls. Most of the things we tried helped, but the girls still struggled. And that was okay.

When we were placing the children in the mixed-age classes for the following year, I suggested that my four feisty girls be put in separate classes. But for reasons I won't go into here, they ended up together for the next two to three years. They continued to be challenging to their classmates and teachers during their time in the early childhood program.

Some of the girls moved into our grade school, and they have settled into themselves more. I look forward to knowing them as they grow. I believe that karma brought them together and brought them to me. I hope their struggles in early childhood, and the struggles of their teachers and parents, serve to make them strong and healthy as they grow into adulthood. I know that I did my best to nurture them. And I learned a lot from my nine dancing princesses.

Some years before I had this class, Kim John Payne worked with our faculty on Social Inclusion. One of the things he spoke about was the gift of conflict. He told us that conflict is an opportunity for growth. He spoke about how many adults suffer from harmony addiction. My biggest lesson from the year of the princesses was making peace with the conflicts and tears that occurred all year long. The parents and Ms. Kate and I did all we could for these girls. But all of our love and care didn't make their lives easy. We did provide them with a safe and loving place where they could struggle and find their way into their bodies and the world. I know I am a better person for my year with the dancing princesses. ♦

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3 Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*, http://wn.rsarchive.org/Articles/GA034/English/RSP1965/EduChi_essay.html, published online June 23, 2002.

4 Kim John Payne, M.Ed., with Lisa M Ross, *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids*, Ballantine Books, 2009, Page 5.

Girls and Boys — Feminine and Masculine

— Louise deForest

Excerpted in condensed form from the book You're Not the Boss of Me!—Understanding the Six/Seven-Year-Old Transformation, edited by Ruth Ker (WECAN, 2007).

When I was coming of age in the late sixties, one of the central ideas of the feminist movement was that boys and girls were essentially the same in nature, and that it was the cultural environment around the child that helped to create the traditional masculine and feminine roles that the child would eventually adopt as his or her own. The materialistic viewpoint of the time was that if you raised a boy as a nurturer, that was what he would become; if a girl were raised to be competitive and more aggressive, she would develop a more masculine relationship to the world. In other words, it was the old nature-or-nurture question, and it was believed that we, as parents and educators, could determine through our cultural expectations the gender characteristics we wanted to foster in the next generation, regardless of the sex of the children in question.

I tried hard to believe this and closely examined my own gender beliefs and behaviors, but there was also something that did not ring quite true about this picture. In looking back, I think my uneasiness with this viewpoint was that it was too one-dimensional. It assumed that we were all blank slates at birth, waiting to be formed and molded by the world around us, instead of recognizing that we all come to earth with certain talents and experiences and intentions. This way of thinking also did not recognize that everything in this world exists between polarities, and that the masculine and feminine poles are archetypal forces that live and are at work in everything to do with life. These archetypal polarities are central to the development and expression of the human spirit. I know that, as a girl, I experienced life differently than my brothers and that it was significant to me that I was born with a female body. I also know that growing up in a male-dominated family and being the mother of three sons encouraged me to diligently pursue my tasks of uncovering, strengthening and developing my more feminine qualities.

Each individual is so unique and mysterious and none of us is one-sided—purely masculine or purely feminine—but, rather, always weaving an intricate tapestry of the two together. To say “This is

masculine, this is feminine,” negates the individuality of each one of us. Ultimately the higher inner essence of a human being has nothing to do with being a man or a woman.

Rudolf Steiner describes that at the beginning of human evolution there was no differentiation into two sexes. Each individual being carried both masculine and feminine forces within.

And in a far-distant future time, we will once again return to a genderless form but now with the self-acquired ability to reproduce ourselves through the power of the word. He says, “And this in the future will be the birth of the new human being—that he is spoken forth by another.”¹

Steiner does tell us that, through repeated earthly lives, we have the opportunity to experience both realities, taking on a male or a female body in an effort to most effectively meet our karma and our destiny in each life. We tend to swing between the two from life to life but occasionally, in the interest of developing certain experiences or capacities, we can reincarnate repeatedly in one gender.

We do not want to enter into stereotypes of the masculine and feminine. In our pledge to recognize each individuality, we decry stereotypes as unfairly narrowing and confining. In the realm of spiritual companionship, male and female are balanced. There are, however, gestures associated with each sex. So, could we characterize the feminine impulses as: intuitive, reflective, inward, process-oriented, fluid and flexible, receptive, softer (both physically and psychologically), subjective, spiritually-oriented, emotional, imaginative and nurturing? To characterize men, could we say that they tend towards being more individualistic, experience more through their physical nature, are goal-oriented, objective, intellectual, clear and detached, rational, and more earthly and concentrated? The physical bodies of men and women say much about their inner soul gestures. Aside from the obvious outer physical differences, men have denser bones and more muscle mass than do

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Theosophy of the Rosicrucian*, 148.

women, making men, by their very physicality, more deeply embedded in the earthly realm. If one thinks in terms of forms, the male would be the straight line, the female, a circle. If they were represented by the elements, one would be fire and the other water. But what is clear is that the masculine and the feminine are two sides of the same polarity and that together they form a whole. They are day (the masculine) and night (feminine). The female, through her imagination, longs for an intuitive union with the spiritual world. Through the soul life of woman and through her thoughtful understanding of nature, woman can ennoble and refine the willful nature and the vigorous strength of men. Men, on the other hand, through their deep empathy with the material world and their capacity for clear, objective thought and their ability to judge and evaluate, can both transform physical substance and support the evolutionary task of the development of a sense of self for all of humanity. We also know that each of these inclinations can develop into extremes as negative attributes.

On the level of the older child in the kindergarten, those of us who work with these children are well aware of the differences between boys and girls and are often at our wit's end to carry their impulses with love and deep respect. Let's take a look at two average six-year-olds who have been in the kindergarten and know how to play; we'll call them David and Sophia.

Setting the stage, let's say that it's eight o'clock in the morning and the kindergarten is now open. I can hear someone crashing against the outer door and I know it is David. David is hypo-tactile (many boys are burdened with sensory-integration disorders, especially regarding the sense of touch) and must bang against things to get a sense of where he is in space and where he ends and where the world begins. He throws his jacket towards his cubby (not in it, mind you), and bursts into the room with a familiar look in his eye. The calm orderliness of the classroom seems suddenly shattered by a wild wind. He looks around to see who is here; if

he is the first one to arrive, he may run over to me to tell me the latest news; but if there are other boys already present, he does not give me so much as a glance but, with booming voice, begins to organize the play. Chairs are turned over and become trucks or snowplows; blocks are used to build space ships or piled one on top of the other to make a restaurant or an office building. Voices get louder and the play can quickly get out of hand as the boys rush to grab other materials or "rob" another house. The sounds of motors or explosions fill the air as they careen from one scenario to another, barking orders and playing with an intensity and concentration that is often exhausting to watch. When it is time to go outside, David can hardly contain himself; he pushes and shoves to be the leader of our walk. When told he must learn how to wait patiently before he can be a leader, he may kick the cubby (or punch the chosen leader as he or she passes him); and then he mopes for the whole time that we are going on our walk. When we finally arrive at our chosen play spot, again David launches himself forward, running off with his friends and in no time at all the boys are wrestling, pushing, and shouting. They run at full speed and crash into each other or tackle each other as they pass by; sticks

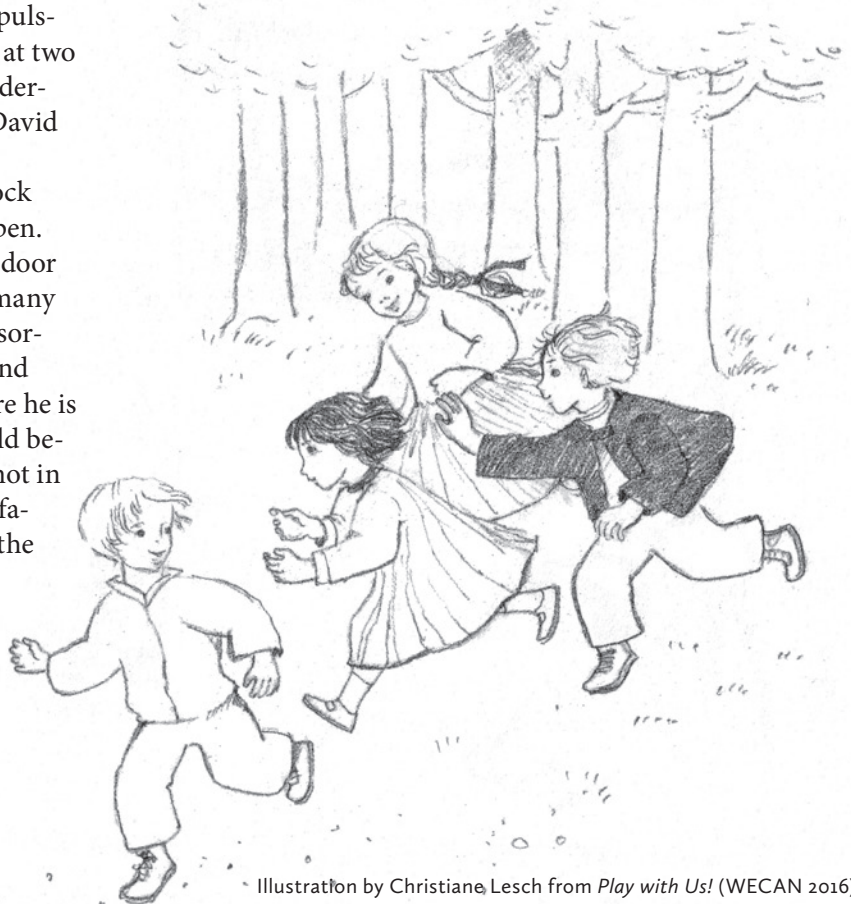


Illustration by Christiane Lesch from *Play with Us!* (WECAN 2016)

become guns and they hide in the bushes waiting to ambush an innocent (or not) passerby. Sometimes they will build traps made of sticks over holes they have just dug, hoping to trap the girls or an animal—preferably one or several of the girls. They test their strength and agility, hanging from ropes or pulling themselves up into the trees, going across the monkey bars or digging to China in the sandbox.

For a few years I had a kindergarten on a farm and the children engaged in caring for the animals and tending the land. When it was a workday, David would engage in the work with the same enthusiasm and concentration he used when at play, and he prided himself (and competed with the others) on his work. Indeed, I often noticed that after working

hard physically, David could enter into play more easily and did not seem so out of touch with himself and others. Always one to make himself scarce when it was dishwashing time, on the farm he was always the first to volunteer and the last to finish and he had a special affinity with all the animals. At circle time, he balked at the group activity and remarked that what we did was “too babyish” for him. It was only his love and respect for me and the boundaries that I provided for him that carried him through this difficult time.

Sophia, on the other hand, comes into the kindergarten more quietly, pausing on the threshold to our room, and often has difficulty separating from her parents. She, too, looks around the room and greets her friends but always comes over to lean against

me or to tell me a little secret before searching out her playmates. Sophia’s play tends to be quieter and more family-oriented and, just as with the boys, much time is spent assigning roles: “You can be the baby, you can be the Daddy and I’ll be the babysitter.” While all older children tend to talk more than actually play, Sophia and her “family” of friends spend a lot of time talking and whispering and watching the boys. Every time someone bothers them or does something they shouldn’t do, especially if that person is a boy, Sophia comes running to me to recount the latest outrage and often a few tears are shed. Sophia and her “family” now put on a puppet show, draping the cloths beautifully on a playstand and gathering all the materials they will need. An argument breaks out among the girls over who should use which puppet: who had a turn last time and who should rightfully do it this time. More tears are shed and a few mean words are spoken before peace once again is restored and all the chairs are placed around the puppet show. After much persuasion (and manipulation) on the part of the girls, everyone is seated to watch the puppet show but Sophia spends most of her time reminding the boys to sit still or to be quiet rather than move the puppets. The boys soon tire of this and wander back to their play.

Sophia and her friends are now all seated in a corner of the classroom making plans for seeing each other after school.



Photo by Margaret Loescher from *A Year in the Woods* (WECAN 2016)

As another girl in the class approaches to play with them, Sophia quickly tells her that she cannot play and closes off their corner with a playstand while she and her friends giggle. "We don't want to play with her," says Sophia to her friends and they all snicker in agreement. The excluded child comes to me in tears, we reapproach the group, and Sophia and her friends reluctantly make room for her in their house. When it is outside time, Sophia hurries to hold hands with her "best friend" (which changes frequently) and pushes all others away. She is quiet once she has her partner and is ready to go for a walk, watching me all the while, hoping that I will see how well-behaved she is and choose her to be the leader.

While Sophia loves to swing holding hands with her friend in the next swing, today she runs to sit under the low hanging branches of a pine tree and there she and a few other girls make fairy rings and gnome houses. They are very intent in their play and wonderful miniature worlds are created. Of course, they also like to run and are physically active — especially if there is a boy or two who wants to chase them, whereupon they run screaming to the teacher complaining that the boys are bothering them.

On the farm, Sophia was initially hesitant to take up the work, not wanting to get dirty, and showed disinterest in that kind of work. After a few months, however, she became a very hard and capable worker and took special pride in pushing the full wheelbarrow over to the compost pile all by herself. She loved the baby lambs and calves but was a bit hesitant with the larger animals. In the classroom, Sophia knew all the words to the songs and all the gestures of the circle and primly took part in the circle, occasionally casting a disparaging look at any boy who was not participating as he should. She would also try to catch my eyes so that I would be sure to see the boy who was misbehaving and that she herself was not. At goodbye time she would give me and her current favorite friends a hug before skipping off with her parent.

Of course this is a one-sided and exaggerated picture. Many boys love to play with the dolls and many girls are incredibly active physically. But these examples do highlight the different ways that boys and girls tend to learn about the world and each other. Boys tend to know each other physically, bumping up against each other and wrestling; girls tend to meet on a more emotional, feeling level, and it is the social world which holds their interest.

I should also hasten to add that children in early childhood are not as fixed in their gender-tendencies as we observe people in their later years to be. In a way, children in these early years are still beyond gender, still living in the unity of the spiritual world and in the impulses that brought them to earth. Only very gradually will they solidify into male and female, through the seven-year phases of human development, until finally, as young adults, the higher self will take on these gender qualities more strongly. But all children carry the seeds of gender identity within them. What a responsibility it is for parents and teachers today to keep open to the possibility that children need to be free to establish their pre-birth intentions about the particular configuration of their masculine and feminine qualities.

And so what does this mean for the teacher working with boys and girls in a mixed-age classroom?

How can we deal with boy energy in our classrooms? Our kindergarten classrooms tend to be very feminine in nature, striving to meet the young child's sense of wholeness and to welcome them with beauty to their time here on earth. The rhythms of the day, week, and year give them security and help them to enter into earthly rhythms. These, too, can be presented in very feminine ways. So when boys enter into our classrooms in their often boisterous way, it can feel as if they are wrecking what we have worked so hard to create. We want things to remain soft, ordered, and controlled. I am by no means suggesting that we should throw up our hands and "let boys be boys." But I do think the key to working with boys is to love their energy, to be thankful for their urge to transform the physical, to enjoy how they get things done, and to celebrate how they can make a difference. We must admire and enjoy their physicality and meet their bumping, banging and yelling with good humor and understanding. We can gently or more sternly bring them back to rightful behavior, but we must carry an inner picture of the masculine forces that are expressing themselves and know that this child really cannot do otherwise, for it would be against his nature.

The girls, too, need our patient understanding, but for many of us they are easier to deal with because they are willing and able to sit quietly, doing handwork or keeping us company, and they are so much more demonstrative with their affection. As women, we tend to relate to them more easily than

we do to the boys. However, girls certainly have their challenges, too, with their tendency to manipulate, to hold grudges and to play emotional games. How straightforward boys can seem in comparison! The tendency of girls to be “hurt to the core” also needs our guidance and courage. And here, I must express my undying appreciation for the male kindergarten teachers and the invaluable role they play in our early childhood programs. Would that there were more men for our little ones! But I daresay that, for the men working in the nursery or kindergarten, it is the girls, not the boys, whom they find most confusing. It’s interesting to contemplate whether, in the classroom, it might be that women find it more difficult to understand boys, while men might feel more at a loss to find a way to embrace what girls bring.

Gender roles are always shifting to meet and reflect the times. Today I can see efforts being made by people all over the globe to bring together masculine and feminine, to expand what it means to be a woman or a man, and to break apart old stereotypes. We are no longer content or fulfilled living in predetermined roles. Today, many men are the primary caretakers of their children while their wives carry the financial responsibility of the family. Women are encouraged to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, and their work is finally being acknowledged and compensated on a level commensurate with men. Men are reveling in exploring what it means to be a man, broadening that definition from the narrow constraints of their fathers’ interpretations, through deep questions, self-reflection and open sharing with each other. But our explorations of masculine and feminine are still deeply mystifying and we have a long way to go.

So it seems to me that one of the many challenges presented by working with boys and girls every day in our classrooms is to come to know and embrace the male and female qualities living in each one of us. I am more masculine in nature; and I find it easy and enjoyable to work in the fields, to build furniture, to cut down trees, all of which I have done with my classes. It is harder for me to create a space—a beautifully-draped, well-ordered classroom with exquisite wool pictures, a full nature table, and so on—and then to sit back and allow whatever will come, to come. Quietly sewing in a corner was, in the beginning of my years of teaching, an excruciatingly difficult endeavor. And yet, through the children, I was able to learn to connect with parts of myself that longed for expression.

Both boys and girls are hungry to be led by our healing example. Children want to see that we as teachers and parents, through our own comfort with the many dimensions of who we are, can accept, love and respect the life of unknown possibilities that lie before them. This requires flexibility of soul and a sense of adventure on our part. How can we stretch our understanding so that we can truly say, whether we are male or female ourselves, “I love the way girls and boys manifest the essence of who they are!”

In thinking of the masculine-feminine polarity, I am reminded of another polarity: that of light (male) and love (female). In talking about the human being’s ability to offer healing to others and to the world, Rudolf Steiner says: “Ultimately everything that happens in the realms of soul and matter on earth depends on the way in which these elements [light and love] weave into one another in our life.”² ♦

2 Rudolf Steiner, *Manifestations of Karma*, 198.

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Louise deForest—A

long-time early childhood educator, Louise works as a lecturer, consultant, and mentor internationally as well as in the US. Louise is a WECAN board member and, as such, also is a North American delegate to IASWECE.

Marjorie Thatcher

Marjorie Thatcher stands with the first teachers to consolidate Waldorf early childhood in North America. A long-time early childhood teacher in Vancouver, British Columbia, Marjorie was a member of the first WECAN board and co-founder with Dorothy Olsen of the West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy (WCI).

Marjorie was first introduced to anthroposophy in her native New Zealand at age seven, after a brother with Down syndrome was born to her family. An aunt, who had studied extensively in Dornach, decided to found a curative home in New Zealand, and Marjorie's brother was one of the first children there. From visits to her brother Marjorie remembers the medical doctor at the home, Dr. Maria Glas, as one of the most interesting people there. Dr. Glas, who had known Rudolf Steiner, was a remarkable individual and lecturer in her own right.

At some point Marjorie took a course in eurythmy but did not develop a connection to anthroposophy at that time. She trained as a nurse. Further studies to learn midwifery led her to Canada where she met her husband, Philip Thatcher. The children born to Marjorie and Philip called her to anthroposophy. One Michaelmas Day, when the Vancouver Waldorf School was still housed in a church, she visited and set her mind to have her children placed in the school. Marjorie and Philip made the big move to Vancouver from northern British Columbia in 1972, and enrolled the children in Waldorf programs. Deep interest in anthroposophy awoke in Marjorie and Philip, and both went to England to train at Emerson College. Francis Edmunds was one of their teachers. Philip did the Foundation Year, during which he studied extensively with John Davy as preparation for his Waldorf teaching career. Marjorie felt a strong impulse to teach. She focused on gaining the necessary background at Emerson.

Marjorie was invited to teach at the Vancouver school in 1976 by Dorothy Olsen, but she had no teaching experience. At that time there was no English language early childhood teacher training, so

Marjorie did practicums at Michael Hall in England and with Margret Meyerkort. Marjorie was inspired by Margret's conscious intention with everything she did in her classroom. All of Margret's teaching rose from a deep grounding in anthroposophy.

Marjorie began teaching older kindergarten children upon her return to Vancouver. There were the usual struggles with trying to create suitable environments in church basements and other rented spaces. She remembers doing this in six or seven different settings. There was difficulty in connecting parents to the school in these early days as well. A permanent classroom was secured in 1981, but it was only in the last years of working with young children that Marjorie got to teach in an environment intentionally designed for children. Through a government grant and generous financial support from a dedicated sponsor, Marjorie brought forward the impulse to build a new early childhood facility. All teachers create the best space we can wherever we find ourselves, but having the right kind of space best supports what we are doing. For Marjorie's kindergarten to have light pouring in through windows to a consciously designed, child-nurturing environment was a divine change from dingy basement rooms.

At an early childhood conference in Toronto in 1984, Joan Almon announced a meeting to form a North American kindergarten association, which was eventually to become WECAN. Marjorie knew that she had to be there. This was the beginning of serving on the Association's board for about fifteen years. The Association formed as a body of individual teachers rather than institutions. The work of the board in these early days was to keep track of the small initiatives in one's geographic area. Sitting in

someone's living room, the group divided up North America. Marjorie was "gifted" the area north-south from Alaska to Portland and east to Saskatoon. She began to organize twice-yearly spring and fall conferences for early childhood educators. These well-attended meetings benefitted from presenters such as Joan Almon and Margret Myerkort, among others. Eventually conferences began at Rudolf Steiner College as well to support early childhood work on the West Coast.

Formally organized trainings for Waldorf early childhood teachers were eventually organized by Susan Howard on the East Coast at what has become Sunbridge Institute and by Janet Kellman at Rudolf Steiner College in California. But Canadian students could not afford to travel to the U.S. for training. Marjorie Thatcher and Dorothy Olsen, both WECAN board members, were urged to create something for Canada. So the impulse that became WCI was born in 1995. Susan and Janet supplied all their documents and a year was spent in formulating this new training. The training program currently meets summers in Duncan, British Columbia, and winter and spring in Vancouver at each area's respective Waldorf schools—"country mice" in summer and "city mice" the other two sessions. One of WCI's strengths is its committed faculty, many of whom have taught from Waldorf early childhood's beginnings in the region. WCI is now the second largest Waldorf teacher training program in North America.

Our current times show many changes from when Marjorie began her teaching in the 1970s. In her study and practicum time in England, she remembers running around and copying all the songs and verses she could find. She was so impressed by how generous other teachers were in sharing their materials. Marjorie had from her own childhood a rich experience of nursery rhymes and traditional games played in the school yard without teachers. A musical mother was also a blessing. Margret Meyerkort brought traditional English rhymes and folk tales as first resources. Most notable are the Wynstones

collections, some of the very first English-language resources for Waldorf early childhood educators. Dr. von Kügelgen also shepherded translation of resources from German into English.

Marjorie sees teacher training opportunities as a great advantage for our teachers now. When she and others began, early childhood teachers had to ask their own questions and work with the experienced teachers they could find, mostly those in Europe. Early childhood teachers had to acquire skills for themselves. Conferences began as a way to enrich and support the teachers' "self-training." Now expectations have changed across the continent. Teachers in Canada are required to hold state certification and early childhood degrees as well as Waldorf training certificates. It is wonderful that teachers now have the resource of thoughtfully designed training programs. Marjorie also sees it as a strong professional step that our Waldorf teachers are expected to complete teacher training programs as well as do individual research. But we also must not lose the impulse to carry forward what we have learned and make it authentically our own through our striving as students and teachers.

A special love of Marjorie's is the Ellersiek hand-gesture games. At one point she created a parent-child group when there was a lot of pressure to put three-year-olds in school. Marjorie thought the children were far too little. The Ellersiek games were a wonderful tool to share with parents in this group. The games also enliven work in the classrooms.

Marjorie is now retired from active teaching in the classroom and from WCI. She feels privileged that she has been able to bring together the things she has most loved—her study of nursing, work with children, studies in anthroposophy, and work with adults—into a rich and full professional life. Now on her Vancouver desk sit sources of traditional singing games. What treasure from this research will join the riches Marjorie has shared with children, teacher-training students, and colleagues over her decades of service to Waldorf early childhood education? ♦

Nurturing Our Work

Cultivating Spaciousness: Working with the Child from Birth to Age Three

— Magdalena Toran

When I am asked to lead a conversation or write an article or teach a class about working with children before the birth of the “I” consciousness, I decline. How do you talk about holiness? How do you teach in the physical what is mostly non-physical? I am a small person in so many ways—how do I speak about infiniteness?

A recent unexpected shift in my teaching load gave me fewer parent-child classes than usual. I found myself feeling spacious in my teaching in a way that I had not felt for a long, long while. Those of us in schools or with the bustle of a modern life often have every last nook and cranny of our beings filled-up. We have things to remember and things to do, places to go and people and projects to tend to. Our inner space is filled with doing. This is so very different from the nature of the very young child. The young child’s inner space is filled with being-ness.

This inner space of being-ness is perhaps best described in pictures. Imagine a cathedral or place of worship just before the members come, or a meadow on a still summer morning, or a well-loved and well-tended home when the family has gone out for the day. Each of these place-images is filled with human-spiritual activity, but they are still and spacious. This is my sense of the nature of very young children. They are cathedral-like. We often feel a holiness and heavenliness around young children. We sense that they have not yet come into their physical bodies. The largeness that they are hovers about them. It is a moment for us as adults to perceive the vastness of who they are, before it enters more deeply into the physical with the first birth of the “I.” They are bringing the divine to earth. How do we cultivate our own inner gesture of spaciousness so as to receive them?

This cultivation of spaciousness is a deeply individual path. I believe the child’s inner space of being-ness is a place that lives inside of each of us. It is the nature of our own being, as proven to us by the

children in our care. Each of us possesses the capacities to cultivate spaciousness again. We only need to go looking for that place within ourselves again, and once we discover it we should grow it, cultivate it and protect it. Once we remember what the young child’s spaciousness feels like, we can access it in our work with them.

Now there are many things that support us in this profound activity and many are the foundations of Waldorf early childhood education, such as the appropriate cultivation of our physical environment and daily rhythm, gifts to the children of elevated speech and song, ample time in nature, gentle, patient care-giving and a quality of timelessness. If we keep our physical spaces well tended and tidy, both the children and we find restfulness. If our daily rhythm is consistent and well-paced; if our speech is loving, clear and joyful; if our artistic offerings are simple, beautiful and slow; if we have unhurried time in the woods, gardens, fields, by the stream, in our familiar places in nature; if we offer our open hands to the children; then they have the resources they need to grow, to build strong bodies and to welcome the heavenliness that they are into those developing physical homes.

All of these things support us in our tending to and caring for young children. But above all it is our spacious being-ness that allows them their deepest rest and greatest comfort. When I encounter a child, I notice that I instinctually slow my movements, soften my tone, and drop a little deeper into myself. When a child who has been restless comes to sit with me for dressing or for circle, I drop even deeper into that space of stillness and being-ness, coming the closest I can to the origin of who they are. Most often, the breathing of the child slows, her gaze softens and she rests. Then I can move slowly and tenderly as I help her dress or wash her hands or just sit quietly and gaze out into the world.

To be with young children in this way is my greatest joy because it feels the most true. Cultivating the inner space of beingness feels true to who they are and true to what they are asking of us. It is worth going on our own inner journey and practice to find and cultivate this space within us so as to support our children in their profound act of becoming. ♦

Magdalena Toran—

Magdalena is parent-and-child teacher at the Hartsbrook School. She is active in birth-to-three work and serves on the WECAN board.

For the Classroom

Bridge of Gold

— Freya Jaffke

Two older children stand opposite one another and form a gate with their hands and arms. Quietly, so the others do not hear, you agree which one will be the “Sun” and which one will be the “Moon.”

The other children form a line in single file and, led by an adult, walk through the gate and continue walking around the bridge and through the gate in a figure eight while singing the above song. At the end of the song, with the words “sticks and spears and laughter,” the bridge children lower their arms and capture the child standing on the bridge.

The captured child is asked: “Do you want Sun or Moon?”

If he says “Sun” then he must stand behind the bridge-child who is the “Sun” and the game begins again.

After all the children are captured, it has to be decided which row of children are going to be “devils” and which are going to be “angels.” A counting verse could be helpful.

Or, the adult could present both hands to one of the bridge-children. In one fist is hidden a small rock, for instance, and the child must choose. If she chooses the fist with the rock then all the children standing behind her are “devils” and the other row are the “angels.”

Now, first the row of “angels” are cradled (best by two adults) by the child lying across the adult’s outstretched, clasped arms. The following verse is spoken very rhythmically:

*Angel, angel, heavy laden,
With so much silver and gold;*



*High in Heaven, High in Heaven,
And back to the Earth below.*

The child is set back on the ground with the last line of the verse.

Next, one of the “devils” stands between the adults’ locked arms and is carefully and rhythmically pushed forward and back with the following verse:

*A devil is rolled,
rattled and shaken,
Right out of the house
he’s [or she’s] taken!*

If this game is played with a mixed-age group that includes three-year-olds, they may leave the waiting line because often they are not yet able to stand in line and wait until everyone is captured. We should just let them do as they please in this regard. It does not bother the older children if a younger one leaves for a while to go play something else. If you have a large group of children, you may decide to have two children captured at once.

Experience has shown that the shaking and rattling of the “devil” is so popular that the children will often get in line again to be “shaken,” even the ones who were “angels.”

Bridge of Gold

Melody: Ch. Jahr



Bridge of gold, oh gold - en bridge, now who has bro - ken you? The
gold - smith, the gold - smith, and his young daught - er too.
Go a - cross; Go a - cross; the last one we will
cap - ture with sticks and spears and laugh - ter.



Illustrations by Christiane Lesch

Excerpted from the book *Play with Us!* by Freya Jaffke, translated by Nina Kuettel (WECAN, 2016).

Freya Jaffke is a master Steiner/Waldorf kindergarten teacher and teacher trainer from Germany who has lectured and offered workshops for educators and parents in many countries. Her books on early childhood have sold over a quarter of a million copies worldwide.

The Three Little Pigs: An Introduction

— Laurie Clark

This story is a fairytale from England. It reflects the process of building up the physical body of the young child, in this case, building a “house” (the body). Playing the game of making houses for the young child is a recapitulation of the individuality incarnating into the body. Children love to play “building houses,” covering various objects with materials that they can fit into and make a “home.” Playstands, tents, material over chairs, pieces of wood and whatever objects are available are used over and over again to build, take down and rebuild “houses.”

I think of the wolf in this case as being the childhood illness or fever that tries to “blow the house in.” Each time children go through a fever process, they come out of it gaining more of their own individuality and

are a little bit different after each illness. An illness that has been taken in and then overcome, especially if a child has had the opportunity to work through the fever without much intervention, but also with caution and sensitivity, is of great benefit to the young child.

It makes sense that there would be three different characters, pigs in this case, that one after the other build a sturdier house than the one before. This happens three times and each time the “house” (the body) is more resilient after it is rebuilt (overcoming the illness) again from a stronger material: from straw to sticks and finally heavy, sturdy bricks.

It is interesting that the third time the wolf comes, he goes down the chimney over the fireplace into the pot of boiling water

(the heat of the fever) and the little pig finally moves into his sturdy brick “house” that cannot be blown in through overcoming and outwitting the wolf. Perhaps the end, when the little pig eats the wolf instead of the wolf eating him, can be thought of as the ultimate digestion and reconfiguration of the inherited body weaving itself into its own individuality.

Children delight in this story and love the repetitions in the storyline. There are also several opportunities for integrative, health-giving movement, including crawling, the log roll, large and small motor movements, vestibular movement (rocking backward and forward, jumping off chairs, etc.) and proprioceptive movement (jumping, clapping, slapping, and so on).

The Three Little Pigs

A Circle Adventure Based on the Traditional Fairy Tale

Composed by Laurie Clark

There was an old sow that had three little pigs she could no longer keep.
She sent them out into the world,
their fortunes to seek.
The first little pig sang a song as he made his way.
What would he find to make his house this day?

Lead children in and out of spiral

Here I Go

Sylvia Nordoff



You can substitute running, hopping, tiptoeing, skipping, jumping

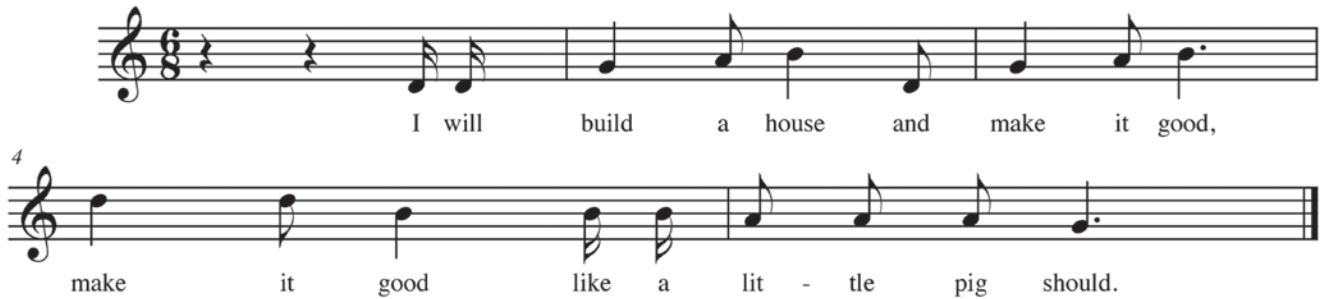
He met a man with a bundle of straw and said
 "Please, man, give me that bundle
 to build me a house so fine.
 It shall be a house of a most wonderful design."

Gesture of arms around 'bundle'
Arms in front, palms up

Make a triangle roof shape above head

I Will Build A House

Laurie Clark



After singing "I Will Build A House," start from floor level, slowly moving up. Place palms of hands alternately on top of one another as if building a house. End the movement by making a roof/triangle shape above head.

Glockenspiel can be played from low to high tones to accompany the movements.

He built his house of straw the best he could.
 Just like a little piggy should.

There came a wolf. He heard the pig's song,
 He came and this is what he said as he crept along,
 "Little pig, little pig, let me in."
 "No, no, no, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."

Crawling and sniffing

Repeat a few times

Sit down, put hands around mouth

Right then left hand alternately touch chin

"Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in."

Blow with hands around mouth on "huff" and "puff"

Sit together in circle holding hands, rocking upper body forward and backward a few times

So he huffed and he puffed, and he blew the house in.

Repeat "huffed and puffed" a few times

When the wolf comes creeping along, that
 is the end of the little pig's song.

The second little pig sang a song as he made his way,
 What would he find to make his house this day?

Song: Here I Go

He met a man with a bundle of sticks and said,
 "Please, man, give me that bundle
 to build me a house so fine.
 It shall be a most wonderful design."

Gesture of arms around bundle,
arms in front, palms up

Make a triangle roof shape above head

Song: I Will Build A House

After singing song, fingers (representing sticks) of left and right hand criss-cross alternately starting at floor level slowly going up until reaching above head for a roof in a triangle shape—glockenspiel can be played from low to high tones or hum tones.

He built his house of straw the best he could.
Just like a little piggy should.

There came a wolf. He heard the pig's song,
He came and this is what he said as he crept along,

*Crawling and sniffing
Repeat a few times*

Sit down in circle

"Little pig, little pig, let me in."
"No, no, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."
"Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in."

*Hands around mouth
Right then left hand alternately touch chin
Hands around mouth, blow on "huff" and "puff"*

Sit together in a circle holding hands rocking upper body forward and backward a few times

So he huffed and he puffed, and he blew the house in.

When the wolf comes creeping along, that
is the end of the little pig's song.

The third little pig sang a song as he made his way.
What would he find to make his house this day?

Song: Here I Go

He met a man with a load of bricks and said,
"Please, man, give me the bricks
to build a house so fine.
It shall be a most wonderful design."

*Arms up in gesture of carrying a heavy load

Make a triangle shape above head*

After singing song, alternately place right fist on top of left fist from floor level slowly going up until reaching above head in a triangle roof shape—glockenspiel can accompany from lower to upper tones.

He built his house of bricks the best he could.
Just like a little piggy should.

There came a wolf. He heard the pig's song.
He came and this is what he said as he crept along.

Crawling and sniffing, repeat a few times

"Little pig, little pig, let me in."
"No, no, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."
"Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in."
So he huffed and he puffed, and
he huffed and he puffed
But he could not blow the house in.

*Hands around mouth
Right then left hand alternately touch chin

Hands around mouth, blow on "huff" and "puff"

Shake head in "no" gesture*

The wolf said, "Mr. Smith's field has turnips,
Be ready by six."
But the pig went at five and
Pulled the turnips,
He knew the old wolf's tricks.

*Hold up 6 fingers
Hold up five fingers
Pulling gesture*

The wolf said, "Down at Merry Garden there are
fine apples to pick on a tree, be ready at five."
The little pig knew what he had to do to stay alive.

Hold up 5 fingers

The pig went at four and climbed and climbed
the tree to get the apples as fine as could be.

Children stand on their chairs

Along came the wolf and asked the
pig if the apples were good.
The pig threw the apple so far and then jumped
down and ran home as fast as he could.

*Throwing gesture
Jump down and run back to circle*

The wolf said, "I will take you to the fair
at Shanklin. Be ready at three."

Hold up 3 fingers

The pig went to the fair and bought a butter churn
when the wolf came looking hungry as could be.
The pig got inside the churn and rolled and
rolled down the hill, rolled and rolled...

*Starting at feet bring arms up along sides of
body above head as if getting into churn*

*Do developmental exercise—the log roll—lying down on back with arms straight
down by the sides of the body, child rolls onto tummy and then onto back repeatedly
until reaching his destination. One or two children do this at a time on a rug or
soft surface—then children jump three times before sitting back down in circle.*

It frightened the wolf and he ran home and when
he went to the pig's house, this is what he told.
"A great round thing came down
the hill and frightened me."
The pig answered, "Ha, it was me
inside the churn you see."
The wolf was angry and climbed up the roof, And
down the chimney. The pig he would now eat.
But the pig put boiling water on the fire
and in fell the wolf. The lid went on, the
pig is the one that had the treat!
The little pig lay down to take a rest
In his house of brick, which was the very best.

Hands roll around each other

Point to self

*Pointer and middle fingers on right hand
'climb' up left arm to the top of the head*

Right hand claps left hand when lid goes on

*Children lay down to rest with
lyre, singing or glockenspiel*

This circle is taken from *Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures*, Vol. 2,
by Laurie Clark and Nancy Blanning, published by the authors, 2016.

Around the World

A Summary of the Fall IASWECE Meeting in Ti'von, Israel

— Louise deForest

Twice a year the IASWECE Council (International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education) makes an effort to have our meetings in a member country, giving the IASWECE representatives an opportunity to have a first-hand experience with the teachers and schools of that country. This October, our meeting was held in Ti'von, Israel. Given that our themes for the last several years have been the question of diversity and overcoming fear, Israel, with its ongoing conflicts, was the perfect country in which to deepen our understanding of both.

Anthroposophists have been living in Israel since before the state was created in 1948, but they were not active in practical deeds until 1967. Following the Arab-Israel War, in 1967, the first curative home for adults opened, located in a state home but guided by the vision of a German anthroposophist. This small beginning awakened anthroposophic activity in Israel. In 1969, two more homes, both for handicapped children, were opened, one in the south of the country and one in the north. In the 1970's growth became steadier; young people left Israel, gathered experiences in other countries and returned to Israel with new impulses, such as founding a kibbutz in 1982 based on anthroposophical impulses and vision.

The first Waldorf school was started in Tel A'viv, followed by the Ti'von Waldorf School a few years later. Today, in a country of eight million people, there are twenty Waldorf schools going from first to eighth grade; six high schools, five of which have double grades and long waiting lists; and many, many early childhood programs. It is estimated that close to 5,000 children are being educated in Waldorf primary and secondary classes, and over 3,000 children are being served in Waldorf early childhood classes.

Waldorf schools are not subsidized by the government in Israel but the government does provide land and buildings to independent schools for their use. This is of great support to most schools. For the

free-standing early childhood programs, however, it is often difficult to obtain these land/building grants.

Before our Council meeting, the Israeli Early Childhood Association organized a conference in the Ti'von Waldorf School, and many Council members were available to offer workshops or talks. Over two hundred Israeli teachers attended this one-day conference with the theme *I and You: the Space Between*, giving all of us an opportunity to meet one another and to share our work with young children. While in the past the kindergarten teachers would regularly meet, this was the first time in several years that they were able to host and attend an early childhood conference, which made this conference all the richer and more appreciated.

During our Council meeting, several important decisions and actions were taken up. IASWECE has been in the process of moving our legal seat from Sweden to Switzerland over the last year, and now our Swedish office will officially be closed in the new year. Once we finish our application for non-profit status in Switzerland, the process will be completed and the seat of IASWECE will once again be closer to our area of activity. We also provided teacher training support for 25 countries for the coming year, as well as for several of our mandated working groups so that they can continue to meet and work between Council meetings.

We began planning for several joyful events: 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Helmut von K gelgen, the founder of the Kindergarten Association many years ago. 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the first Waldorf School. While no concrete plans were made, IASWECE representatives carry the question of how each country can mark these occasions individually and how these important anniversaries bring us closer together as a world-wide movement.

The next IASWECE Council meeting will be held in Krakow, Poland, in April, 2016. ◆

Book Review

Life Is the Curriculum

By Cynthia Aldinger

Lifeways through CreateSpace

Independent Publishing Platform, 2015

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

A friendly, warm new resource has come to us in the form of Cynthia Aldinger's new book, *Life Is the Curriculum*. In the late 1990s, Cynthia began considering the needs of very young children in care away from their families while parents worked. Already a trained and experienced Waldorf kindergarten teacher, she could see that institutional settings with large groups of same-aged children did not serve the children's needs. Warmth, personal attention, and the richness of the home environment with simple, practical rhythms and routines of daily living and growing were lacking. All the advantages (and sometimes challenging opportunities) of living with siblings of differing ages were thwarted by the same-age groupings. And the large-size groups were overwhelming and overstimulating for little children.

A new paradigm for providing home-based care arose out of pondering how to create a gentle and unhurried environment that would invite the children into healthy, secure incarnation. Rudolf Steiner's insights into child development provide the foundation for this approach known as LifeWays. Children are cared for in small groups, from babies up to six-year-olds, in a home-like setting. The wisdom, richness, and insights of this relationship-based care fill the pages of *Life Is the Curriculum*.

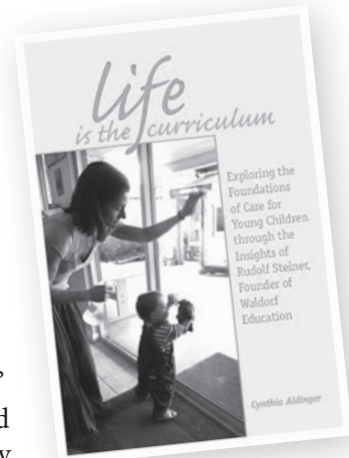
The book is divided into considering four "curricula"—Life, the Child, the Adult, and the Environment. The introduction observes that "pressing down" the forms and schedules of the kindergarten does not serve the needs of the very young child in the home or home-care setting. Parents and care providers "need to know how to set up a meaningful home life." The chapter "Life as Curriculum" then considers the practical and domestic arts that surround the children in the home setting, giving them experience of process and orderly care for the environment. Seeing adults do their work with intention

and interest gives the child reassurance that life is good and purposeful. People's work and care for one another contribute to the common welfare. Steady, quiet rhythms reassure the child that there is time to explore, grow, and be.

"Child as Curriculum" reminds us that each child already comes into earthly life with a spiritual biography and pre-birth intention for this incarnation, and that children pass through lawful stages of development. Watching the child with true interest and respect allows the adults to learn much. Knowledge of child development is essential so we can know what to offer and what to fairly expect from the children as they move through these different passages. Here the children and their unfolding instruct the care givers.

"Adult as Curriculum" emphasizes the importance of consciously embraced self-development. Children imitate not only what they see. They are more substantially formed by the authenticity of deed, feeling, and thought of the caring adult. Rudolf Steiner is quoted: "In helping the child as he learns to walk, we must be pervaded by love; in helping the child to gain the power of speech, we must be absolutely truthful; and since the child is one great sense organ and in his inner physical functions also copies the spiritual, our own thinking must be clear if right thinking is to develop in the child from the forces of speech." This chapter's section on "Relationship-based Care" is important reading for all of us involved with children in any setting.

The chapter "Environment" reminds us how subtly and deeply the children's surroundings affect them. This is beautifully summarized: "The bodily-religious devotion the young child experiences toward her surroundings is of the same nature as the oneness she experienced prior to incarnation, while cradled in the non-material spiritual world. One can



see in the infant's long gaze, in the toddler's caress, and in the two-year-old's lively dialogue over and through all surrounding sounds and noises, that the choices we make regarding the sights, sounds, touches, tastes, smells, and thoughts, feelings and things that the child encounters will, in some way, merge into the child's being."

These thoughts are not new to Waldorf educators. Preschool and kindergarten classrooms are centered upon these essentials as we plan our rhythms, activities, and interactions with the children. What is so nice about *Life Is the Curriculum* is that it gives a review of these fundamentals through quiet, accessible

consideration. The book is written with no rush or hurry about what anyone should do, no haranguing to make a point. Rather the book helps the reader to step out of the flurry of activity to sort out what really matters in the flow of the day, the week, and the seasons. This small volume is a fine resource to recommend to parents with its clear descriptions and real-life examples. It also gives a useful and satisfying framework to help teachers review these "curricula" in our classrooms.

When I finished reading the last page of *Life Is the Curriculum*, I felt refreshed and satisfied. I think this will be the experience for many more readers as well. ♦

Resources

An important part of WECAN's mission is to create and gather resources for educators. We would like to direct Gateways readers to some resources of which everyone might not be aware.

We invite you to visit our website, www.waldorfearlychildhood.org, to explore a wealth of online resources for educators and parents, and subscribe to our *Research Digest* email newsletter.

The *Research Digest* gathers recently-published research, thoughtful analysis, and commentary on subjects that touch upon various facets of Waldorf early childhood education. For example, in the February 2016 edition you will find:

On Play and Movement:

- Study: Sparing Chores Spoils Children and Their Future Selves
- The Play Deficit
- Here's What Happened When a School Tried Recess Four Times a Day
- What to Say When Your Kid Says "I'm Bored"

On Early Intellectual Stimulation and Reading:

- School Starting Age
- Is the Drive for Success Making Our Children Sick?
- Why Forcing Kids to Do Things Sooner and Faster Doesn't Get Them Further in School
- Kindergarten the New First Grade? It's Actually Worse Than That

On Media Exposure and Electronic Device Use:

- Exposure to Electronic Baby Toys Associated with Decrease in Quality and Quantity of Language in Infants
- Don't Let the Toys Do the Talking: The Case of Electronic and Traditional Shape Sorters
- Association of the Type of Toy Used During Play With the Quantity and Quality of Parent-Infant Communication (Study)

On Other Topics:

- One More Reason to Get a Good Night's Sleep
- Taking an Interest: The Bridge Between Teachers and Parents
- Phylogenetic Analyses Suggests Fairy Tales are Much Older than Thought

You may subscribe to the *Research Digest* email newsletter by going to www.waldorfearlychildhood.org and clicking on the "Join Our Email List" icon found at the bottom left corner of the page, filling out the form, and checking the "Research Digest" box at the bottom.

You may also direct parents to the "Parents and Families" section of our website.

Finally, we encourage you to visit the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE), at www.iaswece.org. See their "News and Events" link for recent research and publications, upcoming international conferences, and more.

Calendar of Events

Personal and Professional Development

June 20-July 1, Sound Circle Center for Arts and Anthroposophy, Seattle, WA: **Summer Courses to Rekindle the Flame in Arts, Anthroposophy and Teaching.** For information email information@soundcircle.org or call (206) 925-9199.

June 20-July 15, Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training, El Sobrante, CA: **Summer Program at Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training.** Workshops will include "The Healing Art of Storytelling in the Waldorf Classroom" with Nancy Mellon; "Breaking the Spell: Electronic Addictions and the Evolving Human Story" with Nancy Mellon; and "Nourishing Family Life: Waldorf Wisdom for Parenting in the 21st Century."

June 26-July 29, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **2016 Summer Series Courses and Workshops for Early Childhood Educators.** Courses will include "Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education"; "Considering First Grade Readiness" with Valerie Poplawski and Elyce Perico; "Feeling the Mood of the Fifth" with Connie Manson; "Storytelling as Antidote for the Digital Dilemma" with Nancy Mellon; and "Meaningful Crafts for Early Childhood" with Connie Manson. For a complete schedule and to register, visit Sunbridge Institute's website at www.sunbridge.edu, or contact Registrar Tamara Photiadis at registrar@sunbridge.edu or (845) 425-0055 ext. 16.

June 27-July 15, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **The Summer Institute.** Courses will include "Spiritual Embryology" with Japp van der Wal; "Dancing Hands and Frolicking Voices" with Susan Weber, Jane Swain, Nancy Macalaster, Lynn St. Pierre and Kim Snyder-Vine; and "Working with Parents" with Louise deForest. For further information email Sophia's Hearth at info@sophiashearth.org or visit their website at www.sophiashearthteachers.org.

July 4-22, Rudolf Steiner Center, Toronto, Canada: **Summer Festival of Arts and Education: "The Human Form Divine."** For information email info@rsct.ca or call (905) 764-7570.

July 11-19, Italy: **Journey to Italy with the Waldorf Institute of Southeast Michigan.** A voyage tailored to Waldorf teachers. Experience Rome's ancient grandeur, the breath-taking art of Botticelli, Michelangelo, and Raphael; and the flowering Renaissance in Florence. Contact Margot Agrime via the information form at <http://wism.org/contact-us> or at (734) 635-4143.

August 8th-26th, Rudolf Steiner College, 9200 Fair Oaks Blvd, Fair Oaks, CA 95628: **Consciousness Studies with Dennis Kloczek.** Contact rsc@steinercollege.edu or (916) 961-8727.

Conferences

April 16, Hartsbrook Waldorf School, Hadley, MA: **Northeastern WECAN Regional Gathering.** Contact Betsi McGuigan at blmcwig@hotmail.com or (603) 352-1109; or email Su Rubinoff at surubinoff@gmail.com.

May 25-28, the Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland: **Birth to Three Conference.** For information visit the Goetheanum's website at www.goetheanum.org or call Goetheanum Empfang at +41 (0) 61 706 44 44.

July 22-27, Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School: **The Summer Puppetry Arts Conference.** Featured speakers will include Joan Almon, Jennifer Aguirre, Susannah White, and Janene Ping. An opportunity for artists, teachers, and those working in therapeutic fields to collaborate and deepen their explorations in this essential high art of early childhood. For further information contact jpig@hawthornevalleyschool.org.

Calendar of Events (Continued)

Teacher Education Programs

June 19-July 8, Hawthorne Valley Alkion Center, Ghent, NY: **Summer Intensives**. Workshops will include “An Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education”; “Nature Stories and Eurythmy for Early Childhood”; and “Leading with Spirit: The Art of Administration and Leadership in Waldorf Schools, Session III – Administrative Roles and Practices.” For information go to the Alkion Center’s website at alkioncenter.org or call (518) 672-8008.

June 20, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **2016 Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Program**. Program Directors Nancy Blanning, Leslie Burchell-Fox, and Susan Howard. New Cohort begins June 20. Contact: Amina Phelps at info@sunbridge.edu or (845) 425-0055 ext.20.

June 11-July 15, Sophia’s Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **2016 Teacher Education Programs**. Programs will include the **400-Hour Teacher Education Course in Waldorf Early Childhood Education: A Full Birth to Seven Training**. For details visit sophiashearth.org or call (603) 357-3755.

July 3-22, the Great Lakes Waldorf Institute, Wisconsin: **Summer Intensives**. For information email Lori Barian at lori.barian@greatlakeswaldorf.org or call (414) 616-1832.

FOCUS: Gender

- ◆ Gender Diversity in the Early Childhood Classroom
- ◆ The Transgender Child
- ◆ Nine Dancing Princesses SUSAN BRUCK
- ◆ Girls and Boys —Feminine and Masculine LOUISE DEFOREST