

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 76, Spring 2019

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From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

By the time these pages of *Gateways* reach you, spring should be awakening with vigor. Renewed plant growth, baby birds, and other new little creatures will once again assure us of the loving relationship between cosmos and earth that brings new possibilities to birth. While spring and new growth always seems like a new beginning, all the work that has been preparing for this now-visible explosion of creation has been quietly preparing itself. There has been no fanfare to acknowledge the quiet holding that earth and sun and the elemental beings have done through the long winter months, when all is still and can seem bleak. But the relationship among these nature beings is dependable and something upon which we can rely.

Relationship between human beings is not so predictable or protected. Developing relationship among all peoples is complex and easily bruised by disinterest and inattention. In our current time, there are also artificial lures to entertainment, distraction, and dismissal of the other that bombard us every waking hour, if we so choose. The creation and nurturing of relationship are under threat.

Last fall's *Gateways* concentrated on speech. Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos, the keynote speakers from the February, 2018 WECAN East Coast Conference, shared a picture of insight that the child's impulse to speak arises from a longing for and need to create relationship. The child gains mobility with walking, and a physical/soul space of separation results between child and parent. The child speaks to create a new connection, and the parent responds. There results a speaking/listening exchange between the two, which fills the gap with warm, invisible substance. This substance becomes the new bridge between child and parent. Language expands and becomes the bridge from person-to-person beyond our family as well. Through the vehicle of speech and language, we have the possibility to create new social life. If speech and language are misused, we also have the possibility for destruction and creating alienation rather than connection. How we understand and use language is very important.

The **Focus** articles in this issue carry on this picture of language and relationship building. The concluding keynote from Dr. Lakshmi and Michael is shared. They bring together the picture of congruence—how intention, attention, and the “match” between what is said with what is being felt and thought—make all the difference to whether our speech can heal or destroy. These ingredients are not visible, akin to the quiet preparation and holding that cosmos and earth do during the stillness of winter. *Gateways* is honored to share these speakers' concluding thoughts to complete the picture that our carefully chosen, intentional, warm speech can be a powerful, healing agent of change.

Holly Koteen-Soulé took us on an exploration of “Attention to Attention” in our society in the fall issue. The first part laid out the scene. Our attention is being diverted and subverted to distractions and virtual replacements for reality and truth. It is difficult for us adults, who have the maturity to resist. For little children, who absorb everything that comes toward them, the implications for how they are being affected are grave. In this issue, Part II of Koteen-Soulé's exploration shares inspiration for what we can do about this situation. We want the children to engage their will to resist being overcome by technological temptations. Holly reminds us that it is we ourselves who have to be the change we would like to see on behalf of our children.

How little children unfold, how they learn to use language and navigate the world, is beautiful to behold. A description of nursery-aged children by Ursula Ramos, nursery teacher at Desert Marigold in Arizona, takes us into the delightful world of these young children. She describes everything that is good about this world of little children. The children respond to what is good. When we see what they truly love, we can respond by creating and protecting this experience for them.

The subject of speech and word usage takes a turn in the concluding article of this section. Trice Atchison describes an encounter with other early childhood educators, some Waldorf teachers

and others from mainstream programs. When a Waldorf teacher was asked how we support literacy development in the kindergartens, the answer was an off-hand, “We leave that for the grades.” Trice helps to remind us that we are doing *very, very much* with our kindergarten curriculum to support future academics, but we do not name it as such. She emphasizes that we must be able to articulate what is happening through all the kindergarten experiences and learn to use mainstream vocabulary to name them.

Going on to **For the Classroom**, Laura Donkel shares with excitement how woodworking and other practical work is offered to children at a school in mainland China. At the Waldorf school in Suzhou, outdoor practical work is daily fare for the children. Seeing the children’s engagement, discipline, and strength of will was an unexpected gift to Laura when she went to China as a school mentor. Accompanying photographs round out the detailed view of this program.

“Minka and Twilight” is a story of adventure and fun. It could also speak as encouragement for a reluctant child who is timid to dare. Author Mindy Upton, long-time early childhood teacher from Boulder, Colorado, created this original story of a boy and his family on the Mongolian steppes. It will be a treat for the classroom with its vivid, imaginative pictures of a place very different from but accessible to our children’s own lives.

Reading the Signs of the Times challenges us with an “op-ed” from *Gateways* editor emeritus Steve Spitalny. This heartfelt letter reminds us that the mission of Waldorf education is to include all and exclude none. Steve notes that many Waldorf festival celebrations fall short of this intention. Major festivals harken to imagery that has come from Western European Christian tradition. This article extends a call for us to create new festivals that affirm what is true and universal among all human beings.

There is activity within our movement and WECAN to move forward with questions of universality, equity, and inclusion. The WECAN publication *Seasonal Festivals in Early Childhood* (2016) is a resource to help us reconsider our festival celebrations.

This collection of articles was created to help us find our way toward inclusive experiences for all parents and children in our universal human family.

International News takes us on a brief excursion to the Waldorf scene in Spain. Thank you to Louise deForest for regularly reminding us of the diversity and healthy activity of Waldorf education around the globe.

In case you are looking for bedtime reading to fortify and inspire you for tomorrow in the kindergarten, we include three WECAN publications in our **Book Reviews** to recommend to your use. *Please, Can We Play Games?* by Ruth Ker is a rich compendium of traditional games that will extend every teacher’s repertoire. *Same Light, Many Candles*, by Carol Cole, is the moving story of work with homeless single mothers and their children at the Sophia Project in Oakland, California. These families were supported and nourished to health of body and soul. Stories such as these take us out of our comfort zone and stretch our understanding of what it means to serve others. Finally, *Child Development Year by Year*, researched and written by Holly Koteen-Soulé, is a succinct, must-have summary and characterization of child development from birth to age seven. It reviews the progression of development for us as teachers. This very affordable booklet is also a useful reference for parents as it objectively describes what behaviors and soul moods are typical at each age.

The *Gateways* coming in Fall 2019 will begin to take a deep look at “what stands behind” movement, speech, rhythm, practical work, artistic work, stories, and festivals to support children’s healthy growth and incarnation. And we want to take a further step to appreciate how each of these experiences pave the way to literacy, writing, and reading; number sense and math; logical thinking; and executive functioning. But in order to activate the potency of each thing we do, as teachers we must understand “what stands behind.” Your thoughts and experiences are invited to be shared on these pages. Please send contributions on this subject to gateways@waldorfearlychildhood.org. ♦

~ Nancy Blanning

FOCUS: Speech & Language

Developing Speech: What needs to come into the space between us?

Speech and the Human Encounter, Keynote Lecture III – February, 2018

— Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos

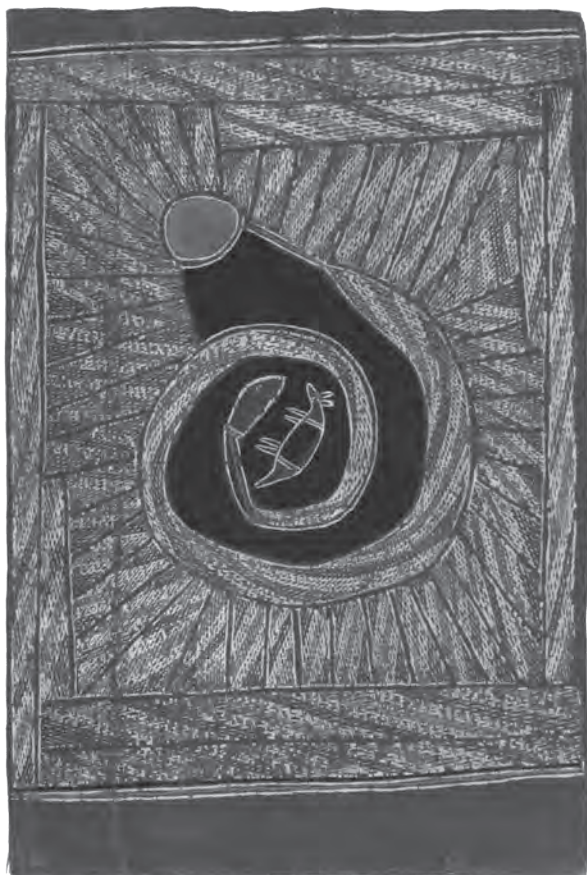


Early childhood circle

Introduction

Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos, keynote speakers at the February 2018 WECAN East Coast Conference, created a sensitive, profound picture of what is happening with the development of speech in the young child. This speech milestone, which comes after uprightness and walking are achieved and before the first signs of thinking are displayed, is typically described in physical and mechanical terms in clinical textbooks, which catalog the stages of speech development. But the picture that Prasanna and Kokinos shared goes deeper, placing the birth of speech in its rightful context as a bridge to creating relationship with other human beings. This bridge entails both speaking and listening, and requires both hearing words through the ears and also “listening to the sounds of the soul” of the other. When we are truly “speaking,” we are listening to the questions and responses that are living within the other.

The first two keynotes were published in issue 75 of Gateways in Fall, 2018. We encourage readers to revisit them.



Images depicting Australian aboriginal mythology. Aboriginal art always presents situations in their full context. The cross-hatching in the pictures indicate the unseen etheric world that surrounds all objects, people, plants, and events. All things are connected in relationship to one another. No single thing can be thought of as isolated; all things and events are interconnected.

In the first keynote, “Speech Development: Giving Birth to Speech,” Dr. Lakshmi described that we have known one another in the spiritual world and have agreed, even vowed, to meet again in physical life. Once we are born on earth, as preparation to encounter each other, we begin to awaken to the experience of ourselves through movement and then through speaking, which opens the doorway to thinking. Awakening to oneself first is a prerequisite to becoming aware of the other.

Dr. Lakshmi continued: “Every moment in our lives, we experience ourselves—where our feet are, where we are in space. We claim our space. The moment this happens, we have a longing to share, a longing to meet someone on earth whom we have known before in the spiritual world ... I wake up and look around for my friends. Every time in our lives when we wake up in our physicality, we are looking for an encounter which brings a memory from a previous encounter.”

We come back to earth to meet both the birth mother and also the earth mother. The child listens to the birth mother and listens to the earth mother through “standing upon the earth and listening to her with his feet.” But when standing and walking occur, a distance is created between both the physical and earth mothers. The distance—the space in between—is experienced as a separation that the child longs to fill up with speech. From here on out, the child searches for spirit-filled words through which she can express to the world what lives inside her.

Michael Kokinos continued by expanding on the spirit of language in “The Human Encounter and Integration of the Lower Senses.” He described the Australian aboriginal peoples as having true congruence between what is spoken, what is inwardly pictured by the speaker, and what is artistically created [through a puppet or beeswax modeling, for instance]. Congruence means that all of these elements match and create an experience that is bigger

than the sum of the individual parts. Unlike our modern selves, these people have no “inner chatter” that intrudes upon the encounter through speech. All events, all creatures, all people are interwoven into a context of wholeness. Aboriginal peoples will never draw an object or animal alone; they will always draw it in the context of its surroundings and interactions with others. These people in their lives and in their speaking reflect that all things are interconnected. This interconnectedness between the inner picture and the spoken word is essential for true communication. The authenticity of how these elements match and the warm intention with which the word is spoken will determine the quality of the encounter and relationship.

After describing a profound experience with a nonverbal child through a rhythmic hand-gesture game, he stressed that intellectual knowledge of therapeutic techniques is not enough. The work of the therapist, healer, and teacher all depend upon relationship with the other. It is the longing for connection, and the true warmth of interest with which it is met, that “invites the birth of true, human speech.”

Speech arises out of a deep longing to create connection with the friends around us whom we have already known in the spiritual world. Part III of this presentation begins with that understanding and goes on to explore what is required of us to fulfill it.

For the third keynote, Dr. Lakshmi began and Michael Kokinos added concluding remarks. The two earlier lectures described the development of speech—and blockages to its healthy unfolding—for the child. This concluding lecture addresses the qualities, intention, and consciousness the adult speaking partner needs to develop in her speech in order to make connection “in the space between.”

Approaching the Space Between: The qualities, intention, and consciousness needed in the adult speaking partner

Dr. Lakshmi:

We sit here together at this conference and the truth is that we all agreed to join together at this meeting a long time ago. We each individually take responsibility for ourselves and for our sisters and brothers whom we have come to meet from pre-birth. It is both selfish and selfless that we recognize one another, for we have things to do with each

other, ways to help each other fulfill our pre-birth intentions. What needs to happen between you and me and what needs to come into the space between us? We need to come into words and practicality in our encountering. Encountering requires that the words we speak, the images that stand behind the words, how we listen, and how we think about the encounter itself must all match and reinforce each other; they must be congruent. To this we bring the wholeness of ourselves in body, soul, and spirit. We have to bring all of this to mind.

A little child in the kindergarten already knows that there is someone there whom she has recently known. The children’s ink is still wet. Their memories are still very fresh. The child is here and is ready to meet others. The more she gets into her body, the more she wakes up and also wakes up to others. Even though the child has prepared for this meeting, there is no compulsion to make connection. Maybe the child has come prepared to meet someone but experiences that “she stinks.” So the child does not engage. There is always free choice.

Who we are in each incarnation has influences from the past. The head of the child does not belong to this incarnation. The head carries everything the child has experienced in the previous lifetime. The embryonic head is large and makes up one-half of the size of the child. Very close to the head lies the heart, and there is an intimate meeting between the two. The memory of this intimacy is very fresh for the child. Then the head unfolds. By the time the child is one year old, the head and heart are not so close together. For us adults, the distance is even further. We make observations through our head, but our business in relating with the child is to use the “non-head” part of ourselves. To create relationship in freedom, we have to choose our words carefully to bring harmony with the inner experience. There is a whole plateful of words to choose from. We can pick sounds and words from the plate, but we want to allow time and have patience to choose the right ones. This is very important. Working through the head is one avenue of encounter. The head analyzes and separates.

In the metabolic/limb system, where we are unconscious, we all belong to each other. It is hard to understand what the other person means only through the head. If someone knows you through this rhythmic system, he will give you what you need

when you need it—not according to some timetable, like the meals served on airplanes that come whether you are hungry or not. Things that come out of this “non-head” are more supportive for us.

We make observations of the children with our head and think of remedies and helpful activities. This is head work. Then in the evening we have to tell the head to be quiet. Impressions can now come of things that could not be written down. In the human digestive system, we have continuation of embryonic creative forces that build the body. Here in the evening, in the night, arise imaginations from the non-head forces. These imaginations meet us in the morning and give us new insight and substance to work with. The goal of this creative process is to transform facts into images. It is this metamorphosed fact-to-image that we are striving for in our work and to carry out into the world.

We hold what we have brought from the night carefully. There is the world outside, but we create our own inner life with our own words. Our whole organism is working so these two streams of outer and inner world meet. We each have our own story going on inside ourselves. We meet in the night with the child and review our agreements of why we have come together and what we are going to do together.

We can listen to each other in many different ways. Using language is a very specific human capacity. We select the words to use with a lot of inner and outer preparation. When we go to a new land, we are often met with a new language and new songs. Native peoples listen to the land and sing out what they hear. Each child is a new land with a new language and filled with songs that we want learn through our ways of listening.

When we speak, listening is also happening both within oneself and within the other person. We hear with our ears and also with our bones. Sound causes our bones to

vibrate, so we are hearing through bone conduction also. Whenever someone speaks, the larynx of the listener is also moving sympathetically. When we hear, we are also “speaking” along with the speaker. There is constant movement both within and between one another.

As we help children to build up their own language, we have to let the children have free play with what they say. Every child is interested in picking up vocabulary. There has to be freedom on the non-head to burp, “toot,” say “bad words.” Of course, we are here to educate children in time and space to learn what is appropriate. But we do not say that what is coming out of your body is wrong. Children up to seven years are still open sense beings and are sensing how we react to what they bring out. I listen with my whole body and speak with the whole body. The child listens to and senses our whole organism, not just the words. Even though external ears may be working, the child is listening with her whole being. As the child first listens to the earth’s vibrations through her feet, so with our “feet” we listen to the child. Language tells who we are as we use it to express ourselves. Little babies who do not have language express themselves through movement. The child is relating constantly. The baby kicks her feet in a particular way and the mother says, “She’s tired,” and knows that this is true. The mother can read her child’s movement language.



Parent and child during handwork activity with beeswax fish

Each child has chosen a language and has a plate of words from which to choose. Once speaking starts, the child is eager to choose many words from the plate and asks questions. But we do not need to answer all the questions. This is actually a disservice to the child. Only after seven years are children ready to recall a memory. Memory expands through many loops, each one reaching back or out further and further. But this is meant to occur over time and we do not want to accelerate it. If we have five-year-olds who cannot recall a story, we are happy. We are not training children at this age to memorize.

Rudolf Steiner said that beauty belongs to language. There was a time when language was still beautiful. Then came the need to be correct and grammatical. This moved speaking from the non-head [where speech sat on the top of rhythmic breathing] to the head. In our time, speech is very pragmatic. Children are asking for boundaries [in their speech and behavior] to prove that we really love them. When they are ready to speak hexameter, then they are ready for grammar and correctness. We need to allow space in which a child is free to create in language as well as in free play. We are constantly in the process of listening and speaking. We want to listen to the soul of the other also through what is not said. We listen to the unspoken and bring a picture out of it. The whole world is here to educate the child. The role of the teacher is actually quite small. The

child must be free to explore and be guided by our wisdom but not censured in her speech.

For us to do our work, we need to have a healthy relationship between our metabolic and our head forces. When the head is tired, metabolic forces keep things going; they do not tire. Our ego and astral separate from our physical and etheric bodies during sleep. We need this rest from ourselves. When we eat and digest well, we sleep well. When we sleep well, the head is sleeping. Then every morning we wake up with more wisdom and more love.

How do we know if we are really experiencing the child? We have to ask whether what we are seeing is actually the child or whether I am seeing what I expect to see of this child—which may be my expectation and not the child himself. We must practice Goethean observation, nicely described by the Nature Institute as “ways of thinking and perception that integrate self-reflective and critical thought, imagination, and careful, detailed observation of the phenomena,” where we strive to look with objectivity and to see the wholeness of the child. We are training our instruments to become perceptive beings. The human being is never perfect but is always becoming. What we see right now of a child is a momentary expression of what is striving and longing to become.

Michael Kokinos:

There are many themes weaving together with the thoughts of these keynotes. Lakshmi and I work with children with autism who do not speak. There are things we want the children to be able to do. And we want to allow them their freedom. This takes us to the mystery of encounter. We need to be open and receptive to this mystery. If we have an encounter at the spiritual level, two beings meet. We can meet as we are now doing in this conference with everyone together. We can also meet in an individual encounter, I-to-I, where there is an intimate, intuitive connection. If we can bring our attention to hold the space of this intimate contact, we can achieve the connection through touch, through a song,

The joy of a knot doll. “Congruence” means that all the elements of what is thought, spoken, and intended fit together, and each part reinforces the wholeness of all the elements.



through a crisis. We can do this, not through the Pedagogical Law, but through warmth. (As Steiner described the Pedagogical Law in *Education for Special Needs*: if the need of the child is to develop the physical body in the first seven years, the teacher works to strengthen her own etheric body. If the grade-school child is to be supported in developing a healthy, strong etheric body, the teacher works to strengthen and purify her astral body, and so on.) Through the intuitive relationship that has been established between child and caring adult, the warmth ether travels down the adult's limbs into the held "space between" and descends to the physical body of the other. This can open up the possibility to speak for the first time. Nothing else exists except my focus in the sensory world [through touch, hearing a song, and so forth] to create something. This is our business to bring the spiritual into the physical. We can bring this through congruent action, through good speech. [Editor's note: Congruent action, which was introduced in the first lectures, means that all the elements of what is thought, spoken, and intended fit together, and each part reinforces the wholeness of all the elements. For example, when the adult is speaking of a "fish" and holding a bee's wax fish in her hand, all of her thought and imagination is also living in "fish-ness," in the archetypal image of the qualities and character of fish.]

In the eurythmy performance last night, we saw colors and heard words and music. These elements were all congruent. The speech, music, colors, and movement all worked together to affirm the truthful archetype standing behind the images in the story. We want to be conscious of the archetype that each character in our stories, each activity in the kindergarten, present to the children in our kindergartens. Our goal is to be congruent in our thoughts, movements, and speech as well. We have to begin thinking of the archetype standing behind each image as a spiritual being. We want to make ourselves open to bringing this over to the children. The images must be living in us.

The indigenous peoples we have spoken about sing of the space between and what happens there in the wholeness of etheric space in which all things are interconnected. The archetype of this connectedness is the circle. Can we hold the highest in our consciousness when we are moving in circle time as we move joyously in this encounter? ♦

All images courtesy Michael Kokinos.

Resources:

- Michael Kokinos, "The Human Encounter and Integration of the Lower Senses," *Gateways* Issue 75 (WECAN 2018) at 10.
- Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna, "Speech Development: Giving Birth to Speech," *ibid.* at 6.
- The Nature Institute, www.natureinstitute.org
- Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Special Needs: The Curative Education Course* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015)

Lakshmi Prasanna, MBSS, DCH, is a pediatrician. She was one of the pioneer parents and founding members of the Abhaya Waldorf School in Hyderabad. Lakshmi has worked for many years all over the world as a school physician and was the founding president of the Anthroposophic Medical Society in India. She runs a teacher training (www.iralearn.com) as well as a small curative education center in India. Lakshmi has developed courses for all schools, parents, and teachers to understand and help children with autism. Visit her at www.doclakshmi.com.

Michael Kokinos B(PT), Masters (Health) Michael is an anthroposophic physiotherapist certified at the Goetheanum. He has researched the use of rhythm and movement and the health benefits of the Waldorf curriculum at the masters level. He helps teachers improve their rhythmic competence for morning circle with TaKeTiNa voice and rhythm workshops. As a healer he uses a combination of craniosacral therapy and sensory integration work with children. He is the director of Blue Sky Therapies in Australia (www.blueskytherapies.com.au).

Attention to Attention, Part II: Attention and Rhythm

— Holly Koteen-Soulé

Introduction

The first part of this article was presented in Gateways 75. Concerning phenomena were described to demonstrate how distractibility is replacing our willed capacity to focus attention. Fast-paced, multi-tasking lifestyles disrupt opportunity to sustain thinking, feeling, and willing with any sense of “flow” or rhythmic breathing between focused and more relaxed states. The ubiquitous presence of screens is distracting our attention away from one another as human beings. Relationships built out of sincere, warm interest in the other are becoming harder to create and sustain.

This trend is particularly threatening to young children. Dr. Michaela Glöckler, now retired Head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum, remarked in a 2017 speech that the first three years of a child’s life will affect future health and educational capacities in later years. Lack of concentrated or focused attention in the first year may correlate with attention deficit problems. Depression and aggression may arise in conjunction with not having had a peaceful atmosphere for listening in the child’s second year. Lack of feeling accepted or of having a sense of being at home within oneself may pave the way to problems of addiction and other dependencies. This picture is most concerning, as we see that all of these alarming conditions are on the rise.

The author now offers suggestions for what adults can do to counter these trends. Children are longing for kinder, warmer, and more attention-filled spaces in which to live, grow, and to feel at home in both body and soul. How we parents and adults will focus our attention on this matter is an essential first step.

Attention and Rhythm

Attention does not mean being focused exclusively on one’s child at all times. That kind of attention tends to be stifling and is not necessarily helpful for a child’s development. Attention, like breathing, has to be rhythmic and responsive to the demands of the situation.

Some activities require us to be wakeful, and others we can do without a lot of focus, such as familiar or repetitive tasks. The rhythm of taking hold and letting go of our concentration is normal and healthy. Working on a computer all day can be stressful for many reasons, but one of the reasons is the kind of wakeful attention that is required. To be able to muster the force of concentration necessary for deep thinking, a significant meeting, or the timely completion of a project requires having rested and renewed one’s capacity for attention.

With the young child, we alternate times of being fully present with the child with times when the child is free to be fully attentive to his own activities. There are also times when we are engaged in side-by-side activities. In this case our attention has a different,

more flowing quality, for example, when we are walking, cooking, or gardening together.

This is different from multitasking, because the tasks being undertaken do not require the same kind of attention. Walking with a friend can sometimes promote a deeper conversation than just sitting together in comfortable chairs. I get some of my best ideas when I am ironing!

Many psychologists, doctors, and educators are recommending screen-free rooms in the home and screen-free times in the day and week. These suggestions, if they are built into the family’s habit life, can greatly support creating healthy rhythms for both parents and children.

The Re-Schooling of Attention

Young children differ from adults in the kind of attention typical to their age. They consider the whole world with wonder and delight, engaged with one detail, then another. Those of us who spend time with young children are sometimes fortunate to be able to slow down and let go enough to enter into their mood of wonder with them. This can be both refreshing and illuminating.

Georg K hlew nd, in *From Normal to Healthy*, describes the differences between a child’s and an adult’s perceptions.

Above all, perceiving in a child is based far less on predetermined concepts, because these have not been formed. This is why the activity of the senses is more intense; everything has to be looked at, touched and listened to. Also, this intense sense activity is still intertwined with the world of feelings, and the feelings are partly cognitive, that is really feeling, feeling toward the outside, not the self-feeling of the adult. The wonder of discovery and the wonder of mental experience are still united. The capacity for devoted attention is much greater in children than in adults, and this is so to the extent that the child does not yet turn his attention egotistically to himself. Psychic experience is multicolored and many-sided and can be characterized by joy. The joy does not apply to the thing perceived, but to perceiving itself. Or rather, perceiving is not yet as separated from the object as for the adult. (K hlew nd at 142)

A rich tapestry of sensory, feeling, and cognitive perceptions that are outwardly oriented and not egocentric can arise from devoted attention. This way of being and attending to the world, which is completely natural in a small child, is the conscious goal of many a mindful adult!

Towards this end, K hlew nd offers us three relevant pieces of advice: (1) Valuable practical experience in freedom of will can be gained by learning to concentrate our attention. (2) The intensity of our sense perceptions can be strengthened “with light, careful attention.” (3) Both of these practices can help us transform our cultural addiction to external, passive pleasures into creative, artistic joy. (143)

Attention is important in a mindfulness practice, but no less important in everyday living, according to psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Csikszentmihalyi initially studied creative and artistic individuals, and coined the concept of “flow” to characterize what is common about their experiences. In a subsequent study, he documented stories of ordinary people who also found flow in many aspects of their lives, including work, hobbies, and relationships.

Csikszentmihalyi characterizes flow as a state of complete immersion in an activity that is intrinsically rewarding and that lifts the course of one’s life to a different level. The intense absorption in such a state is more like the joy for joy’s sake of the small child, than typical pleasure. “The important thing is to enjoy the activity for its own sake and to know that what matters is not the result, but the control one is acquiring over one’s attention” (Csikszentmihalyi at 129). He maintains that while it is usually difficult to change the external circumstances of one’s life, changing the focus of one’s attention, and thereby the contents of one’s consciousness, is a much more reliable way to achieve a feeling of fulfillment.

Our children not only benefit from the attention that we offer to them directly, but also from witnessing the quality of attention that we cultivate in ourselves, including our interest in others and in the world around us.

Attention as Love

Attention and consciousness are all-encompassing topics, and it is helpful that we are able to study ourselves in addition to working with the research of others.

Through the course of this exploration, I have also begun to understand that, whether one is the giver, the receiver, or sharing an experience with others, attention in the fullest sense involves all of our soul faculties—thinking, feeling and willing. As Mary Oliver, the poet, wrote in elegiac praise of her partner, a photographer, “Attention without feeling ... is only report.”

My own practice of genuine attention involves inwardly saying “yes” in three different ways. Bringing myself to a specific focus is the first “yes”; this is mostly connected to my thinking. In my feelings, the quality of “yes” is more like “listening,” or creating a free space. While a portion of will is required in committing to both of these first two aspects, however, there is a third “yes” that comes as I let go of my own needs or agenda in giving attention to something or someone else; this aspect is a kind of selflessness in the will. To be the recipient of such full attention is to receive a rare, and sometimes, startling gift.

Simone Weil, the French philosopher, activist, and mystic, wrote compellingly about the role of attention in life and education.

The poet produces something beautiful by fixing his attention on something real. It is the same with an act of love. To know that this man who is hungry and thirsty really exists as much as I do—that is enough, the rest follows of itself.

The authentic and pure values—truth, beauty and goodness—in the activity of the human being are the result of the one and same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object. Teaching should have no aim but to prepare, by training the attention, for the possibility of such an act (Weil at 119-20).

Supporting the Forces of Life and Growth

We confront the danger that our attitudes and interests are being strongly influenced by societal forces that contradict our personal values. These influences stream down to affect our children as well. Some young people I know are becoming aware of the need to consciously manage their media use.

It is equally clear that attention is a powerful force that can be transformative. An image that kept occurring to me as I worked with this topic was of two contrasting qualities of light. The light that we associate with our consciousness, that is largely metaphorical (although may have some basis in neurology), seems to me to be a warm, lively light. The light of our screens is cool, and I have often experienced it as drawing life forces out of me. It is the former quality that can warm one’s heart, “light up” one’s eyes, and nourish and heal us.

If we parents and teachers are willing to look at our own habits of attention and try to be healthy models for their children, we can preserve and even strengthen the best of our human capacities. ♦

Resources:

- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
- Georg K hlew nd, *From Normal to Healthy* (Hudson, New York: Lindisfarne Press, 1983).
- Mary Oliver, *Our World* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2007).
- Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge Classics, 2002).

Holly Koteen Soul , WECAN board member and coordinator of Teacher Education, taught kindergarten for 18 years, first at the Seattle Waldorf School and then as founding teacher of the Bright Water School, also in Seattle. She has led courses in early childhood for several teacher training centers and has served as an AWSNA consultant for developing schools. Holly has been on the core faculty of Sound Circle in Seattle, Washington, since 1995.

The Role of Oral Language in Early Childhood

— Ursula Ramos

Oral language and storytelling play an important role in the Waldorf early childhood classroom. They also are key to a child's healthy development. Oral language and storytelling are conveyed through rhymes, verses, song, and stories. They aid child development in framing our activities, bringing imagination and pictures, being a source of comfort, and being a catalyst for movement. In addition, oral language and storytelling are an antidote to the sensory deprivation caused by media use.

From the very beginning of life, a young child's senses can be fed by oral language. Lullabies, soothing words, and nursery rhymes benefit the child's development. The very young child is not looking for explanations or facts, yet she benefits from the meaning behind these soothing or humorous forms of speech. Even before young children can speak or comprehend language, they understand the feelings behind the words and also the feelings behind the sounds of the words. We can envelop them with safety, gentleness, and sympathy through our words. Similarly, young children can be carried along by the rhythm and melody of songs and nursery rhymes. They can enjoy the sounds of the rhymes so much that they look forward to hearing them and eventually ask for them, without yet understanding their meaning.

Very young children retain an intimate connection with the spirit world, traveling freely back and forth between the gateway of heaven and earth. During the early years they are taking in the world from sense perceptions that are a remembrance of the knowledge they brought with them from the spiritual world. They are taking in information from everything around them, especially from the natural world. As they get a bit older, they move towards understanding and relishing fairy tales and other oral language. This is where children move from existing only in direct experience with their surroundings, to being able to absorb stories about other things. At this stage of development, they can picture imaginary worlds and become immersed in stories about imaginary surroundings and people. They are drawn to and get the most out of pictorial language, understanding the meaning through larger archetypal images and

other picture language, rather than the language of reason and logic.

Our speaking to children throughout the day supports their development. Children find comfort in repetition. They enjoy reading the same books, going on the same walk, visiting grandma on the same day each week. Being carried along with rhythm and repetition gives children a chance to explore within safe, well-understood boundaries. Of course, children may see hints of repetition from their past lives or from the spiritual world, but they are also finding their way into their current earthly lives. So much of modern life is not rhythmical and offers little repetition. Our modern times do not make intrinsic sense to children. In the classroom, we may begin our days by saying the nursery rhyme "Rub a Dub Dub" as we wash the children's hands. We use the same transitional songs for clean up or for getting on the rope "train" to go outside. The same blessing is said each day before snack. Anytime a child can be met with simple repetition, they can relax into the real work of childhood.

In my new nursery class, I chose to use all the transitional verses from my parent-child classes, because most of the children came through my parent-child classes. I knew that hearing these familiar verses in a new classroom, away from their parents for the first time, would help carry them through this major transition. I wanted to surround them with as much familiarity as possible. Were the transitions smooth these first two weeks? Absolutely not. It was a lot like herding cats as these little ones tried to find their way to cleaning the room or joining the circle. But several recognized the cues and sat on the circle rug or ran over to have the Dusty Child rub their cheek at clean up time. Other children instinctively sang the songs with me, songs that many had heard for two years already. Even if they weren't sure what to do in those first few days, they were surrounded by familiar songs and verses that helped them identify transitions. All this repetition carries the children through their day, allowing for a feeling of safety and a space for exploration.

We carry the same circle for several weeks, until the children can fully live into the songs and verses. We also carry the same story for a couple of weeks, using much the same words each time. This allows the children to enter into the story. It gives the children time to digest what they are hearing. With time, the children can understand the pictures in the language and comprehend the meaning within the song, verse, or story. This then allows for the excitement, anticipation, joy, and participation that comes from this familiarity.

For the first two weeks, I have been carrying a welcome circle as well as “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as the puppet play. The welcome circle includes singing good morning and naming each child. I chose to do this so that they could learn their friends’ names. You can see the pleasure on their faces when they remember the name of the child that I am going to sing about next and can join with me. One little girl tries to beat me by saying the child’s name before me, so pleased with herself that she knows all her friends’ names already. I am also doing the Wilma Ellerseik verse “Before Dawn.” They were quite attentive the first day or so, not yet knowing the words. However, now that they know they know the animals, words, and some gestures, their enthusiasm is palpable. I have also seen them repeat some sounds and gestures during play time. I have given them time to digest this verse and it has given them something to take into their imaginative play. The same can be said of my puppet play. The children ask if they will “see Mary.” She is a marker in their day and something to look forward to at the end of their busy morning.

Oral language is an antidote to media. Everywhere we can see the proliferation of screen time. I recently observed a family in a tourist town. The three children, ages seven to twelve, were all walking down the street looking at their phones while shielding them with one hand from the sun. It is not uncommon to see children on their tablets or parent’s phones when at the grocery store, or watching a video in the car. Then there is the media within the home itself. What this media means is hours each day of noncommunication between child and adults. These

are all missed opportunities to notice and discuss the new, the different, or the mundane. It means missed opportunities to process what has happened in their day. These are the times where parents can forge bonds with their children through conversations big and small. Families are not giving time for these conversations to happen; thus many children are growing up unable to initiate or hold conversations, unable to meet another human. It also blocks the adults’ ability to impart knowledge or experience to their child. Instead, children are having virtual experiences with their media of choice.

Another downside to media use is the lack of movement. Speech has been described by Karl König as “movement come to rest.” The nature of modern media is to keep children engaged with quick-moving images that keep the child in a state of “fight or flight.” This means children spend hours sitting still at an age when their prime mode of learning is through movement and engagement with the environment. This emphasis on visual stimuli stunts the use of other senses. It prevents them from engaging in physical activities that promote gross and fine motor skills, in turn affecting brain development and leaving them less than ready for formal school learning, and, frankly, life. The lack of speech is related to poor sensory development because speech deficits are so closely related to overall motor and sensory development. For example, more than one hundred muscles are involved in producing speech. Children who are deprived of opportunities for speech are deprived of opportunities to properly develop these muscles.

In fact, most of the foundational senses that Rudolf Steiner described rely on movement and interaction to develop. The tactile system, or sense of touch, is a foundational sense that relies on interaction with other humans and with the environment. Through the sense of touch, children begin to understand where they end and others begin. An underdeveloped sense of touch manifests in poor motor planning, and this extends to speech production. Another foundational sense is the sense of self movement, or the proprioceptive system. Lack

of movement opportunities mean a less developed sense of self movement, which means a lack of spatial awareness. This too manifests itself in poor motor planning and lack of speech development. The sense of balance, or the vestibular system, can properly be developed only through movement. An improperly developed vestibular system means children often feel literally off balance, or tend to bump into other children or ruin play. Both of these conditions have social consequences for the child. Underdeveloped vestibular systems have been correlated with speech deficits as well.

As we can see, media use can place children in a sense-deprived state, denying them the physical setting needed to succeed in school and in life. We are taking away their ability, in some cases, to become upright, to speak, and to learn to think. These are the very things that make us human. The last foundational sense is the sense of life. The sense of life informs us of our well-being. It is related to sleep, nutrition, and rhythm. It helps us be in tune with ourselves. Media aims to keep us uninterested in ourselves or how we feel. Media addiction can cause complete disinterest in all the things that the sense of life supports.

Young children also learn through imitation. Children are wired to look to the adults around them to learn about life. They do this by imitating mother washing dishes or father cooking dinner. They sweep their playhouses, as they have watched their parents sweep the house. Through this the children are not only imitating movements, they are learning about the tasks of life. Because we live in a pushbutton and swipe-type of world, there is less meaningful work for children to imitate. In the Waldorf classroom, teachers actively engage in work that children can imitate, such as ironing, grinding grain, and churning butter. These are all things they may never see done at home. In order for children to develop their will and understand their place in the world, we must provide examples of real work that they can take part in. What are the consequences to children who do not have examples of real work in their lives? What are the consequences of children not having human examples worthy of imitation, instead having only images on a screen? We know that children can begin to talk and walk like animated characters on the screen, but what does it do to the development

of their will and of their soul? These experiments are being played out in real time and children are the guinea pigs.

Media also does not call on children to use their own imaginations or creativity. Images from media crowd out the child's own ideas. Children who engage in media use are not only deprived of interaction with humans, which can help spark an idea or feed creativity, they are also deprived of interaction with their environment. Engaging with one's environment helps children make connections, discover new interests, and work collaboratively. Engaging in the environment often means more time in the natural world, which is known to help humans digest their lives and provide a sense of calm. All these things are missed out on when children take part in too much media.

We can see that a life full of rich oral language is needed for the healthy development of a child. There is certainly an assault on oral language in our society. Most children suffer from some lack of language in our lives. Thankfully, the emphasis that is placed on oral language through verses, nursery rhymes, songs, and stories in Waldorf early childhood classrooms can help support language development in children. Hopefully, through educating the parents of these children, they can enrich their use of language in their homes as well. ♦

Resources:

- Karl König, *The First Three Years of the Child: Walking, Speaking, Thinking* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Floris Books 2004)

Ursula Ramos began teaching in the nursery classroom at the Tuscon Waldorf School in 2000. She was part of the pioneer Lifeways training in Wisconsin. After taking time off to start a family, she returned to Tuscon Waldorf School, teaching parent-child classes for six years. In 2017, she returned to the nursery. She is a certified Simplicity Parenting group leader and completed the Sunbridge Institute early childhood teacher training in 2018. She is grateful to have all three of her children attending Tuscon Waldorf School in first, fourth, and eighth grades.

Literacy Learning in Waldorf Early Childhood

— Trice Atchison

We Waldorf educators continuously seek ways to bridge our knowledge practices of education with the language of mainstream education. Recently, I attended a Waldorf early childhood conference and had many good conversations with colleagues and friends. During a lunch debate, I heard a seasoned Waldorf educator respond to a question from a curious mainstream kindergarten teacher: “What do you do about reading and writing in kindergarten?” My colleague answered: “Oh, not much, we leave that up to the grades.”

I was taken aback. It astonished me to hear a Waldorf educator not proclaim the important work we undertake. Too often I hear, “All you do in early childhood is bake and sweep.” I believe it is time that we stand up and learn to express ourselves eloquently when speaking about our curriculum.

Literacy education, which is practiced so richly in Waldorf kindergartens, is one concrete place where we can start. I was fortunate enough to attend a mainstream “emergent literacy” course this past spring that really helped me put into words what we already know and do. I would like to share what I have learned.

In the Waldorf kindergarten, literacy education is based on the emergent literacy model. This means that children are always learning language in many different ways. Embraced in a warm, loving kindergarten environment, children experience, among many other things, a program rich in language arts. We offer oral stories, rhymes, riddles, and songs that teach syntax, structure, and word order. All these language offerings also teach phonological awareness, which means exploring language and sounds.

In the Waldorf early childhood classroom, children not only learn literacy and language arts in multimodal ways but also the social contexts of a Waldorf school.

Through phonological awareness we can identify and manipulate units of sound and words.

Literacy learning in Waldorf schools is also intertwined with other experiences, such as self-expression through gesture and movement and a wide variety of sensory encounters. Therefore, we are able to meet children with many different learning styles. In imaginative ways children manipulate and explore symbols, thus learning the meanings of diverse signs (such as a picture in place of a name tag, a pinecone whose absence indicates that

someone is in the bathroom, and so forth). We offer opportunities for three-dimensional presentations while working with bread dough, beeswax, and sand. In our weekly rhythms, children are engaged in artistic experiences, such as drawing and painting. These countless “multimodal” ways of learning literature are a source of creativity and joy and are fundamental to reading and writing abilities that develop later.

In the Waldorf early childhood classroom, children not only learn literacy and language arts in multimodal ways but also the social contexts of a Waldorf school. We are especially fortunate to have strong school communities, which provide cultural context for our children. Families, administrators, and teachers take part in community life through picnics, dinners, school celebrations, craft circles, work parties, and much more. Through these activities we share in meaningful, common experiences and build relationships and cultural contexts in which our children are firmly rooted. As teachers, being sensitive to families from diverse cultures and backgrounds enables us to bring a culturally relevant curriculum.

One of the greatest gifts to our children is that we *tell* stories. When a story is told, rather than read, the narrative is not necessarily culturally bound. Therefore, a story that is told offers the possibility for all children to identify with the main characters. If our picturing of the scenes we describe is universal and inclusive in our own minds, then we open the children to the possibility to experience this as well. By looking deeply at what lies underneath our use of language, we serve the children well in preparing them for literacy learning.

Much more stands behind our curriculum. We Waldorf teachers must deepen our own understanding of what stands behind the Waldorf early childhood curriculum. We are professionals in the field of early childhood; we need to be able to articulate all facets of our work in a competent manner. Learning this mainstream vocabulary and expanding our own consciousness of the great substance that stands behind our work is our present and future task. ♦

Trice Atchison *leads the Parent Child Garden sessions at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School in Massachusetts, has taught parent-child classes for more than 10 years, and is a certified Simplicity Parenting group leader. She co-edited A Warm and Gentle Welcome with Margaret Ris (WECAN 2012). Trice can also be found singing jazz classics in and around the Berkshires.*

For the Classroom

Purposeful Work for the Young Child: Suzhou's Shining Example

— Laura Donkel

For the past sixteen years, I have worked as an early childhood educator: fourteen years at Waldorf schools and the past two years at an independent preschool in the Chicago area. Healthy movement and purposeful work have a very special place in my heart when it comes to the young child.

Last November, I had the privilege of visiting a Waldorf early childhood program in Suzhou, China as a school mentor. As is common with most Waldorf travels, I hoped to share ideas, share the work we do in America, and collaborate with new colleagues in line with the anthroposophical ideals of Rudolf Steiner. After two weeks, it was clear that I would return home with a suitcase brimming with new possibilities and ideas for working with the young child in our North American settings. I'm thrilled to share these discoveries with you.

In *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children*, Henning Köhler writes, "The imitating of early childhood has very much to do with creativity. It relates impressions and expressions. Not only is it the first manifestation of the shaping will, but it is also the most decisive step in sense-maturation, in the ability to make a proper use of sense-impressions." (Köhler at 18). Rudolf Steiner has said that the seed of freedom lies in imitation. I invite you now to look at the delightful opportunities that await us outdoors as we work purposefully and offer healthy imitative models for the young child. Let's start with a day in the life of a Suzhou child's school day at Suzhou Garden School.

The teachers show up at their classrooms, situated in the ground floor of an apartment complex alongside a stream, one of many branches of the Suzhou River. The entrance is through the small backyard. A wooden picket fence with a climbing trellis and arched entryway greets the children. Hanging from the trellis grow gourds and vegetables; the former will become musical instruments, and the



Bodhi seeds and sandpaper

latter additions to wholesome meals. A child opens the gate and goes straight to the outdoor shelving units, where sandbox boots line the lower two shelves. The child quickly changes into school boots. The first children at school pull the tarp off the large sandbox, then select child-sized rakes and sturdy spades to use in doing the work of loosening the sand. Not until the whole box of sand is completely loosened do they begin to play. In time, more children arrive; and the quiet hum of purposeful work begins.

There are four workbenches, each equipped with two vises. Wooden tool boxes house various child-sized rasps, files, and saws. Baskets of sandpaper, coarse, medium, and fine, are at hand. The larger saws live in the shed on the upper shelves. Baskets of collected branches, chunks of tree limbs, and logs are sensibly placed on either side of the workbenches. The children select branches and begin to peel off the bark before sanding. The smaller branches will eventually make their way into the classroom to hold up a small rope line of clothespins to hang their freshly dipped beeswax candles.



The workbench in Suzhou, ready for the morning's activities

Baskets of bodhi seeds set beside baskets of sandpaper beckon, awaiting smoothing. As the children sand the seeds, exquisite designs emerge, surprising the eye. The teachers smile and tell me that the longer the seed is sanded, the more pronounced the designs become. I am taken by their beauty and the reverence in which the young child works beside the teacher, also vigorously sanding the bodhi seed.

A young boy of four years takes a piece of wood that he has been working on, clamps it in a vise, and begins to saw it in half. Teachers strategically place themselves in the outdoor area and also do their work, whether separating rice, working on a specific

project, or tending to the children in the play areas. A father brings his little boy, sets down his briefcase, takes up a large, thick log, and begins to saw it. He works for twenty minutes. The log is sawed in half. He sets the two pieces on a shelf, washes his hands in the outdoor utility sink, then collects his briefcase and heads to work. I think of the magnificence in that short span. The little three-year-olds sit on logs and study how the father moves. When he leaves, they are ready to follow suit. The assistant teacher sets out a basket of thick branches for them to begin sawing with smaller saws after the wood is placed in the vises. And so the school day begins.



When the adult leaves, the little ones are ready to follow suit

The five-year-olds are working on small wooden boats and chairs that will be used in the classroom. They know that when they turn six, they will begin to whittle a small knife and sew a sheath. These small pieces of doll furniture prepare them for the treasured tool they will bring home at the end of the year.

Tools. Purposeful tools—rakes, saws, vises, rasps—for the children in Suzhou. We too can offer this work to our students. These Suzhou children learn to work respectfully and with great intent. These tools prepare them, nurture them, and ignite their imagination. This is the bridge that we can build at home with the parents of our students. In an effort to give our children the best, combined with pressures over the college their child will one day attend (yes, college), many parents despair and turn to technology as an answer to preparing for a successful future. I'd like to respond with one word, a different word. Tools. Hand-wrought, manual, practical tools.

I am typing this open invitation to you, dear teachers, on an iPad. I love my iPad. I can take it with me everywhere and steal away to a café, sip tea, and write to you. Before computers, I used my beloved typewriters. I have two. They are beautiful, black, and solid. As a writer, before I followed my path to teaching, my typewriter traveled with me

everywhere I went. Now it's my iPad. In my purse I have my pencil case with my beloved pencils. The little children under our care will have access to computers soon enough. I urge you to give them practical tools *now* that will help them take on the screen world in the future with the same respect and reverence.

I want to touch on one more important aspect of this opportunity. Look at the photos and see the healthy developmental movement that becomes available through this work. You will see crossing midlines, vestibular strengthening, proprioceptive and core development, fine motor movements, and dexterity. From all this work comes self-assuredness. The child's inner light shines brightly.

Patience, reverence, imagination, imitation. These four qualities are spilling over the brim at the outdoor play area. We, too, can offer this here in the U.S. Let's do it. Pete Seeger sang about having a hammer. Let's join him and our Chinese friends and start hammering. ♦

Resources:

- Henning Köhler, *Working with Nervous, Anxious, and Depressed Children: A Spiritual Perspective to Guide Parents* (Chatham, New York: Association of Waldorf Schools of North America 2013)

Laura Donkel is in her sixteenth year as a Waldorf early childhood educator. She is the Director of Teacher Development at a small, independent preschool in Chicago where she's introducing the Waldorf method and leading a class of four- and five-year-olds. In the summer with her two adult children, Annie and Matthew (also Waldorf educators), Laura brings the Waldorf early childhood curriculum outdoors in her forest program, *Walk In The Woods Chicago*.

Minka and Twilight

— Mindy Upton

This story comes from Mindy Upton, long-time kindergarten teacher in Boulder, Colorado, who has recently retired from Blue Sky Kindergarten. Mindy became acquainted with Mongolian felted puppets and Mongolian story culture. This story of “Minka and Twilight” is her own creation and was presented to her children as a puppet play. The images of the story speak strongly to our capacity for inner picturing. The children will see Minka and Twilight move through this adventure on their own inner puppet stage.

Far away but not too long ago, there was a family of nomads who lived simply and happily in the plains of their beautiful country in Mongolia. Deep in the folds of a valley where mountains grew through the clouds and the horses and cattle roamed freely, lived Minka and his family—Momma, Poppa, and Big Sister. Minka helped his Poppa and Momma build their house made of wool. Their round house, a yurt, had thick, woolen walls that kept the warmth of the fires inside all winter long. Minka and his sister had a small bed that was covered with many-colored blankets and furs. A small, covered window was right next to Minka’s bed. So, in the morning, Minka could be the first to see the sun on the horizon; and in the evening, he could see the moon rise from the mountain top before he went to sleep.

Simmering butter tea was served from the fire in the morning to start off the day when the rooster reminded them that morning had come. It was now time to tend to their animals and do their chores of the day.

After slowly putting on his layers of woolen shirts, coat, boots, and mittens, off Minka would go to do what he always would do ... watch. He would watch as Poppa would gather the oats for the horses. He would watch as Momma would gather corn for the chickens, and he would watch as sister would start to walk over to her favorite spot to call in the horses. This was Minka’s favorite part of the day. Minka would sit and watch as the horses heard sister’s sweet whistle song in the cold air.

Then the rumble and roar of the horse hooves would begin to shake the earth. All the horses would

come running, led by the strongest, fastest horse in the world. At least this was what Minka thought. This magnificent white horse was named Twilight. When Twilight came close, he would always stop for a moment and turn his head to Minka as if to say, “Come with me.” Minka would sit and look at Twilight in awe.

Minka would watch as his sister greeted the horses and served them their daily meal. Then she would gather her blanket and saddle to go for her daily ride. She first put on the blanket, then the leather saddle. “Come on, Minka!” she would call. “Come and ride!” But Minka would just shake his head and look and watch as sister would jump on top of Twilight and start to ride. Off they would go into the brilliance of the morning light twinkling on Twilight and sister. Twilight looked as if he had wings on his hooves. They hardly touched the ground. His mane danced in the face of Big Sister as the golden dust from the ground flew to make clouds on the earth. Oh, how Minka longed to ride, too.

Every day he sat and watched and watched and watched. Every day a small carrot was in his pocket, just in case he would get close enough to offer it. Just in case he decided “yes,” he could ride too. Every day his sister would call out, “Minka, come and ride!” Every day Minka would sit and wait and watch. “Minka, come! Minka, come and I will help you!” cried his sister. Minka would just watch...

Night fell and Momma called everyone in for the night. After a day of feeding the animals, tending to the crops and riding the horses, everyone ate heartily and then readied for bed. Minka ate his soup, changed



From *Supporting the Life Sense: Nurturing well-being in young children and the adults who care for them* (WECAN 2019) – Image courtesy Ruth Ker

to his bedclothes, and took a bit of carrot which he placed by the window. “Maybe,” he thought, “maybe he will come tonight. Maybe.”

This night, different from the other winter nights, the moon was as big as the sky. The sun was so far away. The cold breeze stopped. The snow on the mountain twinkled with silver. The stars sparked a brilliant light through the cold, frosty air. Minka’s eyes felt heavy and he cuddled in his blanket and fell asleep. Lying in bed, warm and cozy next to his sister, Minka heard a sound of crunching, munching. And there he was! There was Twilight, nibbling on his carrot! Minka reached out to touch his warm nose... Twilight nuzzled his nose next to the window and made the window turn warm. Twilight looked straight into Minka’s eyes as if to say, “Minka, come and ride! Minka, come and ride! Minka, come and ride and I will help.”

Minka looked into Twilight’s eyes and deep within himself felt a feeling that he had never felt before... “Yes...” Minka felt, “Yes!”

“Cock-a-doodle-doo!” Was it morning already? Minka looked out the window. The carrot was gone!

Butter tea was served as it always was with hugs and morning kisses, then layers of clothes. Minka couldn’t wait to get outside to see the horses. He never got dressed so fast! “Where are you going?” asked his sister. “To see Twilight!”

Sister ran after Minka as fast as she could. She whistled and there they came—the entire herd headed by Twilight. This time Minka gathered the blankets, the saddle, the carrots and stood and waited for Twilight.

Twilight stopped and waited patiently. Minka knew exactly what to do. He fastened the saddle just as he had seen sister do, and then Twilight did exactly what he said he would do. He bent down on his knees and helped Minka get up on his back. Sister watched, Momma watched, Poppa watched. Minka was on top of Twilight! Twilight gave out a big “NEIGH!” and off the two went into the plains, galloping steadily. And the wind sang upon Minka’s face. ♦

Mindy Upton was, until recently, the Executive Director of Blue Sky Kindergarten in Boulder, Colorado, which she founded over 25 years ago. She is on the board at The National Institute for Play and has been an adjunct faculty member of Naropa University since 1980, where she she teaches “Kindergarten Magic,” a hands on course in the practice and application of early childhood pedagogy. Her quest is to nurture and embrace the magic of the early childhood years with love and attention to each individual child.

Reading the Signs of the Times

Some Thoughts on Waldorf Education and Religious Diversity

— Stephen Spitalny

In the present time, it is essential that Waldorf school communities everywhere, in consciousness and freedom, create an inclusive welcome for people of any religious, ethnic or racial background. As a member of the Waldorf school movement and as a representative of anthroposophy, I believe it is incumbent upon me individually and upon all of us to ensure that Waldorf schools shine as beacons of a universal, spiritual education not associated with any religion, a truly nondenominational education.

All Waldorf communities should work to create truly welcoming, open, universal havens where all families can feel welcome and connected. It is through celebrating our shared values through new festivals—festivals that we are going to have to create ourselves—that we will bring forth this new community with the children at the center. This is what the spirit of our time is asking of us.

As a Waldorf consultant and teacher trainer, I wish for all schools to take the time and make the effort to create unique festivals that can be appreciated universally. These festivals would strive to speak to the place of the human being within the earth and cosmos, to the seasons, the peoples, and the other kingdoms of life, and not be confined to any single religious tradition. We must be courageous and bold in creating original stories and imaginative pictures to present images that are universal. It is hard work but so worth the effort and it is a necessary activity of our times.

A well-intended gesture to acknowledge all religious, ethnic, and cultural streams can quickly turn into a hodgepodge of festivals that is undigestible for the children and burdensome for the faculty. On the other hand, this proposed rethinking of community celebrations is not suggesting a retreat into a bland, dead version of Waldorf education with no festival life. This is a call for vibrant, enlivened,

spiritual, and spirited festival celebrations created out of the thinking and will of each school's faculty and community. Then we will have festivals that speak to everyone.

There are various elements at play in all of this. One is the curriculum. It is clear that by eighth grade, Waldorf students have experienced a breadth of world culture and religions. This is an amazing intention in Waldorf schools. Here we can consider classroom decoration and help each other to discern if we are presenting one-sided religious images associated with Western European traditions on the classroom walls or in the students' main lesson books.

Festivals and special events are an important area to consider. Can we try to live into the experience of a Jewish family? A Native American family? A Muslim or Hindu family? Many people question whether Waldorf education is a Christian education. When questions about religion come, it is a call to examine what we do that makes it seem so to others. This reminds us of the open-mindedness Steiner asked of us. We have to be active with our will in our thinking to develop a true social impulse for our time.

The name of Christ and the traditions of Christianity in Waldorf schools is what is off-putting for many families. All branches of Christianity, as well as esoteric Christianity, say that Christ's deed was for all humanity and for the earth, for us all. The "turning point of time" came when our earth needed renewal and the Sun being, whom we call Christ, united itself with the Earth, thereby renewing all of our etheric forces. The deeds of that being are for all humanity, regardless of religious beliefs. In *The Universal Human* lecture series, Rudolf Steiner said:

Today I wanted above all to explain that Christ was that spirit from the cosmos who, in the course of earthly evolution, brought spiritually what was originally intended for our outer form

but could not develop externally, because we would then have become automatons of love and equality"... We have the right feelings for Christ only when we see in him the savior, rescuing humanity from dispersion and separateness; only then can Christ fill our innermost I. Christianity lives wherever people are able to understand this union of humanity through Christ. In the future, it will not matter much whether what Christ is will still be called by that name. However, a lot will depend on our finding in Christ the spiritual uniter of humanity and accepting that external diversity will increase more and more" (Lecture 4).

In other words, we can know if an initiative is connecting with what Steiner called the Christ impulse when people are united, when people join together. If separation is created, then, according to Steiner, the Christ impulse is not present. It is an easy-to-use compass.

I am passionate about deepening Waldorf education through our will, through our hard and diligent work so that our education attracts families of all backgrounds and becomes the seed for social renewal. The core of Waldorf education is Steiner's idea that "The most important thing is to establish an education through which human beings learn once more how to live with one another." One aspect of this is how we relate to each other as individuals. We can address this by taking up such practices as Nonviolent Communication (NVC) or other tools that foster personal social skills and communication between individuals.

Creating inclusive communities is crucial for the future of Waldorf education. Failure to create more inclusive communities will relegate Waldorf education toward the fringe of society. On the contrary, we want to grow and expand the Waldorf school movement, making it something vibrant and thriving for the times to come.

To become a universal beacon of welcome and inspiration is Waldorf education's goal. We know that its methodology develops capacities for the future; its view of the developing human being is profound and unique. Yet schools and some teacher training programs are struggling, shrinking, even

disappearing. Economic issues explain some of this struggle, but the perception that Waldorf education is a religious education is another factor. The times are calling upon us to reconsider all of our traditional festival celebrations—the Advent Garden, St. Nicholas, and Michaelmas for a start.

Filling the school calendar with festivals from many religions would not by itself address this question either. Let's look with fresh eyes at all our practices, and with open minds recommit ourselves to the best of Waldorf Education. When we marry that with our creative wills, something amazing and inspiring will become manifest. The question is how to create meaning without the trappings of religion.

Everyone has biases—some we recognize, others are hidden from our awareness. This is true for every human being. Our task as Waldorf teachers is to embrace the inner experience of others and, thereby, overcome our biases. We want to discover aspects of ourselves previously hidden from our own awareness. Openness to the perspective of the other is part of self-education, the path to "know thyself."

My work as a teacher trainer has taken me to Asia and other locations far from western, Christian culture. I am often asked to address the question of the Christian underpinnings of Waldorf education. My answer always is that Waldorf education and Waldorf schools are meant to be universal and inclusive, not representing any particular religious tradition. I am happy to discuss the Christ impulse in Waldorf education with the teachers and the trainees. It has nothing to do with religious traditions or religious education. It has to do with creating thriving, welcoming communities where people of diverse backgrounds join together.

It is deeply disappointing when families of different traditions do not feel included and recognized in Waldorf school communities. I offer this verse to describe the goal we can strive toward:

May the Spirit of the World
Be unveiled to those who are seeking,
In the healing Light shining by which we can see,
In the singing of the choir of Peace, resounding
in human hearts,
And in Love streaming into human deeds.

Editor's Note: Steps toward the Future

We see our times politically, socially and religiously tightening and becoming more dogmatized. This is the absolute opposite of the spiritual intention for our times under the guidance of the Archangel Michael, and this is completely counter to the motivation and intent upon which Waldorf education was founded these hundred years ago. Awakening to the call for an education that frees the human being and spirit from dogmatism into freedom of thinking and human association is a mandate of our times.

A first step within WECAN activity toward this end was the publication of *Seasonal Festivals in Early Childhood: Seeking the Universally Human*. Editor Nancy Foster explains that many festival celebrations we think of as “Waldorf” originated not in the first Waldorf schools, but in the familiar European and religious cultural traditions of the time. We are challenged today to renew our celebration of the seasons of the year through bringing the healing forces of a rhythmic life to the children, in ways that honor all human experiences in a universal way. Our communities today are awakened and enriched by the different cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious orientations in our school communities. As we strive to create festival celebrations that are accessible to all and true to universal human experience, this book was created to be a helpful resource for strengthening Waldorf education for the future.

Discussions about racial, ethnic, religious, and gender diversity and inclusion have been paramount during meetings of the WECAN board, and in conversations outside of meeting times. At the 2018 spring meeting, the board met with expert consultants who helped the group uncover and evaluate implicit

biases that influence teachers’ behavior toward children and their parents. The board has also formed a Diversity Working Group, which is working to arrange group study and facilitation workshops with diversity and social justice consultants.

The intent of this letter is to open up discussion around these questions of diversity, inclusivity, and universality in our schools. Your positive ideas and practices to expand this conversation and share newly formed festival and community celebrations are invited by Gateways — gateways@waldorfearlychildhood.org. ♦

Resources:

- Nancy Foster, editor, *Seasonal Festivals in Early Childhood* (WECAN 2016)
- Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human* (Gas 117, 124, 165) Lecture 4, Bern, Switzerland, January 9, 1916. See also Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human: The evolution of individuality* (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks 1990)

Steven Spitalny is an early childhood consultant and writer, offering lectures, workshops and mentoring around the world. He is on the faculty of the Waldorf Institute of Southern California. He is the author of *Connecting With Young Children: Educating the Will* (2011), *Living with Young Children* (2015), and *What’s the Story: Storytelling as a Path Toward Living Happily Ever After* (2015). He has been a WECAN board member and editor of Gateways Newsletter.

Waldorf Early Childhood Education in Spain

— Louise deForest

In the autumn of 2017, the IASWECE Council, with representatives from around 34 countries, gathered in Barcelona, Spain for one of two yearly meetings. Meeting in different member countries gives the council a first-hand experience of how Waldorf early childhood education is developing around the world, as well as an opportunity to meet and talk with local Waldorf educators and to visit schools. Indeed, many Council members come early to spend a few days in different kindergartens and early childhood programs around the country before joining the council meeting.

Having lived in Barcelona in my late teenage years, it was delightful to revisit special places (when I could find them) and to discover some of the many changes that have happened in Barcelona. What a special city this is, with the amazing architecture of Gaudí and others, the seaport with its international flavor, the eastern Pyrenees looming over the city, and all the hidden alleyways and plazas one can find throughout.

Our council meeting coincided with political demonstrations in Barcelona, asking for more balanced fiscal support from the government (and some asking for independence from the government), and the Festival of Sant Jordi, the Patron Saint of Barcelona. It was quite a juxtaposition of images to see huge dragon puppets dancing down the side streets accompanied by drummers and sparklers while groups of all ages marched down the major roads, Barcelona flags waving, songs being sung and slogans being chanted in Catalan. Contrary to the reports in America, the demonstrations were good-natured and friendly, though the demands were serious and come from a deep history of feeling side-lined.

As far as I know, people in Spain began to be interested in anthroposophy in the late 1960s. Because this was during the highly repressive Franco regime, small study groups gathered clandestinely in Madrid. The major focus for these groups was

translating lectures into Spanish and studying anthroposophy. When democracy finally came to Spain, people pursued Waldorf teacher training in Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, with the plan of founding Waldorf schools in Spain. This happened in April 1979, just outside of Madrid, when the first kindergarten opened in what is now Escuela Libre Micael, with just five children. This school now has five hundred students from toddler groups through twelfth grade.

Presently, there are twenty-five kindergartens, twelve primary schools, four middle schools, and one high school in Spain. A deeply Catholic country, Spain remains very conservative despite its often progressive political leadership. So the growth of Waldorf schools has been slow but steady. This is also true for the Camphill movement, which has been trying for years to get a foothold in northern Spain.

In 2000, the Asociación de Centros Educativos (Association of Waldorf Centers) in Spain was established. This is made up of representatives from kindergartens, primary schools, and teacher training institutions around the country, who work together to protect the naming rights, support new initiatives, promote the quality of teaching, and actively participate in international educational associations, including IASWECE. Members of this association are also helping their neighbors in Portugal establish healthy Waldorf schools there.

There are now twelve teacher training seminars in Spain, educating approximately 1,000 aspiring Waldorf teachers. That seems like a very high number but, as we know, not every Waldorf teacher trainee becomes a Waldorf teacher. In my travels I have met many Spanish-trained teachers working in other countries. These seminars are accredited by the Ministry of Education in Spain, so graduates receive a Masters in Waldorf education. Perhaps best of all, students studying education in the major universities both learn about Waldorf education and visit Waldorf

schools as a part of their education.

While in Spain, I had the opportunity to participate in a conference about sleep (as had been requested by the International Birth to Three group) and to visit an early childhood program in a sleepy town in the foothills of the Pyrenees. I found the teachers, like Waldorf early childhood teachers everywhere, to be enthusiastic, warm, and forward-thinking individuals. They have a healthy balance between outdoor and indoor times and a tiny but rather astonishing play yard with many opportunities for movement and meaningful activity. There were

two large classes for a mixed-age kindergarten and a small but full nursery program; in all, about thirty-five children were being served.

Waldorf education is alive and well in Spain, and I often hear of new early childhood initiatives popping up in different parts of the country. The challenges that the Waldorf movement faces there—conservatism, religious dogmatism, suspicion of anything new and different, regionalism—will all be overcome as generations of Waldorf graduates begin to transform the country through the education they have received. ♦

Book Review

Please, Can We Play Games?

by Ruth Ker

Reviewed by Jill Tina Taplin

We gratefully acknowledge that this review first appeared in Kindling – the Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education (Stourbridge, United Kingdom).

It is a great pleasure to find long-respected colleague, Ruth Ker, has published an anthology of traditional games intended for family, schools, and other festive gatherings. Ruth offers an eclectic collection of both familiar and new material from her many years' experience working with young children. These are introduced and annotated with pearls of wisdom that will be appreciated by both parents and educators.

In early childhood, movement, words, and music deliciously offer a feast of nutritious soul food for healthy development. There is scope for many layers of learning through these games—physical development through varied and rhythmical movement, social lessons about turn-taking, sharing and inclusivity, rich language to enhance pre-literacy skills and clear speech, musical experiences to tune the ear, counting, sequencing, rhyming, and much more.



Beginning with the songs we sing to our children before birth and culminating in the joy of bringing more complex singing and movement games to children age six and older, we instinctively feel that these activities are beneficial. In our current world, the electronic smog of poorly reproduced music and speech assaults the ears in many public places. Rhythmic games in the playground and street have practically disappeared. This

book takes positive action to keep these treasures alive and bring them to young children today.

Ruth makes the important point that games build relationships between children and between children and adults. As the games bring out our playful side, older children in the challenging transitional stage at kindergarten's end respond to our adult enthusiasm and interest in playing these games with them. Her book focuses on the value of transactional, social and traditional games. It is, as she writes, a "revelation" how powerful these can be as children practice the skills for life of self-regulation and social understanding. We know that, for children age five to eight, the fairy tales are so valuable in offering not literal pictures of

the world, but archetypal images of the journey of the soul. Ruth suggests that traditional and contemporary games can offer archetypal forms which are equally valuable in supporting healthy development.

Please, Can We Play Games? offers many useful, practical hints for engaging young children in these offerings. Ideas include how to work with mixed ages and how to include music, speech, and movement in the rhythm of the kindergarten.

The book is well laid out, with the text, music, and descriptions of games and songs clearly included. Ruth has a strong interest in meeting the needs of the older children in the kindergarten who are trying to

tame their new six-year-old capacities. To this end she includes bean bag and rope-skipping games in addition to helpful sections about tidy up time and transitions in general.

I can wholeheartedly recommend this new resource book as inspiration to adults in kindergartens, schools and homes to share music and games with young children. Ruth quotes the saviors of street and playground lore, Peter and Iona Opie: “A true game is one that frees the spirit.” This lends support to her belief that playing these games together connects us and the children to all our positive potential. ♦

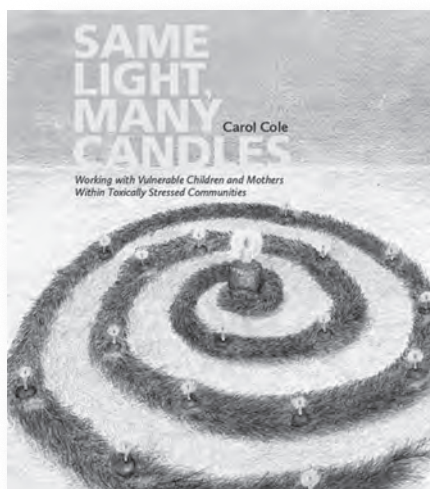
Same Light, Many Candles

by Carol Cole

Reviewed by Susan Howard

The needs of children and families threatened by homelessness in the San Francisco Bay area moved Carol Cole to found the Sophia Project. The challenges of homelessness and its accompanying trials, without the outer supports provided by a more conventional Waldorf setting, led Carol to embark on a journey of exploration and service that took her far beyond her decades of experience as a Waldorf early childhood educator. Guided by the image of Sophia, her journey was a process of learning to perceive and practice what it means to be truly human in our troubled times, working on behalf of young children and their mothers. A healing oasis for children and mothers, the Sophia Project was the result of this journey, a product of inner conviction, courage, imagination, and love.

The Sophia Project is action research of the highest order, demanding tremendous inner and outer effort on the part of Carol and her husband David. Their efforts were backed up by significant spiritual and financial support from the wider anthroposophical, Waldorf, and Camphill communities. The fruit of their work is astonishing—families have become



healthier and stayed intact. A significant number of Sophia Project children are now in college. No Sophia Project family has ever returned to homelessness. All this is a result of the intensive therapeutic early childhood programs, respite care, art projects, and family support the Sophia Project offered.

Waldorf early childhood education is being called upon to articulate what is essential and unique in our Waldorf approach. Carol Cole's book provides an inspiring articulation of this. Her wonderful account of the Sophia Project provides us with insights into both the invisible essentials as well as the concrete resources necessary for that work.

Today many of us long to find ways to reach out beyond privileged communities to work directly with what Carol calls “vulnerable children and mothers within toxically stressed communities.” Childhood itself is vulnerable today; all families and communities suffer from some degree of “toxic stress”. Each of us can find inspiration for both our inner and outer work through *Same Light, Many Candles*. WECAN is honored to add this treasure to our collection of publications. ♦

Child Development Year by Year

Edited by Holly Koteen-Soulé

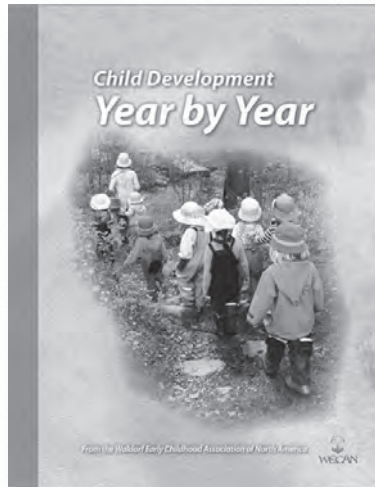
Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

Child Development Year by Year is a gift for teachers and parents of young children. Holly Koteen-Soulé has combined many hours of careful research with years of observing young children in the classroom to produce this concise, twenty-page gem. We often long for a quick check-in resource to remind ourselves of what is typical for each year up to age seven, when the first big developmental cycle is completed. This booklet is an answer.

The book is organized with two facing pages dedicated to each year, starting with baby's first year of life. Each two-page spread describes and characterizes what is prominent developmentally for ages one through seven. Included are the familiar physical milestones, as well as accounts of how the child's consciousness of self, world, and others grows and develops.

This booklet is geared to serve parents as well as teachers. The joys and the challenges of each age and of keeping up with a quickly changing young child are acknowledged. Practical advice is offered to calm anxieties and help parents grow in their parenting as their child progresses through so many stages and changes.

The booklet is beautifully laid out, with soft watercolor backgrounds behind the text. Photos of children at work and play exemplify what the text has just described. This booklet is also very affordable.



Each teacher can have a personal copy, and the cost is so reasonable that schools can purchase copies to give to families. That will be a good investment. This information reassures parents that their children are unfolding through the inherent wisdom within their being which is their birthright. Description of the typical appearance and ripening of the child's capacities affirms that this is a natural progression that does not need to be rushed.

Each section ends by describing a gift that each year of growth brings for both parent and child. These gifts offer a beautiful collection we can hold as guiding images. They are:

- Trust
- Learning wonder at the world
- Joy of communication and companionship
- Finding the spirit of adventure in everyday living
- Creating and clarifying family values
- Building social life through work and play
- Strengthening one's own calm center
- For the parent—learning when to let go for the child to find his own confidence in life ♦

Calendar of Events

Personal and Professional Development

June 16-21, and July 16-20 2019, Hawthorne Valley Alkion Center, Ghent, NY: Summer Course Weeks 2019. Workshops will include “Singing and Playing the Lyre in the Mood of the 5th”; “Early Childhood Festivals”; and “Leading with Spirit: The Art of Administration and Leadership in Waldorf Schools.” For information go to the Alkion Center’s website at alkioncenter.org or call (518) 672-7500.

June 19-July 21, 2019, Sunbridge Institute, Spring Valley, NY: Summer Series. Weekend workshops and 5-day courses will include “Foundations and Fundamentals of Waldorf Education,” “Essentials of Anthroposophy,” “Collaborative Leadership,” “Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education,” and “Working with Parents.” For more information visit sunbridge.edu, or contact Penelope Myles-Voss at summer@sunbridge.edu or 845-425-0055 x20.

June 23-July 26, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: Sunbridge Summer Series. Courses and workshops for early childhood educators include “Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education”; “Working with Parents”; “Waldorf Weekend”; and “Collaborative Leadership”. For information/registration, visit www.sunbridge.edu or contact Penelope-Myles Voss at info@sunbridge.edu or 845-425-0055 x20.

June 24-July 12, 2019, The Early Childhood Education Center at Sophia’s Hearth, Keene, NH: 2019 Summer Institute. Topics include “Incarnational Support,” “How to Be a Healing Storyteller at Any Moment,” “Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education”; “Creating and Strengthening Parent and Child Work in Your Community”; “Child Development” (2 parts, register individually); and

“Storytelling with Young Children.” Note also that Weekend Workshops begin in September. For more information visit www.sophiashearthteachers.org or call (603) 357-3755.

June 30-July 5, West Coast Institute, Duncan, Vancouver Island, BC: Mentoring: Transforming Ourselves to Meet the Other with Louise deForest, Heather Church, and Wendalyn von Meyenfeldt. “We are all just walking each other home” —Rumi. For further information please contact Ruth Ker at mrker@shaw.ca. Visit us at www.westcoastinstitute.org.

July 1-12, 2019, Sound Circle Center for Arts and Anthroposophy, Seattle, WA: Summer Intensives 2019. Topics include “With Warmth and Joy: Meeting the Very Young Child from Birth to Three”; and “The Art of Administration and Leadership in Waldorf Schools: Working together in community.” For information visit soundcirclecenter.org or call the Center at (206) 925-9199.

July 8-26, 2019, the Great Lakes Waldorf Institute, Wisconsin: The 2019 Summer Intensive. For information visit greatlakeswaldorf.org or call Sandra at (414) 299-3820.

July 8-26, 2019, Rudolf Steiner Center, Toronto, Canada: Summer Festival of Arts and Education. For information visit rsct.ca, email info@rsct.ca or call (905) 764-7570.

July 14-19, West Coast Institute, Duncan, Vancouver Island, BC: The Unexpected Gifts of the Mystery Children—learning to see these children with different eyes with Adola McWilliam, Marjorie Rehbach and Robin Laskowski. For further information please contact Ruth Ker at mrker@shaw.ca. Visit us at www.westcoastinstitute.org.

Early Childhood Teacher Education

June 17-July 5, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Completion Track. New cohort enrolling in low-residency, 8-week program for highly experienced lead early childhood educators wishing to complete their full WECAN training. Scholarships/MEd option available. Program Directors: Nancy Blanning, Leslie Burchell-Fox, MEd. For information/application, visit www.sunbridge.edu or contact Penelope-Myles Voss at info@sunbridge.edu or 845-425-0055 x20.

June 24-July 12, 2019, The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth, Keene, NH: Birth to Seven Certificate. The full certificate course is taught in two sections: Birth to Three and Birth to Seven. For details visit www.sophiashearthteachers.org or call (603) 357-3755.

June 30-July 19, 2019, West Coast Institute, Duncan, Vancouver Island, BC: Waldorf Early Childhood Educator Training New intake June 30. 2-year part-time program, 5 weeks each year. 3 weeks in July, 1 week in fall and spring with additional mentoring, observation and practicums. For further information please contact Ruth Ker at mrker@shaw.ca. Visit us at www.westcoastinstitute.org.

October 4-6, 2019, The Early Childhood Education Center at Sophia's Hearth, Keene, NH: WECAN Birth to Three Conference: Steiner and Pikler – The Fruits of their Labors, with Jane Swain, Susan Weber, Debbie Laurin, and Katherine Scharff. For further information contact Heather Church at church1888@gmail.com.



From *Child Development Year by Year* (WECAN 2017)
– Image courtesy Green Meadow Waldorf School