

A Rainbow Ruckshau

Christina Williams

Looking back over twenty years of Waldorf kindergarten teaching, I experience the wonder of a rainbow with gratitude, I acknowledge all the children, parents, and colleagues whose lives have been woven into the color arc of my teaching destiny. As I look to the future, I know that many new teachers are coming forth in the Waldorf early childhood movement eager to take up the work in the classroom. So many new ideas, insights, and teaching systems are being developed to help teachers meet the needs of today's world. I am grateful for the basic guidelines my teachers and mentors gave me throughout my career. They have a special place in my heart and in the rainbow memory.

Several years ago, the Early Childhood Association held a conference in New Hampshire. We invited key mentors from Europe so that participants could experience how the various individual styles in kindergarten classes differed, that each mentor had worked very hard from the foundations of anthroposophy and had come up with individual ways of manifesting their insights.

This conference helped to melt away the dogmatic tendencies where one would say one way was totally correct and the other totally wrong. Anyone who has taken up painting or a musical instrument or any artistic pursuit will agree how helpful it can be to experience more than one master teacher. Each has a quality, a perspective that can encourage another striving person to integrate whatever is needed for coming to some clarity for new work. In some ways, I am reminded of the seven life processes that begin with a breathing or taking in to the final state of new creation. Only after the outer has been internalized, digested, and made our own, can we give birth to something new.

As I pondered the ideas that various mentors awakened in me during my teaching years, I realized that each, in her or her own style, spoke of finding balance between extremes. So I pass the ideas they shared on to you:

1. Awaken what comes to you from outer advice, but seek what comes from your genuine inner guidance as well.

2. Monitor the intensity of your exciting outer preparation for festivals and puppetry so you do not sacrifice the deeper, inner quiet mood of that outer event. Breathe! A healthy sleep life helps more than you know.

3. Make every effort to nourish your adult life with artistic pursuits. Avoid excesses and remember the importance of rhythm in your life as much as you tend the rhythms of classroom planning. Eurythmy and even one sentence of spiritual content each day will enliven you.

4. When you begin to tend to details in your preparations and in your child observations, as you find a bigger picture, bigger meanings will arise. It is a principle of image and after-image.

5. To be worthy of imitation be truthful with inner attitudes and thoughts, and in outer enjoyment and devotion to the practical work you do with the children as well as in the reverence, gentleness you devote to the artistic offerings.

6. Being fully present with whatever you are doing requires an awakened consciousness. The children know when thoughts and deeds are not in accord with each other.

7. Your light-filled joy and your genuine love are truly visible to the children. This radiates warmth to them, and they feel trust in the goodness of life.

Obviously, these ideas shared from my mentors have been put in my own words, but I hope you can catch the essence. Regardless of the differences between various "streams" in our movement, there is an imagination that can include all of our individual styles. It is truly the imagination of the rainbow bridge that connects the heavenly with the earthly. Working from the foundations that Rudolf Steiner gave us in anthroposophy, we can work toward that goal in our everyday striving.

May wisdom shine through me,

May love glow in me,

May strength penetrate me

That in me may arise
A helper of mankind
A servant of holy things
Selfless and true.

Rudolf Steiner

All good wishes to those taking up the Waldorf
early childhood teaching. May you take your part
in the creation of a rainbow bridge!

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kindergarten teacher, now retired, from the
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