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.

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**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.