

# Gateways

A Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

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# From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

Dear Readers,

The activity of gathering articles for this issue was very different from most of the other issues I have edited. Many people sent in their articles, and articles from their colleagues, as well. In fact, I received more than could be included. So, thank you to all who submitted, and I truly hope this is the beginning of a trend. Sharing our thoughts and experiences with a wide audience can be a bit daunting, but it is so important for all of us to find the courage and time for articulating what others may be thinking about.

Each time, when I sit down to write an issue-beginning *Letter from the Editor*, I am struck by the synchronicities I experience in terms of my recent experiences and thoughts in relation to the young children, and those of the writers of the articles that make their way to me. This issue, three articles address questions about mixed-age kindergarten groups, both from the point of view of intention and values, and from a practical perspective. It happens that over the summer, my kindergarten of children ages four years and nine months through six expanded to include three- and four-year-olds. The joy, innocence, and openness and imitative qualities of the younger children are a wonderful reminder for me, as well as a source of joy and awe! I am grateful to the spiritual beings that participated in creating this opportunity for the children and me, as well as for providing the inspiration for three wonderful writers, Barbara Klocek, Nancy Blanning and Susan Silverio, to share their thoughts on this subject.

In this issue, we have an article by Sally Schweitzer from England that takes up the theme of young children and nature. Thanks to *Kindling*, our United Kingdom sister journal for this article of deep and practical ideas and experiences of working with young children in the outdoors. What a coincidence!/? The Alliance for Childhood has just released another important resource. It is called *Tech Tonic: Towards a New Literacy of Technology*, and it expresses how the young child needs unmediated experiences of nature in early life in order to meet

the demands of later life. It is posted as a pdf file on their website at [http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/projects/computers/pdf\\_files/tech\\_tonic.pdf](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/projects/computers/pdf_files/tech_tonic.pdf). Hard copies can also be ordered. *Tech Tonic* and Sally's article are wonderful complements for each other and gifts for our work.

Also, Suzanne Down offers her thoughts and experiences about two very different storytelling/puppetry realms. We have a look at math in kindergarten as well. What? Leah Palumbo reveals how in a Waldorf kindergarten, math and number basics are indeed addressed. Glenda Moore gives insight into a home-based program in a town with no other "Waldorf" activities, a pioneering effort. Nancy Foster reports on some collective working in the realm of festivals and shares some of her thinking on this topic. And that's not all. We have a rich and full issue that I hope will offer each of you nourishment and inspiration!

The late Mr. Fred Rogers said: "*Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning. . . They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play.*"

Of course, what they are learning is how to be human, both socially and neurologically. Play is vital! Tragically, the realm of play is under attack in our world. It is becoming more difficult for children to have the time and space for the play activities that they need. How can we support the child's need and right to free creative play? How can we become advocates for play locally, nationally and globally? WECAN is looking into this question, as is the International Waldorf Kindergarten Association. And many others are waking up to the critical importance of play for so many aspects of human development. In recent years, a significant body of research has been done about play and its importance for the healthy development of children. This spring the Goetheanum will host the World Early Childhood Educators Conference, held every seven years. The theme is the role of play in childhood and its influence on later development. More information on this conference was included

in the Michaelmas issue of the WECAN News. Play is in the air all around the world.

*Playing for Keeps* is a national not-for-profit organization that exists to help bridge the gap between what researchers have learned about play, and what parents and professionals who impact childrens' lives daily need to know to help support the development of children toward their full potential. This organization is a resource for parents, early childhood caregivers, teachers, cultural leaders, pediatricians, librarians, and policy makers

and others. Their website offers many articles and is worth a visit. <http://www.playingforkeeps.org>

*Play is the purest, the most spiritual product of man at this stage, and it is at once the prefiguration and imitation of the total human life-of the inner, secret, natural life in man and in all things. It produces, therefore, joy, freedom, satisfaction, repose within and without, peace with the world. The springs of all good rest within it and go out from it.*

Freidrich Froebel

## **The Shortest Day**

Susan Cooper

*Written for The Christmas Revels, 1977.*

So the shortest day came, and the year died,  
And everywhere down the centuries of the  
Snow-white world,  
Came people singing, dancing,  
To drive the dark away.

They lighted candles in the winter trees;  
They hung their homes with evergreen.  
They burned beseeching fires all night long  
To keep the year alive.

And when the new year's sunshine blazed awake  
They shouted, reveling.  
Through all the frosty ages you can hear them  
Echoing, behind us - listen!

All the long echoes sing the same delight  
This shortest day  
As promise wakens in the sleeping land.

They carol, feast, give thanks,  
And dearly love their friends, and hope for peace.  
And so do we, here, now,  
This year, and every year.

Welcome, Yule!

# *Meeting the Child*

Barbara Klocek

How can we meet the different children in the kindergarten? Some children are four-years-old, some are six, and what a difference that makes! As well, even at this young age, they bring their home environments, their incarnating bodies and their individualities. We multiply that times the number of children in the class and it can indeed be a challenging task for the teacher.

Early in the year, the challenge lies in getting to know the children. As one little girl entered in with a firm step and a social smile, I thought, here is a strong, solid girl. This was confirmed a few days later when I saw her pinch the child next to her. Firmly I said her name. She looked at me surprised and burst into tears. I had spoken too firmly to her, for there was another very sensitive side that I had not yet seen. I had jumped too quickly to the conclusion of who I thought she was. I have taken that event into each school year as it starts and try to keep my thoughts of the child as open as possible. I also have a page for each child in my yearly notebook in which I write observations starting with the first day. I try to write in it at least every few weeks. It is amazing to see what I had observed the first week and then a few months later, for the picture deepens and reveals many layers as the year progresses. I have also found it invaluable in parent conferences to bring up specific incidents that might otherwise disappear in my memory. I find the ebb and flow of time in the kindergarten and the dreamy consciousness of the children creates a mood that is not conducive to observation. The recording of my observations over time awakens me to my perceptions as well as to who the child is becoming.

What about meeting the different ages? This is a whole dance in itself. How gently and tenderly we need to meet the younger children. We are like a wave to them, and sometimes we can be so overpowering. Often before they know us, even our looking at them is perceived as painful. I have come to see how sensitive they are even to my mood, which I had thought was only being experienced in my inner landscape. Several little boys were becoming more and more rambunctious in the classroom, and I felt my irritation growing. As I began to move towards them, the sensitive children

began to draw back. Not all children are so sensitive, for at the other end of the spectrum, some of them are surrounded by a kind of dream aura, unaware of my movement and my mood. This has led me to being more active outwardly when I sense something is not going well so that I do not get to the point of becoming irritated, disturbing everyone's inner landscape. This has also led me inwardly to strive to be very peaceful and calm in the classroom so that I am perceived by the sensitive children as a safe and easy energy to be around.

What a joy it is to have a child for a second year. The foundation of understanding and trust has already begun. They love to return to the rhythm of the kindergarten and help the new children find their way through the day. With these children, there is an opportunity to go deeper in the relationship. A group of three boys comes to mind concerning this. The first year, they came in already knowing each other, and paying attention to the teacher was not a skill that was in place. They initially would not let any other new children play with them and rudely turned them away. I tried drawing one of the group out by helping me with a task but met with little long-term success because the call of the pack was so strong. I suggested to the parents to have play dates with the new children, which was nice, but did not change the dynamic when the three were together in the class. They all had summer birthdays and were five-years-old before starting their first year. I finally decided that they needed a vacation\* from each other for a while. At first, they were at a loss of what to do, but, before long, they each began to find new friends. A new lightness came into each of the boys. After about a month, they asked if they could play together. I said they could if they included the other children. What a difference it made to the whole class dynamic, for they became much more joyful and inclusive. When they returned for their second year, they welcomed the new children, both older and younger, and the mood of inclusiveness and acceptance carried through the year.

As the child becomes six-years-old, a new dynamic can appear. Instead of the adult (parent or teacher) being the center of his world, which is a

lovely characteristic of the five-year-old, the child becomes the center of his world. New capacities of inner awareness in imaginations, memory and feelings are developing. Out of this, play becomes more planned. Often they don't even need to play but would rather sit and talk. This time is often referred to as the adolescence of childhood for the teenager also often considers himself the center of the world and has a strong inner life. With this shift, there can begin a challenging of the teacher in subtle ways. Indeed, this is the beginning of the consciousness change when, instead of learning through imitation, the child learns through the loving authority of the teacher. This is usually a tumultuous time at home as well, and the phrase, "You're not the boss of me!" echoes around them. We need to meet them with a different gesture. The same child who, a year earlier, was an eager helper now doesn't want to help at all. This is the time for loving firmness and the gentle but firm words, "You may help."

The child at six is much more awakened to his or her feelings and identifies with them in a new way. Sympathy and antipathy become more pronounced. I have found one of the tasks with these children is to help them begin to do things that they do not want to do. We all have this as part of our life task that returns again and again to us. It has shown itself earlier in the child at two, but at that point is more related to the will. We can help them overcome their antipathy with our warmth and enthusiasm. As we enter into the activity, from washing dishes or cleaning up the outside toys, we bring joy into our mood and movements. Often this is enough to help them, for they are still under the mantle of imitation as well.

Perhaps they need some one-on-one time to help them enter into activity. Our love and attention is healing. This time, one-on-one, may also reveal a challenge that they are having with an activity. One six-year-old girl was not drawn into our enthusiastic activity of jumping rope outside. For a while, I let it be, but then, one day, said, "All the six-year-olds get to practice now." How self-consciously she tried, for it was not easy for her to get off the ground, even though she was tiny. What a wonderful teaching moment it was as we all watched her try, and I consistently told her how well she was doing. There was an unkind comment from one of the skilled

children, and another teaching opportunity presented itself as I reminded everyone how hard it was when they were first learning, and how we have to help each other as we practice. The tiny six-year-old took it to heart and every day wanted to practice. We all happily followed her progress.

Kindergarten teaching requires a great mobility of soul. With each child, as we turn our attention on them, we need to change our inner tone or landscape. One child needs to sense a quiet valley for their soul. Another child needs a warming fire with which to be close. Another child longs for a clear fence that holds their boundless energy. It is through deepening our understanding of child development and by practicing both our outer observation and our inner calm that we can sense what the child needs and reflect it.

*Barbara Klocek has been a kindergarten teacher at the Sacramento Waldorf School in California for many years.*

*\* Author's Notes: The three boys stayed in the same class. I told them that they were given a vacation from each other so that they could make new friends. For several weeks they couldn't play together. For a day or two they were a little at a loss but soon began to have new friends and enjoyed their play in a new way. Then when they were able to play again, they were inclusive of these friends. I have done this also with social relationships where I thought the children could not resolve the issues on their own. We had two very strong, choleric girls who were drawn together and had wonderful times. However, sometimes they would get in a pattern when they were only able to quarrel with each other. With a vacation time, they could relax, relate to other children, and come back to each other in a different gesture.*

*I see the vacation as a opportunity for the child to be allowed time away from a difficult or unhealthy relationship. This allows a breathing in relationships that I have found that children are not always able to do on their own. I try to bring it in a very calm, matter of fact way and use it to help them expand their social skills without judgment.*

# *Mixed Ages in the Kindergarten: Oldest and Youngest Together, or Not?*

Nancy Blanning

Last spring, I attended a six-person retreat focusing on the topic of the older child in the kindergarten. Many deliberations confronted the working group who were asked to look at the needs and challenges of the six-year-old in the kindergarten class. Among these was the question of mixed age groupings. Does it serve both the youngest (generally thinking of three-and-a-half-year olds) and oldest (our six-year-olds, some turning seven before the school year's end) students to have them together in one class? This consideration poses challenges of protection for the younger ones, freedom of expression for the older ones, and practical issues for the teacher of how to orchestrate each day to embrace the needs of the entire group.

This is an interesting topic for me personally to ponder. I have never taught in anything other than a three-and-a-half to six-year-old classroom and have loved every minute of it. As one's own personal experience tends to create a baseline of "normal and typical," it is fascinating to see the wide range of opinions around this question, each of which has its merits. In Denver, the four kindergarten classes, three at the Denver Waldorf School and one at Parzival Shield School, all enroll this age range. One class had for some years only enrolled four-and-a-half to six-year-olds but changed to the wider mix a year ago. The teachers report great satisfaction with this change and will continue with younger children joining the class community.

So what are the issues that put this to question? With the little ones, there are clearly practical as well as philosophical concerns. In the beginning, the younger ones need greater physical assistance.

Working out how to provide this practical support calls for creativity, flexibility, and even some genius from the teachers. The six-year-olds tend to be more "worldly" and can bring some images and behaviors to the little ones that are far from the ideal we wish to cultivate with all of our students. Parents may complain about the "bad influence" of an older child as the young ones imitate all of their

experiences from school. So here rises the issue of protection.

As for the older children, parents often state that they do not wish their offspring to be "held back" by the class having to embrace the younger child and her/his needs. Parents may state, "I can see the younger children learning from the competence of the older ones, but what is in it for my older child? What benefit can the older children possibly receive from their little classmates? If you teach to the whole group, won't my child be bored?" And unspoken may hover the question, "Might my child be short-changed of the teachers' time and attention because of all that is required for the younger children's needs?"

Each of the above questions and many others that we could state from our personal experiences are valid. In the face of these questions, what are the supporting reasons for the mixed age grouping?

In studying the intentions behind Waldorf early childhood education, we find standing the picture of the kindergarten being the extension of "hearth and home." The kindergarten is a bridging step out into the world from the intimacy of the earliest years at home with the mother (which too few of our children get to experience in our modern culture). In the home, the children are all together, learning through imitation as they observe the practical care of the household and family. The family group has no segregation of ages. Everyone learns to adjust to the give-and-take of family life. Each one learns that personal needs will be met, but often we have to wait while someone more in need is cared for.

Waldorf education arose out of the ashes of the First World War, bringing with it impulses for creating a new sense of community. Thus, this picture of a kindergarten family that mirrors real community family life is, for me, very compelling. Although there is the challenge of the practical adjustments within this family constellation, there is also the opportunity to draw out of the children

flexibility, tolerance, and generosity toward one another and individual needs.

Having younger children in the group may call for slowing down the pace for each day and simplifying our expectations around the contents of each morning. This can be a plus for everyone.

Even our kindergartens can become too frantic when we succumb to the anxiety to offer too much to keep the children engaged. The slower and steady pace the little ones require can be a balm for everyone.

The step the six-year-olds will take into first grade will call for all the social skills the kindergarten environment can cultivate. The wider-age grouping can provide an even stronger foundation for creating class community over the next eight years. Years later, on the grade school playground, the grade two children will know many of the grade one and three children because they will have had many long hours of play with them in the kindergarten.

Over the years, there has been the opportunity to observe mixed-age groups in comparison with older kindergartens at our school. The consistent impression has been that the older group became more quickly self-aware than their age-mates in the mixed groups. The older group was more conscious of each other's capabilities or lack thereof. A more competitive mood arose in the older group. This suggests that having to adjust to and hold the younger ones in mind, for both teachers and students, helps the older ones to stay sweeter and younger in consciousness for a little bit longer.

The question of protecting our children from the rampant, negative influences of the world is overwhelmingly challenging for teachers and parents today. Negative moods, attitudes, and behaviors are imitated by children of all ages, not only the older ones. Whether littler children are in the classroom or not, we strive for ways to redirect and transform the images the children are bombarded with. That we strengthen, intensify, and potentize all of what we do with the children is imperative; and the presence of the younger children can help us to remain even more vigilant.

Movement; stories; festival experiences and images; and truthful, hard working, practical activities are all therapeutic antidotes for the ills all the children suffer. Parent education efforts become our most

potent vehicle for supporting healthy development of children of all ages.

Three-and-a-half has proved to be the youngest age that works well in our groups. Each of our classes has enrolled a younger three in exceptional circumstances and, each time has reconfirmed for us that three-and-a-half marks a significant step of emotional and social maturity. The stimulus and social expectations of the mixed-age class can be overwhelming for the younger three.

The spirit of "everyone's wants and needs will be met but not necessarily all at the same time" has proved a good guiding motto. It has worked well to dedicate especial attention to the youngest children through the autumn up to winter break, making sure each finds a secure sense of place in the class. This has been possible because the autumn months are so full of festival preparations and possibilities that it is easy to have a wide range of activities to keep all engaged. The little ones can stay close to the teacher's side if s/he is not otherwise playing. The older children are usually familiar with the activities and are eager to enter into the festival preparations with enthusiasm and experienced self-confidence. After winter break, the focus shifts to the older children. The younger ones by now should have a sense of belonging to and familiarity with the class routines and can take a step of independence. The pace can quicken a bit, if needed, and more challenging activities directed to the big children take the forefront. To do things that are big and heavy or precise and complicated feeds the six-year-old hunger for real tasks.

In a mixed-age grouping, the little ones bring their sweetness and a wide-eyed admiration for the competence and achievements their older classmates demonstrate. Their presence helps the kindergarten retain its connection to real home situations with children of all ages in the family, offering opportunity for developing patience, tolerance, flexibility, and generosity. The older ones have a subtle incentive to display their best, for the little ones to look up to. They can have the experience of being older and more competent, seeing their accomplishments contrasted to the developing skills of their younger classmates.

A last question is how many of each age might the class enroll. Some years ago, our kindergartens

decided to try to balance the age groups, having equal numbers of three-and-a-half, four-, five-, and six-year-olds. This looked great on paper. In reality, it proved completely impractical because the ages of children knocking on our door did not match our mathematical figures. We must strive to assure that there are enough of each age so that no child will be socially isolated. Yet the clustering of children and families who seek Waldorf education each year may surprise us. An experience of visiting with Freya Jaffke's kindergarten many years ago gave me confidence and permission to release expectation of how a class should be precisely configured. She was asked how she balanced the ages of the children in the class. Her reply was that she did not; she simply took the children as they came. If one year most applicants were younger children, they are the ones she enrolled in her class to join the ones already there. This is a guideline that has served us well.

There is surely no single "right" way we must all ascribe to on this question. For myself, teaching in a mixed-age kindergarten was a joy and a pleasure. The rewards of having many children for three years, deeply building and cultivating something with them, far outweighed the challenges and practical inconveniences of accommodating littler ones. The sense of family in a wider spread of ages was enriching for everyone. I can't imagine wanting to do it any other way.

*Nancy Blanning works at the Denver Waldorf School as a remedial and therapeutic educator and was a kindergarten teacher for many years.*



# *The Older Child in the Kindergarten*

Ruth Ker

From the results of the last North American survey, 30% of the groups surveyed contained children aged three or three-and-a-half to six or seven and 60% of the groups contained children aged four or four-and-a-half to six or seven. Here are a few more comments about the benefits of having younger children in the mixed age kindergarten from our colleagues in North America:

1. The older and younger children balance each other out. When the older children go through their six year old change/crisis, the younger children re-ignite the older children's excitement for beautiful, lively and fanciful play.

2. Mixed age groups provide children with the advantage of staying with one teacher for more than one year usually.

3. Younger children look up to the older children and aspire to future privileges. In their looking forward to the opportunities to do these things another year, they help to carry enthusiasm for the kindergarten curriculum. Yearning for future events helps them to grow into the capacities to achieve them.

4. Younger children can help the older ones from becoming prematurely hardened. The wide-eyed wonder and innocence of the younger children can be the leaven for the group. They make things rise.

5. Mixed age groups provide greater diversity. There is a great disparity between the developmental stages in early childhood and children are more able to find their equals in a group spanning one-and-a-

half to three years. This also helps the teacher to receive more accurate signals as to the proper placement of the grade one ready child.

6. A first-born child in a family has the opportunity to experience what it's like to be the younger child in a mixed-age kindergarten and the youngest child in a family could be the older child. In this way, children are able to expand their life experience, in relationship with others.

7. The mixed age group benefits only if the activities can be structured so that there is enough movement and real meaningful work and adult authority presence for the older children. If these are not strong, then the little ones can be overwhelmed. At the same time, the teacher must hold the younger children in a reassuring, tender and close gesture. A balanced age distribution is also important.

The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

*Ruth Ker is a kindergarten teacher from Duncan, BC and a WECAN Board member.*



*The supersensible world impresses parts of our body differently. The ether body penetrates/impresses our breast and upper leg more than it does our hands. Straight from our fingers go mighty beams of the ether body. Because this is what happens in our hands, we can see that our hands develop a wonderful, intimate relationship to the outer life. People who wash their hands often are in a finer relationship to their environment, they are more open to their environment. . . The human being is organized in such a way that he can have this intimate relationship to the outer world through the hands." (Rudolf Steiner, St. Gallen, 2/26/1911)*

# *Celebrating Festivals With Young Children*

Notes from a Conference

Compiled by Nancy Foster

More than sixty early childhood teachers gathered in Spring Valley in February, 2004 for a meeting sponsored by the Pedagogical Section and organized by Susan Howard, Chair of WECAN. The purpose of this meeting, which preceded the annual East Coast Waldorf Early Childhood Conference, was to explore the nature of the festivals we celebrate with young children.

The meeting opened with a brief presentation by Nancy Foster, in which she delineated some qualities that she believes should characterize festivals for the young child. Following this talk, the participants took part in conversation groups facilitated by Susan Howard, Andrea Gambardella, Ann Pratt, and Nancy Foster; the session ended with reports from each conversation group.

Offered here is a somewhat informal, aphoristic summary of both the introductory presentation and the conversation reports, with the hope that this will stimulate and encourage teachers to continue renewing and enlivening their own work in this realm and perhaps to contribute other thoughts to share with *Gateways* readers.

The introductory remarks by Nancy are indicated throughout by italics. The rest of the summary is from notes of the conversation reports as they related to the points made in the talk.

## **1. A true festival arises out of the teacher as a reality.**

*Werner Glas (co-founder of Sunbridge College and initiator of the first US kindergarten training) said we can't rightly celebrate a festival with children unless we adults are celebrating it. Children are imitative, so we must offer something which is a reality to us; otherwise it is superficial or even false. Are the adults, in their work with the festival, just following tradition, or are they actively seeking to create something "modern" in the best sense—something that is alive and evolving? Teachers should offer to the children only what they themselves can penetrate or are striving to penetrate, not just what some other teacher is doing.*

At one school, the full faculty held an in-service discussion about festivals, pondering the question, "What can we do to meet the incarnating child?" It took courage to do this, agreeing to live with the questions and forego immediate answers. They found it to be a very productive process.

At another school, the faculty celebrates the seasonal Christian festivals together, with small groups of the faculty taking turns in planning the festivals. Each festival is preceded, the week before, with faculty study of a festival lecture by Rudolf Steiner, to help deepen the relationship to the festival.

It is essential for the teacher to penetrate with consciousness what she is offering to the children. Traditions may have deep meaning behind them, but they need to be re-examined, not brought out of habit. Traditions can be "made new" through our conscious work—for example, the Advent Garden (given various names by various schools).

The teacher/adults need to be immersed in the experience, not intellectualize. We should make the festivals affirmations, not just adult creations. The teacher's inner work helps reduce questioning from the children.

## **2. A festival should support the incarnation process, helping the child experience the connection between his earthly and heavenly homes while becoming a citizen of the earth in this time and place.**

*The child has chosen this time and place to incarnate, according to the pre-birth intentions formed with the help of spiritual beings (the birthday story gives this picture). A festival should enliven this verticality (the connection of heaven and earth) and place it into the horizontal (the social realm in which the child has incarnated), as John Davy has written. The child's world gradually expands from the mother's eyes to the family circle and gradually outward to include the early childhood group. The young child does not yet experience the wider world in a conceptual way. The festival should belong to*

*the child's "here and now" in its connection with the heavenly realm. (For example, a Michaelmas festival for the younger children might include picking and polishing apples—the here and now—and a recognition that the child's courage to climb high for the apples comes from Michael—the heavenly realm. The star in the apple also represents the heavenly realm.)*

Festivals are celebrations of the earth, but they also acknowledge that we are in the service of something higher. They can bring a universal experience of what it means to be human. They can involve meaningful work, done in service of something higher.

Multigenerational observances help the child to feel part of the social surroundings.

Festivals should fit into the climate of a particular place, taking into account the life of nature and human beings in that place.

In Advent, stories and activities can reflect the relationship of the elements to the heavenly world and the birth of the child. One classroom had a nature table with a "Forest Family" with archetypal beings (family members, "professions," etc.) who came to visit in preparation for the birth.

The image of the birth at Christmas is significant to the incarnating child. Some teachers call the child the "Child of Light," to indicate the heavenly connection.

**3. A festival should take account of the "bodily religion of the child," and the fact that the child from birth to seven lives in the realm of the Father-God: ex Deo nascimur. (Reference: *Foundation Stone Meditation*)**

*These thoughts tell us the importance of wholeness for the young child. The healthy child, who lives so strongly in the will, in the limb system, feels at one with the surroundings—supported by the creative ground of the One, the Father-God. Thus a festival should offer an experience with which the child can unite itself fully, rather than a multiplicity of possibilities for experiencing the festival or the season. "Learning about" comes later in the child's development; "experiencing wholeness" belongs to the young child. Remember that devotion and reverence are experienced and expressed very differently in*

*early childhood and adulthood. Joy and satisfaction give a sense of wholeness, roundness. ("Lachen macht dick!"—Laughing makes one fat! —is an old saying quoted by Bronja Zahlingen.)*

In Advent, a story of birth supports these ideas. Bringing in the four kingdoms and the four elements supports the child's feeling of being at one with the world of nature. There is the feeling of the whole cosmos coming together to prepare for and greet the Child, and later, to follow the star.

Too much explanation will interfere with the child's experience. The deepest educational experiences happen when we lead the children, but then stand by and silently witness.

Meaningful physical activity at a festival may be significant, expressing the bodily religion of the child. Real work (such as gardening, tending bees, or making maple syrup) might be considered festivals because they serve others and the work is for the good of the earth. A participatory experience, rather than a show, gets the will involved.

A festival acknowledges awareness of what the children haven't yet forgotten. The festivals may be the culmination of this acknowledgment. Festivals acknowledge the cycle of the year and are thus reassuring.

**4. A festival for young children should be simple.**

*St. Exupery, in Wind, Land, & Stars, wrote: "In anything at all, perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away. . ." We want to avoid Waldorf sensory overload!*

In preparing the classroom for Advent, one should start simply and build up gradually. Try to determine what is *essential*; this is especially important for the younger children.

Simplicity along with joy should characterize a festival. Especially for Advent and Christmas, when there is so much awareness—music, the media, commercialism, etc.—a sense of quiet simplicity is important, along with awareness of what is behind what we do. Along with the simplicity, the adults need to be inwardly active.

Freya Jaffke spoke about a Michaelmas festival centered around simply polishing an apple, cutting it to reveal the star, wrapping it beautifully for the child

to take home.

“Less is more.” Nursery festivals should not be “watered-down” kindergarten festivals.

Two other general topics entered the conversations: the role of Christianity and meeting the needs of parents. Comments by Nancy from last year’s Pedagogical Section-sponsored meeting are in italics, as above, and notes from this year’s conversations follow.

### 1. What is the role of Christianity in the festival life of a Waldorf school?

*At Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten and Nursery, our stated intention (always spoken at Information Evenings which are part of our admissions process) is to observe the Christian seasonal festivals in a way that speaks to the universal in the human being. We feel that “universal” means—not including everything, but reaching deeply to find the essence of the human experience of the cycle of the year. This striving is a process. As a school, we make certain school-wide agreements, within which individual teachers are free within the classroom. For example, we changed the name of the Advent Garden to Midwinter Garden, but individual teachers may use the word “Advent” in their classes if they feel it is right. In addition, individual teachers may choose to include certain non-Christian festivals if it seems appropriate for their particular group of children and parents. In our festivals we hope to create a mood of reverence, which can then be carried into each family’s particular celebrations, whatever their religion or culture.*

Sometimes festival names have Christian connotations even though the actual festival observance may be universal in nature. It is good not to create barriers with names. In some schools, the child is called the “Child of Light.”

The Christ-Being has permeated the earth; thus celebration of the seasons and the world of nature is a recognition of the Christ, whether named or not. In nature, we can find the universal. What is important is that the teacher is working with the Christ-Being inwardly, and that parents know this. It is important to know what lies behind the outward symbols.

We would like to create new traditions, not everything mixed together; also, not Advent disguised underneath the winter festival.

### 2. What are the needs of parents in regard to festivals, and how can we meet those needs?

*Parents need:*

*\*nurturing of the soul life;*

*\*information in advance about our festivals—what to expect, explanations;*

*\*to perceive that we are not blindly following traditions, that we are in a process;*

*\*to be respected, yet met with firmness of integrity.*

*Simple pictures can be very meaningful to parents, and we can model for the parents how to create festivals with/for young children. There will always be a creative tension between parent wishes and our practices; this is not something one can ever “get right.” Communication is the key.*

Parents are hungry for spiritual observances. It is helpful to give parents in advance a written explanation of the meaning behind a festival observance and how it is geared to the young child. Let them know what picture you are bringing, especially at Advent.

One teacher offered parent evenings when parents could share with each other what they do at home with their families at festival times. She encouraged families to establish their own traditions, and encouraged simplicity to meet children at their level. Another teacher asked parents, “How do you celebrate festivals at

home?" before school started. It is important to respect the background and customs of families. If you honor other cultural celebrations, you see parallels within different religions.

A teacher has a parent evening the week before a festival. She tells the stories and sometimes makes lanterns before the Lantern Walk. So parents arrive at the festival already familiar with what will be happening.

We need to discern the balance between what the children need and the culture of the parents. How can we meet the parents, yet not compromise the children? Having the parents involved in the *doing* builds up community and anticipation and gives parents a way to be involved (an example was creating the Advent spiral.)

*Nancy Foster has taught at Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten and Nursery for over thirty years.*

# Living Under the Sky

Sally Schweizer

*When a pine needle falls in the forest, the eagle sees it, the deer hears it, and the bear smells it.*

*Native American saying*

Many of our familiar indoor activities are just as relevant in the outdoors environment. In this article, I will give many living examples of the outdoor activities we have pursued over the years in our kindergarten at Michael Hall. Tidying up outside, for example, should be just as consequent as it is inside. Fetching someone else's bowl for a second helping is just as natural outside on a log as inside. It is a rhythm, a natural habit, brought about by imitation; no thought is involved, only joy in helping, doing and seeing the good. The six-year-olds, already living in good unconscious habits, begin to repeat actions out of a recognition that they have to be done. These are acts of devotion, a real impulse of will, setting the scene for their class teachers to build upon. Hanging everything up properly after being outside, independently even if it is a struggle, becomes a necessary habit. "I can hear some boots playing around outside the door," say I when ready to start the story. The children jump to it and sort it out. "Oh, I forgot!" "I put mine away!" "Mine were just lying down, they got a bit lazy because they were tired." Dressing properly to go outside should equally be a habit, not thought about and done with time and care.

*The elemental beings are the intermediaries between the earth and the spirit-cosmos.*

Rudolf Steiner, *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*

Steiner describes the particular relationship of each elemental to our world in the most fascinating way—for instance, the butterfly, whose wings on death shed their dust into the warm ether of the earth, glimmering and shimmering, into which the fire beings then pour themselves. And this is the world around our children, particularly outside. He describes the relationship between the gnomes and our movement system, the undines and our

metabolic system, the sylphs and the rhythmic system, the firebugs and the nerve-sense system. He tells us how a spiritual music sounds forth from the movement of birds in the air to the sylphs.

How important it is, then, to be in this bird world, in the butterfly world, around and about in nature! Children love nature stories; they find a connection to the world of nature and the elementals. Singing bird songs and singing to the sun, moon and stars find an instant place in their hearts. In speaking of singing with children, Steiner says in his *Education of the Child*:

*The more living the impression made on eye and ear, the better. Dancing movements in musical rhythm have a powerful influence in building up the physical organs, and this too should not be undervalued.*

Nature abounds with impressions for eye and ear, and movements in musical rhythm for our children to imitate: leaves in the wind, dewdrops sparkling on the cobweb, clouds playing in the sky, raindrops falling in a puddle, flames in the fire, crackling wood, seeds rattling in their pods, frogs croaking, and all the delicacies and differentiations of colour and form. All this is absorbed by the child's etheric body.

Sight is the most used of all the senses, but movement underlies all the lower senses. They are penetrated by will activity, by unconscious will forces. Think of the life sense: inner movements of well-being and of jumping for joy! In touch, we reach out to our own periphery, move to our own boundaries to find outdoor space supports skills practice and helps to create harmony amongst the children. When creating or changing part of the garden, the children should be involved; otherwise, it is an opportunity lost. They can help dig, pass bricks, set stones, fetch wood-chips in a barrow, or watch. We are all familiar with how such meaningful work is then imitated at the time and later re-created in play. Every day we adults should be working outside as an example: sweeping, raking, scrubbing, weeding, compost making. A garden is never

finished because parts of it are in a constant state of growth and change. If parents are kept informed and consulted, a lot of involvement can ensue. Workdays are fun and great social occasions. We need their help anyway on the whole issue of clothing.

### ***Clothing***

What are we ourselves wearing outside? Imitation! We know children must have warmth for their life forces, and that they neither recognise nor can as yet regulate their own temperature. They should be dressed properly before they go out of the door, tucked in, buttoned up, hats, scarves and gloves on, extra pair of socks in winter and waterproof jacket and trousers when it's wet. The latter are expensive but save on washing and mending. I explained to the parents from time to time that it's not necessary for the children to have lots of clean clothes and often to be washed themselves, because they don't really get dirty; where it was appropriate I also said that the life forces are washed away too from clothes and body; soap should be used only where necessary. After the winter hats come off, the children should wear sun-hats. I made a whole lot of bonnets with neck protection of old pillowcases with pretty edgings, but the children could also wear their own. No one was allowed to have bare shoulders. With regard to the child's lack of defence mechanism, Dr Victor Bott writes in *Anthroposophical Medicine*.

*Exposure to noise, cold, heat, or too intense light can give rise to disturbances. Temperature regulation is dependent on the ego, and therefore must be supported by care of the adults around the child until the ego has taken hold of the body much later on.*

### ***Planting and Animals***

Seeds and berries for children and birds, herbs for soup, tea and drying, vegetables, fruits, flowers (particularly which are scented for bees, other insects and butterflies) or of interest, like snapdragon, winter-flowering shrubs, trees, as and where appropriate. Have a compost heap and leaf mould, and wood and sticks to rot for wildlife.

Caring for animals helps to build up sociability and respect. We couldn't have animals at Michael Hall because it was too exposed and vulnerable, with no one anywhere near, but we had the gift of cows or

sheep next door for most of the year, plus squirrels (grey, not red, sadly), birds, the odd fox and deer, rabbits and mice! Moles were secretive, but their tunnels were an endless source of exploration and excitement.

### ***Small or Difficult Spaces***

Some teachers only have a very small space for a lot of children, and asphalt on the ground that they may not dig up. Here, I would find old half-barrels, tubs, sinks, and plant them up. Recycled logs do well for a bed, too, attached to corner posts. Put near a wall or fence, climbers can grow up from them, and small trees can flourish too. Water when necessary. Perhaps a part of the asphalt could be covered with wood chips which can be swept up or a carpet. If there is a lot of mud, see how you could cover some of it with, for example, stones, gravel, old carpet or wood chips. Have logs, planks, bricks and branches for creative play. Make a circle of logs for play, picnics and story. Tie ropes to fences and hang clothes over them like tents.

### ***Beyond the Garden Gate***

*We are woodmen carrying trees, carrying, carrying, carrying trees.*

*We don't care about the wind or weather, we just keep carrying, all together.*

*We are woodmen carrying trees, carrying trees, carrying trees.*

*Sawing, Chopping, Hauling.*

Rhythmical "sea shanties" help the work along; we all use them to accompany activities, and outside should be no exception. I used to make up rhymes as we went along, to soothe a situation, but usually just on the spur of the moment anyway:

*Woosh, woosh, puddles, woosh. Slosh, slosh, mu-ud, slosh. Mind your boots, mind your nose, Hold your hat, hold your toes Woosh, woosh, clouds, woosh. Plosh, plosh, rain, slosh.*

I made this one up now as I wrote it. It often encouraged the older children to add verses of their own. They loved it!

### ***Ringtime Outdoors***

What about ringtimes in and beyond the garden? Why not, as long as it holds its rightful place in the morning's rhythm? Magical things happen, too, like birds singing with us, and finding the daisies we're singing about. We can use the natural landscape to enhance our ringtime (e.g. the molehills become the seven hills in Snow White). Stories are lovely outside, under the tree, under the bush, on the hillock, under the sky. The same rhythm, rituals and reverence accompany them.

Creative playtime in woods and field is so rich: nothing gets in the way, and Mother Earth's playthings are rayed out for us. It is also quieter than in the kindergarten. I worry a lot about the noise our children have to suffer today.

*All learning associated with speech in these years should be especially by imitation. Children will best learn to speak through hearing.*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

The child's whole body is also an ear. Where better to hear than outside? Our songs, games, stories told outside, birds, wind, rustling leaves, creaking branches. These experiences will later become concepts, and these will be the basis on which the child later responds to the world.

*The joy of children in and with their environment must therefore be counted among the forces that build the physical organs. They need teachers who look and act with happiness, and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love.*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

### ***Wonder***

The environment outside is a rich treasure, however modest, to fill us adults with happiness, especially if we see how fulfilling it is for the children. My children felt deprived if they hadn't had enough time outside. Wonder (of a daddy long legs: "What do they eat?") and reverence (of a squashed worm at the road, "We'll make him a grave.") help to build up, through imagination, the powers of original thought and feeling for one's fellow human beings. Wonder

helps to rekindle the flame of curiosity, the ability to discover and invent. Time is of the essence: "Hurry up, or we'll miss the shops." Not having time for the child may be depriving her of vital experiences; those who saunter and dawdle may be seeing something we have missed. We have the power to give our children time.

### ***Water and Healing Forces***

Playing with water is very important for children; inside they can wash up, paint, wash dolls clothes and paint pots. I recently saw a boy stand under the drips from the ceiling (leaky roof) "I'm having a shower." Water is especially helpful for precocious, hardened children. Although what comes out of the tap no longer has all the healing properties it should, and rain is polluted ("Mummy says you mustn't eat ice. It's got pollution in it.") none-the-less, water is a healing force. Dew, a stream, the pond, puddles, dripping gutters, mud, rain, mist: all are gifts for our children, and we can seek ways to bring it to them. Joan Marcus once told me she had water in the room in some form, and if it wasn't possible, one could have a blue veil.

The healing forces of music, ritual, warmth, colour and beauty are all found outside. Music gives us bird song, our own song, sounds of nature; "The leaves are clapping their hands!" Rituals are the movements of sun and moon, the seasons, growth and dying, our grace before the picnic and thanks afterwards, lighting the candle (reverent gesture to the sun.) Warmth comes from the fire, the sun, our clothing, the ruddy glow in the cheeks, happiness and our love for each other and the world. Color in nature is like a breath of fresh air for many children who suffer from today's harsh untrue colours. There is beauty in a bird's eye flowers, the big oak tree, and the clouds, in everything in nature.

### ***How Long Outside?***

How long should one be outside? A growing number of kindergartens and playgroups on the continent, and now also here in Britain, spend whole days out, and even have no building, just a shelter somewhere. Margaret McMillan had "shelters" in the city, not "classrooms." One April, in the snow, I visited a state forest kindergarten in Switzerland and asked the teacher about the things one could hardly do outside. He replied that you



had to let some things go: it depended on what you thought was important. In fact, there is almost nothing you can't do outside, especially if you have a shelter. Experience of permanent forest kindergartens is that the children are less ill and generally stronger, healthier and more harmonious. I've thought a lot about it all, and, when I retired, I was still at the stage of being outside for a total of about three days a week, because I still needed to have the balance of the indoors for the children: not for the activities, but for the being.

### ***Trips and Expeditions***

When we were out, we went to the same places for repetition, and also to new ones for wonder and surprise. This is not possible for some, but with a bit of imagination one can do it within a small area, too. Sometimes I invited the parents to come with us to see what we do; that was very popular, and people even took days off for it. One can arrange bus trips or car trips if there's not much possibility at kindergarten; then you need to have new risk assessments, comprehensive insurance policies and clean driving licences along with parents' permission.

We had many happy expeditions. Three miles is not too far for the children to walk once they are used to it; it is strengthening for the will forces. Once, our reward for walking the long way to a farm was seeing two lambs being born. Watching builders on a roof with a bucket on a pulley for tiles was exciting. "I'd like to do that when I'm older. I'd like to be a real workman when I grow up. Do you have to pay to do that?" To be around the campfire is to be as if in nature's kitchen, a cup of warm herb tea (herbs collected and dried ourselves) in one hand and a hot potato or chestnut in the other (rain didn't bother us): bliss! Cheeks glowed, social life blossomed: squeezing up on the log for others, sharing our food, sharing the odd story, talking together: idyllic! Food for the senses and power to the will, underlined through activity. I was blessed with assistants who supported me in all this, who didn't mind getting a bit grubby and fire-smelly. The parents were wonderful, too; I explained to them why I was doing this, and how they could help me.

### **The Elements**

#### ***Suggestions for Games Outdoors***

**Water:** Blowing walnut boats across a disguised paddling pool. Fishing little fish parcels of dried fruit in blues and greens off a blue cloth. The parcels have wire loops, rods have wire hooks.

**Air:** Throwing little sand bags with streamers into a basket. Throwing a ball through a decorated hoop to hit the bell hanging from it. Blowing tissue or fleece balls about.

**Fire:** Playing with a tissue paper butterfly on a stick. Making a candle in the sand (wick tied to a stick placed across the top of a small hole, wax poured in).

**Earth:** The sand pit has been brushed and combed the day before, and on the morning is decorated by many eager fingers drawing special pictures in it, prior to the streamers they made (of sticks and strips of red, yellow, orange crepe paper tied to the top) being placed in it for hoopla. Boxes of different materials for an obstacle course in bare feet: grass cuttings, pebbles, sand, shingle, wet mud, etc.

### ***General Outdoors Activities***

**Water:** Flow form, pond, leaf, paper or bark boats, waterfall, waterwheel, (two small paddles of rectangular board crossed in the middle on a piece of dowelling, supported either side of the stream by forked sticks), washing steps, watering plants, sand pit after rain, watching clouds, an old boat to play in.

**Earth:** Frost painting (put painted papers still on boards out on frosty ground; wait; bring in dry as normal). Mud pit, clay, gardening, collecting crystals from the ground (in gravel paths, even), sand pit, play with real bricks.

**Fire:** Play with beeswax, birthday cake candles if outside day (protect from the wind with an umbrella), bread oven, sand candles, watching butterflies and bees, visiting beehives (not too close!), bonfire, spoons and saucepans for "cooking."

**Air:** Skipping, throwing balls, running after hoops, making windmills and whipper whoppers, leaning on wind, watching clouds, climbing hedge or tree to the top.

### ***Winging through the Year: Festivals Outside***

A teacher once reported on a nursery that had not been outside for five months because of the mud. Amazing! But we can really only appreciate the joys of spring and summer if we take part in the dying and secrets of autumn and winter.

*The earth's soul sleeps  
In summer's heat;  
Then the sun's mirror blazes  
In the outer world.*

*The earth's soul wakes  
In winter's cold;  
Then the true sun shines  
Spiritually within.*

*In summer's joyful day  
Earth sleeps deep;  
In winter's holy night  
Earth rouses, wakes.*

Rudolf Steiner, translated by Matthew Barton

If rhythm and habits live in the children well, festivals can be celebrated outside. Maypole dancing is the most obvious. Sometimes we had to do it in raincoats or hang on to the blowing ribbons tightly, ending up in a glorious colored knot! But this is all a will-developing experience that the parents enjoy and laugh through because of our own enthusiasm.

**Whitsun**, the late spring festival, is of blossoming pictured by the compositae (daisy, dandelion, etc.) family. How beautiful, then, to bring the picture of the impulse of Christianity into the wide world when surrounded by blossom and insects. This is the alternative to having lots of candles inside: one can have them on a wind-still day, or a white one in a glass lantern. Music can be made outside just as well as inside.

At **St John's tide**, we can celebrate with songs and a story and music outside, followed by the fire. Midsummer with food galore for the senses is celebrated by some after the St John's festival, and by some separately. Dancing, song, honey, games and a picnic can belong to this: food for the senses, entertaining all the elements. Parents love to help and look after different games, and to provide for a bring-and-share picnic: a delight of colors, smells and tastes. It must be well organised

with the normal grace, beginning together, passing round and sharing, followed by thanks at the end. Parents may need help in supporting us with this, but are only too pleased to fit in and do "the right thing" for their children. The picnic can be on rugs under the tree, on the grass, on logs. I don't remember its ever raining for this festival, threatening, yes; actually raining, no.

**Michaelmas**: Some people celebrate this together with the Harvest festival, some separately. Whichever way, both can be outside. Michael stands there, the pedagogical companion of humankind, as a picture for the children of everything we have gathered and harvested to put in our basket for winter's dark and cold. An element for Michaelmas can be a lot of hard work in the garden or amongst the older children if attached to a school, or a walk in a "difficult" place with brambles, squeezey places in bushes, up steep hills and so on.

Courage and activity are certainly the main aspects at this time. I used to do both together: Michaelmas and harvest. We had a lot of work to do inside and outside on the morning prior to celebrating in a circle in a mood of quiet reflection, with music and a story at the end. Work included sweeping outside, apple polishing, apple-juice making, harvest loaf baking, raking, herb cutting, lavender picking, weeding and soup making. Parents were invited for as much of the morning as they liked, and were shown how they could help. Everyone shared in the well-earned little meal.

**Martinmas**: We celebrated out of doors with a walk in the darkening night visiting old people, or those who still worked for the school, bringing a lantern and biscuits to each. We would have earthly food, as a balance to the spiritual food, in some prepared place, in the yard, at friends', under the trees, somewhere, whatever the weather: hot tea (cinnamon plus ginger infusion with apple juice added) and biscuits. Parents were well prepared with songs and details beforehand, such as extra socks. At some point, where the children could sit down, e.g. a low wall, I would produce a little puppet play out of my pocket. In the dark, in the lantern light, the mood was beautiful.

**Advent**: My main thought was to kindle the wonder which escapes many of our children today, and to keep it alive in those where it still lives in order to make a space for the advent of the Christ

child. Sometimes I made a spiral garden, sometimes not, but at least a part, if not all, was always outside. It would take too long to describe it here, but it was always a surprise, and wonderful things happened in the children. Sometimes we went for a walk on a normal morning and found candles in apples under the bushes, with parents helping, well hidden, and making music to lure us there. When we returned, we found a beautiful spiral garden of twigs and crystals, and stars that definitely weren't there before! (I had it down to a fine art, with or without help, to create a festival centrepiece in five or ten minutes while the children were getting ready for outside or so, having everything ready behind the curtains.) One of the nicest things I did was to tear up little pieces of sheepskin on the third week of Advent and put them on the grass in the field some distance away before kindergarten started. When we went out for our walk (lured again by magical music glockenspiel or so), we found so many little sheep in the meadow, and could "hear" that they wanted to come back with us to the children's own Advent gardens at home. Again, the parents were well informed and sworn to secrecy! Sometimes I did similar things for other festivals, e.g. hanging so many little shell cradles with babies in them in the bushes in early morning a mile away, which we found later before the story of Briar Rose in the forest with the parents. One could say this sort of thing is a trick, but what about St. Nicholas and Father Christmas? Children should have magic.

**Candlemas:** In the flowerbeds, we planted candles we'd decorated or made and sang to Mother Earth.

**Easter or Spring Festival:** New planting would be a part of it by making Easter gardens outside to take home in flower pot saucers or on bark: cress, alfalfa or wheat sown a few days before. Egg decorating is more of an inside task.

### ***What Lies Ahead? A New Beginning***

*The plant-seeds spring in the womb of Earth,  
And waters rain from Heaven's heights;  
So does Love spring in human hearts,  
And wisdom water the thoughts of men.*

Rudolf Steiner

As the turn of the century passes, humankind is engaging in some soul-destroying education, and we are destroying the very ground upon which we walk. Rudolf Steiner told us that these are times of hard tests for human beings and that they would become even harder. Yet there is hope! I become very distressed and worried about so much I see and experience, but hold before me the healing possibilities offered to us by four Archangels: Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel and, of course, Michael, the leader of our age, to guide us in morality to stand up as individuals and not be afraid to do so, and to be as worthy guides to our children as we can possibly be.

Michaelmas is the Festival of Strong Will. Times of sacrifice, but therefore also healing, can be ahead for us all. Describing how to make an attractive garden for our young children, and doing something about making sure there will be a world garden for them and their children to walk in, are not one and the same. Our inner, awakened selves, with eyes, ears and hearts everywhere, must be active to perform outer deeds. There are many organizations working to save and heal the planet for the children whom we are educating. There are other groups that can give advice and practical help on living with nature and the creation of a harmonious landscape for the young.

All that we bring about through meditation and action changes the world; every deed has repercussions, whether greatly moving or a drop in the ocean. Teachers create ripples in the pools of their work with children, resonating out into the wide world. I am convinced that there is nowhere richer for this sparkling water than under the sky. And all our groups' back gardens may bear a heavenful of playthings, of fruit for the future, of magic.

*This article is excerpted from a larger article that was published in Kindling, the United Kingdom Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education.*

# Math in the Kindergarten

Leah Palumbo

The foundation for learning math lives in the body in the rhythm of the breathing and the heart. This “math genius” lives in the body of each individual human being through the rhythmic system. Of course, children see their parents doing activities that they want to copy and these activities may relate directly to math through computation, sharing of resources or with direct relationship to currency by watching mother purchase groceries, for example. Children begin to count through imitation. Watching mother divide the potatoes onto plates for dinner is a mathematical experience. By watching and copying others, children begin to understand the outward manifestations of simple mathematics. So, as you can see, the world of math is already a part of their natural experience of the world.

The foundation for beginning to teach math in the elementary grades begins in nursery and kindergarten classes with social and practical experiences, simple number rhymes, games, songs, and stories. During the course of a child’s kindergarten experience, children learn math concepts through their experience of the world around them. They learn through movement, making things and playing. The children play “store” using shiny chestnuts to “purchase” items. A group of children may build a train and sell “tickets” for the ride. A basket of small puppets is distributed among a group of children before the beginning of a puppet show. Social concepts such as sharing with a friend are learned early in the Waldorf classroom. There is a natural expression of equality and division when they learn to take turns and share.

Through singing and rhythmic activity, the children begin to experience math as mathematical reality permeates the world. We sing, clap, and dance to the rhythm inherent in number. They experience themselves, as one, first through separation from their parent. Then they experience the “oneness” of the sun shining down upon them in a verse such as:

*Sun above me shining,  
Shine into my golden crown.  
Sun above me shining,*

*Shine into everything I do in the world,  
Sun above me shining,  
Shine into my heart so good.*

The children experience the concept of two: day and night for example. There isn’t a kindergarten child who could start the day without wearing two slippers. The children experience the four seasons and the four elements. Early in the year the children learn that five children fit comfortably on the “ready” bench near the door. On bread baking day, each child receives one bun. We touch lightly on fractions when a child requests a second helping and receives a bun divided in half.

One of the tasks of early childhood is to master body skills: finger plays and movement games that help develop physical coordination and form the basis for the formation of speech. Matching rhythmical counting with body movements forms a basis for later mathematical learning and forms a valuable foundation in the body through the mastery of number and rhythm. During circle time, the children imitate rhymes that incorporate the gesture of counting on their fingers. The teacher brings math imaginatively, through the use of games and seasonal rhymes, both which bring math concepts in a creative way. The children are essentially unaware that circle time presents an opportunity to begin to learn to count, add, subtract, divide and multiply. The children may imitate these rhymes, finger plays and other games learning to count to five, ten, twenty or higher in games of skill such as jumping rope.

Number representations are a natural part of the nature stories and fairy tales that we tell in kindergarten. In the Brother’s Grimm story, “The Queen Bee,” for example, two brothers set off on an adventure and fall into disorderly ways when they are joined by their third brother known to them as simpleton or “simple one.” Simpleton, with help from three different animals, releases the castle from enchantment after completing three tasks. His deeds, with the help from the animal kingdom, free

the three beautiful princesses from their sleep. In the end, the three brothers marry the three princesses. This brief outline illustrates how fairy tales succeed in bringing mathematics to children on a subtle level.

In the forward to Ron Jarman's book, *Teaching Mathematics in Rudolf Steiner Schools for Classes I-VIII*, Chris Clark states that "As a child beholds the universe, it looks for connection with the elements of that universe as well as with the contents of his own mind and soul: a connection with the innermost self." Children experience math in the world around them. Because arithmetic arises out of the rhythmic system of the body, it is natural that in kindergarten we bring the unfolding of math through rhymes, songs and stories. However, direct intellectual teaching does not take place. The child is encouraged to take in the world with his senses. The teaching of mathematics, reading and science happens organically with the child whose natural inclination is to explore the world.

Five little leaves so bright and gay  
Were dancing on the tree one day,  
Brother wind came into town,  
O-O-O-O  
One little leaf came tumbling down!

Four little leaves so bright and gay,  
Were dancing on the tree one day,  
Brother wind came into town,  
O-O-O-O  
One little leaf came tumbling down!

Three little leaves so bright and gay,  
Were dancing on the tree one day,  
Brother wind came into town,  
O-O-O-O  
One little leaf came tumbling down!

Two little leaves go bright and gay,  
Were dancing on the tree one day,  
Brother wind came into town,  
One little leaf came tumbling down!

One little leaf so bright and gay,  
Was dancing on the tree one day,  
Brother wind came into town,  
One little leaf came tumbling down!

One little, two little, three little witches,  
Fly over haystacks, fly over ditches,  
Slide down the moon without any hitches.

One, two, three, four, five  
Once I caught a fish alive.  
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,  
Then I let it go again!  
Why did I let it go?  
Because it bit my finger so!  
Which finger did it bite?  
The little one upon the right.

Five little peas in a pea pod pressed,  
One grew, two grew, so did the rest.  
They grew and they grew and they did not stop,  
Until one day the pod went POP!

Two little beaks went tap, tap, tap!  
Two little shells went crack, crack, crack!  
Two fluffy chicks peeped out and, Oh!  
They liked the wide world so,  
They left their homes without a fret,  
And two little shells are now to let!

Here is the beehive, Where are the bees?  
Hidden away where nobody sees!  
Here they come creeping out of the hive,  
One, two, three, four, five,  
ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM, see they're alive!

### *Games and Stories*

Stepping over stepping stones, one, two, three,  
Stepping over stepping stones come follow me,  
The river's very fast and the river's very wide,  
So we'll step across the stepping stones,  
To reach the other side.

### *Finger Plays and Rhymes*

Five tiny fairies hiding in a flower.  
Five tiny fairies caught in a shower,  
Daddy Cock-a-Doodle standing on one leg.  
Old mother speckle-top lays a golden egg.  
Old Mrs. Crosspatch comes with a stick,  
Fly away fairies, quick, quick, quick!

Five Little seeds a-sleeping they lay,  
A-sleeping they lay,  
A bird flew down and took one away;  
How many seeds were left?  
Four little seeds a-sleeping they lay, et cetera.  
There were five little buns in the bakery shop,  
The kind all sweet with the honey on the top,  
Along came a child with a penny to pay,  
She took one bun and then she went away!  
There were four little buns in the bakery shop,  
Etc...

### *Jump Rope Songs*

Tell me, tell me, tell me true,  
How old, how old, how old are you?  
One, Two, Three...  
My old Granddad made a shoe, How many nails did  
he put through?  
One, Two, Three...  
Bubble gum bubble gum in a dish,  
How many pieces do you wish?  
One, Two, Three...

My mother made a chocolate cake.  
How many eggs did she break?  
One, Two, Three...

# *Outdoor Puppetry and Big Movement: A Friendly Antidote to the Inactivity of Our Times*

Suzanne Down

I grew up in the countryside where my brothers and I spent hours every day in outdoor activity, running through the woods, making forts under and in the trees, building igloos, sledding, and riding bikes. When my children grew up in rural British Columbia, it was much the same for them. It then expanded to include skiing, snowboarding, backcountry hiking, horseback riding, lots of yard and garden work, shoveling snow and chopping wood! Country life is a gift to childhood.

But the overall sign of our times is that people have reached an all-time low in physical movement and are inactive. Many children live in suburbs and cities where parents are afraid to let children play in front yards. Young children are strapped into car seats for endless errands, and, as they get older, sit in front of the television, computer or video games. This, of course, contributes to a host of childhood ailments. This inactivity is an illness of the will. The organs of the metabolism (home of the will) need to be strengthened, or the human will becomes weak or damaged. Its cure is activity, or more importantly, meaningful, purposeful activity, especially with movement of the limbs.

The young child develops his nerve-sense system through physical movement. Dr. Michaela Glöckler states, "Until nine years, children should move and be active as much as possible in order to develop their thinking. The kindergarten teacher relies upon movement in order to teach young children, and it is movement that helps the child develop the nerve-sense system. Movement is the best education for stimulating the brain."

Puppetry can support the child in large movement that carries with it the added meaning of story and social artistry. I have long been interested in outdoor puppet theater, using natural settings as the stages and employing large and small puppets that children move with bigger movements than indoor puppetry allows.

I periodically give an outdoor puppetry summer camp for children. One year, we created big birds

from wire and hand-made felt. They were every wonderful assortment of color! We strung them on long branches with long strings, creating bigger than life size birds with a large range of movement. The children climbed trees and had them flying through meadows.

We improvised nature stories, as well as performed short pieces from songs and poems about birds. We encouraged the "will" development with the children by using large limb movements, while at the same time were embracing the unfolding imagination and fantasy forces. The children became airy and almost flew themselves as they enlivened the puppets in the element of air. The weaving of puppet arts, connecting with the elements, the seasons and delicious physical movement was enthusiastically taken up.

You can encourage the quality of children's own larger movement woven with the magic of puppet activity. Try adding the four elements to your puppet stories.

Air – birds flying in the tree tops

Earth – gnomes crouching and digging in caves

Fire – fire fairies flickering, or a large Michaelmas dragon manipulated by several children

Water – fish flowing along the stream, dolphins leaping over the waves

Work with the children by crafting puppets from found objects in nature. Add movements that connect the children truthfully to the four elements. The world of nature becomes a large story stage! In Lighthouse Park, a coastal park in West Vancouver, British Columbia, there is an outdoor amphitheater perfect for giving puppet plays. It is found in the midst of ancient moss covered trees, and the sound of the ocean sets a magical mood.

I have also found a different forest place in another part of British Columbia where there is a circle of tall, tall pine trees that encloses a small forest meadow. We call it the "Chapel in the Woods." A group of first grade children made large simple marionettes and presented a Christmas play,

called, "The Little Shepherd Boy," for their parents. It was just turning dark (though it was 4:00 p.m.); we had lanterns hanging in the trees and a circle of snow candles, and the stars above were our stage lights. The stage was the meadow, and the children walked the large puppets, as tall as their waists, through the story. Everyone had a nice forest walk to get there and back. It was a memorable and vigorous puppet adventure for all.

We can create these outdoor puppet experiences in many places. I have a group of children that go to a park with me every Monday, and we create puppet stories there. There is a bridge over a streambed that is dry right now until the mountain snows melt. We have made large, very simple marionettes for the "Billy Goats Gruff" story out of burlap and branches. The children take turns being the characters, and play the troll under the bridge themselves. They want to play it again and again, with space to run in the "meadows." We end it after a couple of hours of puppet play with a long walk back to my house. There is lots of movement sparked by the creativity of the puppet story.

*Suzanne Down, founder and Director of Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts has now returned to British Columbia and lives on Vancouver Island. She will be traveling extensively, giving workshops all over North America, and will be offering her Puppetry Training course on both the East and West Coasts, Summer, 2005.*



# *The Joys and Struggles of Growing a Home Kindergarten*

Glenda Moore

I am now entering my fifth year of teaching a small home kindergarten for three- to five-year-olds in America's heartland, St. Louis, Missouri. The joys of such an intimate program are myriad, coming down the stairs while still in my nightgown on a frosty winter morning to begin setting my bread sponge, knowing I will not be fighting rush hour traffic before beginning my teaching morning, having such a small group (eight children) that I can afford prolonged and multiple home visits with each family and the joy of witnessing the very young child blossoming in a group setting that is, in my opinion, just the right size. I teach three mornings each week in the four-hour rhythm that I used when I taught in larger schools. Since my health does not permit me to teach full-time, this part-time schedule allows me to continue serving in a meaningful way. I thought that it might be helpful to share a few of the lessons I have learned upon my journey.

First, I am grateful for the years I spent teaching in two pioneer Waldorf schools in California. Without the form that became a part of me, I do not feel I would have been able to create my kindergarten as it now stands. This may not be so true for home kindergartens that stand under the umbrella of a thriving Waldorf school, but for those who are working in truly pioneering programs, some years of experience are invaluable. Since the school is in your home, it may appear to be only a home (although a warm and inviting one) to your prospective parents. There is no formal edifice to impress and reassure new parents; there is mainly your inner experience to attest that you are indeed a school and offering a genuine educational experience.

Second, I would only recommend the home kindergarten work to teachers who have deep confidence in their parent work. In a home kindergarten, I have not had colleague support when a challenge comes along; one truly is drawing upon inner resource and experience and the well should be deep. And even though I felt largely successful in my communications with parents while teaching in

schools, I have been surprised at times at the unexpected and more challenging situations that have arisen in the home setting. This past year, for instance, I had two children who had significant developmental delays. Both parents, who were friends, were distressed and in deep denial when concerns about the children were brought to them; both parents abruptly withdrew their children in mid-year that, in turn, was distressing to me since they were making real progress under my care. Again, in the home setting, there is no reassuring large community of adults to help allay the fears of an anxious parent; there are no other professionals to support your view of the child and the recommendations you are making.

In response to this difficulty, I formed an Advisory Board of past kindergarten parents and professional people to help advise me on creating policy and for general support. Two of the Board members offered to be present for challenging parent-teacher conferences to act as witness; I accepted gratefully since I had found a parent in deep distress is capable of behaving in a threatening manner. I had felt uncomfortable meeting two of the situations I have encountered in the last four years by myself.

These situations have highlighted a weakness in my program which I hope will be helpful to others: my kindergarten was so small and cosy, and I felt so confident in what I was offering that I began it with virtually no written policy. Did I truly need a parent handbook with only eight families? Yes, indeed, I did. I began with only a discipline policy statement that was required by my licensure. When issues arose over an aggressive child who was being exposed to a great deal of media, I added a television and media policy tied to the discipline statement which basically recommended no media but did not insist unless there were significant behavior problems, especially aggression toward other children. In my situation, I gather families who have never heard of Waldorf education before and attempt to meet them where they are and draw them

along, step by step. I do give them Marie McClendon's two books about media at the initial interview that lasts about two hours. Following are a few essential highlights from my new handbook (completed this last summer):

**1) Television and Media Policy:** I recommend no media; I clearly state that I feel Waldorf education, which keeps the children more open, does not mix well with the sensory bombardment of the media. I inform the parent that I will be presenting information about the effects of media and attempting to persuade them to protect their children until they are older; however, I leave them free unless there is a significant problem with disruption or aggression toward other children. Then I ask for full support or withdrawal of the child from the program.

**2) Parent Meeting Attendance:** I have made the decision to require parental participation at parent evenings and even have them sign an agreement to that effect at the initial conference. I found I had several families who seemed to want a drop-off program and were not interested in finding out more about what I was doing philosophically. I now explain at the initial conference that this education has some significant differences from mainstream early childhood education, and I would like them to be aware of the ideas, although I do not expect them to adopt them all as their own.

**3) Parental Screening:** As the administrator and teacher of a program, I have been tempted to accept families that I had initial concerns about simply because I needed the enrollment. Since these families have subsequently proven to be the most challenging, I have determined to cover several topics in an initial screening to determine parental openness. The above two topics are covered: willingness to consider working with media questions and wishing to discover more about the education through parenting classes. A third question I have decided is crucial is, "All children have struggles of one kind or another. Are you willing to work with me on resolving your child's developmental issues?" If there is any hesitation on this point, I do not accept the family into the kindergarten. I have found in my years of teaching that I am able to work with almost all children, but, for the ones with higher need levels, I need

acknowledgement from the parents that the child has issues to resolve and that I have the parent's full support in working with me upon them. This past year, I tried to work with the previously mentioned children without open discussion with the children's parents because the topic was too painful for them. I do feel like I helped the children, but I am unwilling to attempt the experience again without the open partnership with the parents; it was simply too difficult. The first month of school is a trial period after which the parents and I will assess the child's needs and whether together we will be able to meet them in my program. This allows me an opportunity to experience the child in the classroom setting and create some guidelines from the beginning of the year.

**4) Parent-Teacher Communication:** I have two formal parent-teacher conferences each year, one in the fall and one at the end of the year. I encourage parents to call me if they have concerns in between, but I have decided to limit the telephone conversations to about fifteen minutes. If the issue cannot be resolved in that time, then I arrange a face-to-face conference where we can sit down and address the concerns. I feel this makes for a more conscious communication and allows me time to prepare inwardly for a true meeting with the parent. In the past, I have spent hours on the phone with anxious parents; I feel I have to set firmer boundaries in a home setting than I did in the schools. The situation feels more intimate, and it is easier to cross into a friendship with the children's parents, but I find it is better to keep a bit of formality until the children have "graduated."

In conclusion, I would say that I have found this to be a wonderfully viable semi-retirement plan for Waldorf teaching. I would highly recommend it to experienced kindergarten teachers who find they cannot keep up with the demands of full-time teaching but still have the forces to work in a smaller way. I find I spend about thirty hours a week between teaching, preparation and administrative work, about half of the hours I gave to my school week; this gives me the three-day weekend I always longed for and most of the summer off to regenerate.

*Glenda Moore has taught kindergarten at Davis  
Waldorf School and Cedar Springs  
Waldorf School, both in California.*

## *Re-inventing Spindlewood*

Susan Silverio

For many years, the morning kindergarten, nestled between the woods and the family farmstead, seemed all that the children needed. But increasingly, parents are seeking out afternoon programs and looking for a place for three-year-olds, as well. How could we provide continuity of care in a way that could be nourishing to both children and teachers? How could a teacher carry the child through the “grades” of early childhood? How could afternoons provide, as closely as possible, the best elements of care found in a healthy family?

Something new (or was it ancient?) was being called for. I embarked upon a journey to find a way of life that could carry a wider age range of children over an extended day. I found myself experiencing a shift in focus to relationship-based care with the adult as curriculum, as well as an appreciation of ordinary life including the living arts of nurturing, domestic, and social arts, with the creative arts revolving around the seasonal festivals. The shift was a re-visioning of the “morning program” to an 8:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m. day that allows time for the nurturing physical care of the children and includes children in the daily work and play of life. Rather than the fairly intense three-and-a-half hour program of structured, organized activities for children, framed with hours of adult-only preparation, clean-up, parent contacts and seemingly endless faculty meetings, the door was now opened to living with and around children, weaving in stories, games and verses throughout the

day. I found an inner door opening to the LifeWays Training.

There seemed to be time to breathe. I was reminded that my colleagues in remedial training have for some time recognized the need for remedial work for today’s children, and although I had participated in a number of courses and seminars, there had never seemed time in the course of a kindergarten morning for some of the individual care and attention needed by children. Afternoons now provide time for the nurturing arts of hair brushing, lavender face cloths and warm lavender foot baths that allow the possibility of close observation of the child, and the bodily care that meets two of the lower senses identified by Rudolf Steiner as the sense of life and the sense of touch.

The afternoons also allow a “siesta time,” when my assistant and I frame a row of mats with colored cloths, so that each child has a little house somewhat like the ones that they build for themselves during imaginative play time. Although this custom flies in the face of our hectic “on to the next activity” culture, and has been met with some resistance by some older or more wide awake children, in the course of time, as their parents have grown more comfortable with the value of this quiet time, the afternoons have become a time for a true “out-breath” from the morning, with younger and sometimes older children crooning the day’s songs to themselves and often falling into a sound sleep. The ones who don’t sleep will rest very quietly as they

wait for others to sleep so that we can then sit on the couch and hear the next episode of their “chapter book.” The rosy cheeks of the sleepyheads as they arise testify to their sense of life and well-being.

Even a welcome change can mean the loss of the familiar, and so also with this transition. Like a caterpillar in a newly formed chrysalis, I found my regular morning dissolving into a bit of chaos until new rhythms and forms could emerge and hold a wider range of daily life. I felt challenged as I stepped out from my teacher role and closer to the parental realm. I even missed the familiar excitement of the often-painful interminable group process of faculty meetings.

But what has been gained? The slightly more relaxed rhythms have allowed the assistant teacher to emerge as a person in her own right, and she has discovered a deep well within herself of stories and vignettes that amuse and delight the children, and sometimes meet them in a curative moment. We rejoice to see the children who were quiet and withdrawn last year becoming more playful.

I sense a new feeling quality with the parents. If perhaps I have been a warm teacher, I now stand in the place of a caring person in the lives of their children. Parents seem a bit more relaxed as well, and I now notice them holding, nurturing and playing with their children when they greet them. Because there are now two pick-up times (after lunch *or* after siesta) there is no longer one grand dismissal time. When parents arrive to pick up their children, there is a now bit of a “tidal pool” effect. At the end of the morning, one child might invite a parent in to see his puppet play. At the end of the afternoon, someone might arrive a few minutes early and offer to help us tidy up. I have at times felt defensive of our kindergarten mood, but now want to cultivate an atmosphere of hospitality. Life abounds at these moments, and I find that parents are grateful and respectful.

What else is gained? In spite of my own resistance to being still for a while during siesta, I am learning to have a full twenty-minute out-breath myself after the back rubs and lullabies, a moment of meditation or handwork that provides rest for my soul, even while staying in-tune with the children. During the quiet time that follows, I can sometimes weave in a few other activities that I would have done ordinarily in the afternoon anyway: folding a

basket of laundry, having a conversation with a parent, or setting up for the next day.

Also gained are several children who could not have been accommodated in a more formal kindergarten morning. Some are young; others require a bit more adult interaction to find their way through the day. The other children, some of whom have no siblings at home, gain the opportunity to observe a younger child being cared for. The simple acts of assisting a child in dressing and undressing for outdoor play nourish the sense of touch and can be a nurturing activity if not rushed and perhaps accompanied by a song. A child who has difficulty entering into social play in the morning becomes quiet and observant as I brush his hair before he enters the room. This nurturing touch seems to bring him into his own body and allows a smoother transition to the group.

One of the many gifts of Rudolf Steiner to our search for wholeness in the lives of young children is his recognition of the twelve senses of the human being. In addition to the familiar ones of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing, he describes four lower senses as paramount for child development. These include touch as well as a sense of life, movement and balance.

Together, the lower senses foster the development that in later life will be able to support the human faculties of the higher senses of hearing/tone, speech/language, thought/concept and the sense of the unique individuality of another human being. Without the necessary grounding of the lower senses, the higher ones may not be able to develop in a truly human way. I feel that I am better able to cultivate all of the four lower senses of life, touch, movement and balance (as well as the fifth one of warmth) in the course of the full kindergarten day that allows more time and a quiet afternoon. The sense of life and touch are especially addressed by the nurturing arts. Brushing the children’s hair, such a simple act of care after taking off wool caps or waking up from siesta, was an innovative reclaiming of an ancient practice. (I found small wooden brushes intended for cats that were affordable enough to provide one for each child.) A warm lavender footbath provides a soothing and warming transition from a goodly portion of outdoor play to a restful afternoon. After lunch, warm lavender

washcloths become wet napkins for face and hands, nourishing the senses.

Much has also remained the same in the life of our kindergarten that vitalizes the two other lower senses of movement and balance: sledding down the old woods road during several snowy months, collecting maple sap buckets and sledding them to the sugar shed, swinging on the swings that parents have hung from the peeled log that they lifted up and pinned to two trees during a family work party, hoisting buckets of water from the well for the sheep and chickens. Our woodland paths are irregular and “rooty,” and occasionally a city-dwelling child will trip upon one as he makes his way along in the beginning of the year. But during the subsequent weeks, the children learn to feel their way over the surface of the woods, letting their feet reach out as sensors to maintain their balance as they move. The little frog pond is a touchstone of changing life. In the fall, the children are engaged body and soul in the joy of catching frogs; throughout the winter they observe and test the ever changing frost and ice; in the spring, the children pump the hand pump to create a waterfall over the flow forms to freshen the water that is now teeming with frog eggs and tadpoles.

Even indoors, there is opportunity for movement and balance. Parents who advised me that their active boy could not live without a “four-wheeler” are amazed to see him create one out of a plank and four short logs. In fact, his wooden board can do almost anything—become a slide, a seesaw or a boat (and he now takes a board to bed with him, as well). A small “rock-a-boat” holds four children at a time, or, when turned over, allows toddlers a safe climbing structure, so important for development. The senses of life and touch are nourished by the natural fibers of the play cloths and toys, as well as by the hot water bottles for cold days.

I am still learning to breathe into these new, lighter rhythms and the nurturing arts. There are still things that I want to hold onto and find a place for, like fairy tales for the older children. But most of all, I have the satisfaction of cultivating a place in the world where children can grow, learn and thrive that feels more like a neighborhood than an institution. I still refer to this as “kindergarten,” but whenever Elliot, who is four-years-olds, hears me, he

exclaims mightily, “This isn’t kindergarten, this is SPINDLEWOOD!” Indeed, he is right; beyond all categories and models of education, it is the living experience that is real and creates a foundation for a meaningful future.

*Susan Silverio is the Director of LifeWays Training, Eastern Region, who attributes all the changes she made with her program to the LifeWays training.*

# The Christiana Foundation

Robert Hickman,  
Board of Directors, Christiana Foundation

Christiana Marie Sullivan was born to a loving Waldorf family in Fair Oaks, California. She had a brief three months on earth. During her short life and in the experiences that followed after her death, the whole community felt the presence of a special being whose brief appearance in life was a gesture of beautiful love that transcends death.

Christiana's parents and many friends in the community were inspired to create the Christiana Foundation's mission. In her memory, the Christiana Foundation raises money to support the efforts of a wide array of anthroposophical initiatives around the world doing good work with meager funds. Donations have been given to Waldorf schools with ethnically diverse student bodies; biodynamic farms offering hands on experiences for students; youth empowerment programs promoting community service; a project promoting reconciliation between families in Israel and Palestine that have lost children in the fighting; Sophia House, which supports homeless families; the Early Life Center at Rudolf Steiner College and the Mother's Support Network, a program offering classes and support groups. Even though the grants are small, they are imbued with the special blessing inspired by Christiana.

The Christiana Foundation is currently looking for ways to raise funds directed at supporting the development of parent-child classes in Waldorf schools. We would like to provide scholarship funds for birth to three Waldorf workshops, courses or trainings. We are looking first to Waldorf-trained professionals working in this field and other supporters of early childhood education for donations.

You can help us understand if there is an interest in this project by giving us feedback to the following questions:

- Would you be willing to make a financial contribution directed to this project?
- Do you know of supporters of early childhood education who would be willing to support the project?

- Do you currently offer parent-child classes at your school, and, if so, are your teachers in need of further training?

We all know that childhood is under attack in the world and that the first three years of life shape the children's future lives in profound ways. Parent-child classes are counteracting these negative forces by supporting parents and promoting positive and protective parenting practices. The Christiana Foundation wishes to enhance the good work already being done in Waldorf schools in North America.

Please let us know what you think! Questions and donations can be addressed to:

Christiana Foundation  
7741 Doneva Ave.  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628  
(916) 863-6051  
or email at [elfsproject@juno.com](mailto:elfsproject@juno.com)

*The Christiana Foundation is a recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible. Moreover, since all foundation related activities are performed by volunteers and there are minimal administrative costs, almost all funds are invested in the initiatives we support.*

**Urgent appeal for Loczy!** New government regulations in Hungary have made the costs of operating the Emmi Pikler Institute prohibitive. Your help is needed now to keep the Institute open so that this important work is not lost. Call Elizabeth Stubbs at 781-863-5959 to see how you can help.

# Somerset School

Todd Hilton

Autumn is upon us here at Somerset School, and with the new school year comes a new program that we have started that is directed to the early years of childhood. We have created an Early Childhood program that is specifically targeted for children of ages four through six in need of special care. Somerset School focuses on working with children with learning disabilities, developmental disabilities or behavioral challenges. Our program is designed to meet the challenges that our young children are meeting today in the world, such as media, sugar, poor rhythmic schedules, and lack of proper movement. We offer a Waldorf-based curriculum that is added to with daily movement exercises, meals that are organic-based, and a daily rhythm that allows the child to breathe out and know that they are in a safe, nurturing environment. All this is created in a beautiful setting. We are located on a fifty-five acre farm that is nestled into the heart of the Sierra foothills of California.

Our children begin their day with a morning circle where they are given movement exercises built into stories and song. They also work on exercise mats with rolling and crawling work that is vital to the development of their young bodies. The children participate in helping to prepare a healthy snack of a daily grain (special dietary needs are all met wherever possible). There is outdoor work to be done (when the weather permits, of course) such as gardening, or taking nature walks. There are activities that allow the children to interact with one another in a media-free environment. This allows the child's imagination to flourish to a new, healthier level. At story time, the children sit and listen to the different fables and stories that are presented to them and take these stories into their own lives, living with them at home and in their imagination, and eventually the children are asked to act the different stories out for themselves. There are also crafts to help work on fine motor skills, and the development of hand-eye coordination. Warmer days are capped off with swimming in the pool, which is always the highlight of the children's day.

At Somerset, we understand that there is a need to meet the challenges of our children at an earlier age, and we have risen to meet that need. Many children with learning challenges feel separated from their peers, which can affect developing self-esteem. Here, we integrate spatial dynamic therapy, curative eurhythm, occupational therapy and more within their classroom day so that the children are always part of their peer group. The goal of our work is to help the children find balance so that they more easily integrate back into the surrounding world. We at Somerset think the earlier these children receive therapeutic support, the better. It is a model program holistically encompassing today's beautiful children. It is exciting to watch the success!

*Todd Hilton is an early childhood teacher at Somerset School which was founded by Sunny Baldwin eleven years ago. For more information contact Charles Baldwin, 1175 Alpine Way, Colfax, CA 95713, 530-346-9633.*

**Congratulations to Sunrise Waldorf School, the Vancouver Waldorf School, and the Nelson Waldorf School** for the opening of their new early childhood centers. All three schools were able to realize these new buildings by funds generated from their respective school communities and funds granted by the British Columbia provincial government.

# News from China

Li Zhang

*Li Zhang spent several years in Spring Valley doing the early childhood training and working in the Rudolf Steiner Fellowship Community. She and her husband, Harry Wong, also a Sunbridge graduate, nurtured their dream of bringing Waldorf education to mainland China. Over the course of the past few years, they formed an initiative group and, together with other colleagues in China, were able to acquire land and buildings and the dream began to become a reality. After completing her early childhood training in July, she returned with her young children to prepare for opening day two months later. This article is compiled from recent reports and personal correspondence with Susan Howard.*

Our kindergarten just started last week after almost two months of solid hard work. I have six children right now, but there are still numbers of parents who plan to send children to our kindergarten as soon as we work out the transportation problems. I am very happy, though, to have a small group at the beginning.

We have done a lot these last two months besides very hard and endless renovation work; we are not only building a kindergarten, but also a little grade school for four children so far, and a small community of friends, parents and teachers. We had organized a three-day Waldorf education seminar at the beginning of this month. Our good friends and teachers Ben and Thanh Cherry came from Australia and were the main speakers for the seminar. We also had some singing, movement and painting each day during the seminar. I translated for the three days. More than fifty people came from all over China to attend the seminar, mostly parents or teachers. It was an amazing and rich experience for everybody, especially on the last day, when Ben talked about the spiritual world and how each human being is a spiritual being. It was so powerful to see how the attendees were really touched. A lot of people started to think and review their lives and beliefs. As Ben said, he wasn't surprised that many people came to this seminar, because there is a huge need for the spiritual life in China.

Last Monday was a historical moment for Waldorf education in China. We have written the first page of the history with six children in the kindergarten and four in the grade school. There are a few more children who will join us soon. It rained the whole night before Monday, our opening day. We were worried about the weather for the opening, but it turned out to be a beautiful day.

The rain helped clear the dust on the ground that was left from the renovation and gardening work. It also cleared the dust in the air. The sky was so blue, bluer than usual for Chengdu.

Before 9:00 a.m., children and their parents were waiting outside the gate while all the teachers and staff lined up in two lines waiting inside the yard. Children were peeking through the bamboo door, full of wonder, their one hand holding a flower and the other was holding their parents' hand. The children and parents were encouraged to knock on the door at 9:00 a.m. Teachers and staff started to sing a Chinese song while the door was pushed open. The Chinese song we chose is well known to every parent and child. It means, "The sun shines in the sky, the flowers are smiling at me, the birds say good morning, why are you carrying your school bag? I am going to school and I will be on time every day. Love to learn, love to work; I will be helpful for others when I grow up."

We also sang a song in Chinese called "Stone Song" that was composed by Eckart Loew, who is a German Waldorf educator and has been working in China for seven years and another song, "In the Valley We Will Build a Home," which was composed by Ben Cherry for his school opening twenty years ago in Australia. The singing accompanied the children and parents who were finding a seat in the yard.

After the singing, I welcomed the children and parents. I gave a very brief introduction of our school and how the school came to using the image of a baby's birth. I thanked all the friends who have supported us both spiritually and physically. After my talk, one by one, each child came to the front to put a flower in a vase and receive a flower crown on



his or her head. It was so special for all the children and their eyes were full of light. They turned into angels at that moment. Parents were very touched by our hard work, too.

While children and parents were enjoying this wonderful mood, a drum started a rhythmical sound from somewhere out of sight. A dragon slowly came out from the back of the building. The children's eyes opened wide for they have never seen such a lively dragon. Eckart and another friend made this dragon. It was so creative and beautiful—a symbol of etheric forces. Everyone joined the dragon and danced with joy and wonder. The dragon slowly went through the whole school, blessing every corner of our space, and then took all the children to their classrooms to start the first day of school with their teachers. The parents went to the common room to have some tea and socialize with others. The ceremony lasted for an hour, but it was so special that it will live in our hearts and memories for a long time to come.

Right now, I have six children in the class, one boy is five, one boy is four, three girls are three, and Shihong is two-and-a-half. Only the boys have been to the kindergarten before. There were two children who visited for a day, but they are too young for the kindergarten. I suggested that the parents wait until the children get older. There are two other children who will begin with us next month. They already paid one month of fees to another kindergarten. But

I am very happy to work with a small group at the beginning. It gives me energy to build up the form and to help children to settle into the new life. They are very sweet children and enjoy the kindergarten very much. I have been trying to do everything as simple as possible. I feel the form getting better and better, the rhythm is getting more consistent. The children are very happy in the kindergarten.

We finally have the school started, but this is just a beginning of our journey, we still have a lot to do, to learn and to grow. We still need your continuing support to help our school run and the Waldorf movement to grow in China. Both spiritual and physical support will be appreciated. Right at this moment, the financial needs are our biggest challenge. If you are interested in what we are doing in China, please visit us at [www.waldorfchina.org](http://www.waldorfchina.org).

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Nurturing Children And Families: One Model of a Parent/Child Program in a Waldorf School*

By Sarah Baldwin

Published by WECAN, 2004.

Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny

This newly published book from WECAN is a wonderful resource for anyone considering creating a parent-child program, as well as for those who want to re-envision their existing parent-child programs.

Sarah addresses themes such as why one might choose to have such a program, what inner and outer qualities that the teacher might need, and the specific details of the activities in the program Sarah

was a part of. There is a section on parent education, and the appendix is an invaluable resource filled with stories, references and resources for the reader to investigate. This is a wonderful reference resource for every Waldorf school for this important and often overlooked element of a total family-oriented approach in a school.

The following excerpt gives a sense of the attitude present throughout Ms. Baldwin's wonderful book. She is not claiming to have the "one and only way," yet her warmth and open-mindedness can serve as an example for all of us in Waldorf early childhood work. This section is entitled "Suspension of Judgment."

*This, I feel, is one of the most—if not the most important quality essential for a Waldorf parent/child teacher. I have heard too many stories from Waldorf early childhood parents of how they felt judged by their child's teacher and were made to feel inadequate as a parent. They sensed (or worse, were told) that the teacher thought their child was not dressed warmly enough; up too late the night before; not fed well enough; breastfed for too long; tainted by television; or given the wrong kinds of playthings. How can we earn a parent's trust if we project these attitudes—even if they're unspoken?*

*One important lesson I learned from Susan Weber, Executive Director of Sophia's Hearth Family Center in Keene, New Hampshire, is that it is essential to accept parents who come to you where they are, without judgment. I continually tried to cultivate a sense of gratitude for each and every parent who found his or her way to our program. In order to humble myself I needed only think back to my first two years as a parent, before I discovered Waldorf education, and to remember all the mistakes I made! Here is where being a parent can be helpful.*

## *The Well Balanced Child: Movement and Early Learning*

By Sally Goddard Blythe  
Hawthorn Press, 2004, 213 pages  
Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny

Hawthorn Press has released another volume in their *Early Years* series, this time in partnership with the Alliance for Childhood. And it is another important resource for our work with the young child in today's world.

Sally Goddard Blythe is the director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology in Chester, England. She works with children who

*Again, I chose to teach by setting an example, making books and handouts available and offering advice only when asked, or when I sensed an appropriate "teaching moment." For instance, two toddlers might be fighting over a toy; the parent might then try to reason with her child, explaining about "taking turns." I might then step in and distract one of the children by inviting her over to the play kitchen to help me bake muffins. The conflict is resolved, and I have modeled for the parents how to use distraction to settle a conflict without any discussion.*

This new book extensively covers every conceivable aspect of parent-child programs and I, for one, appreciate the depth and breadth of Sarah's offering. Often those involved in the parent-child work feel like they are all alone in the dark woods. This little book provides a brightly shining lantern to help find the path through the woods, and a reminder that this work is ongoing and necessary in all corners of our movement.

experience various types of neurological dysfunction and "learning difficulties." As is often the case, those who work with children not functionally "normal" can offer insight into what activities and practices support healthy functioning and developmental ripening. Sally Goddard Blythe's book is an excellent example.

In recent years, many Waldorf educators have become more interested in movement development, early reflexes and sense development. This book is a significant contribution towards a deep understanding of these subjects, and serves to deepen our work with young children through the enhanced understanding that can be gleaned here. One can become informed as to the relationship between movement and neurological development and read suggestions of activities supportive of healthy movement development. This book is highly accessible, using images that make clear the concepts described. It is so important to understand the role of primitive reflexes, and how they become integrated. More and more children seem to struggle with the integration of the early reflexes, and retain them longer than in the past. This little book offers a window into that realm with gifts of insight, understanding and practical tips.

The “Sense of Balance,” “Music and the Brain,” and “Reflexes and the Developing Mind” are sections worthy of particular note. One section that I was overjoyed to read describes the relation of nutrition to brain development. Ms. Blythe examines fats and various minerals and how they affect the brain in a way that is clear and direct.

*All of life is about adaptation and change, and as long as we are able to adapt to the demands of our environment we can survive. However, sometimes in*

*the process of change, in our hurry to embrace new ideas and new inventions, we ignore the value of traditions and customs that have grown up as a result of generations of accumulated wisdom. In our enthusiasm to follow what is new, we are sometimes too ready to discard the old, only to discover much later that something of infinite value has been lost. The role of movement and music in education has been a central theme in this book. This is not a new concept, but rather a revival of traditions that were central to education for over two thousand years and which have only recently been relegated to the back shelf. (p. 164)*

The approach taken in *The Well Balanced Child* makes clear that the entire life of learning and developing rests on a healthy foundation of movement development in the early years. Reading this book makes clear that relationship and offers guidelines for strengthening that movement capacity in young children .

## *Calendar of Events*

### Waldorf Early Childhood Conferences

**Invitational Research Conference on the relationships among Waldorf early childhood education** , the work of Emmi Pikler, and RIE™ January 14-16, 2005, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. Second annual research conference sponsored by WECAN through the Norton Foundation, by invitation; Susan Weber, 603-357-3755, [info@sophiashearth.org](mailto:info@sophiashearth.org).

**WECAN East Coast Early Childhood Educators Conference.** February 4-6, 2005. *Nutrition and Nourishment for Body, Soul and Spirit* with Dr. Johanna Steegmans, an anthroposophical doctor from Seattle, Washington, and Gunther Hauk, bio-dynamic gardener and beekeeper, and director of the Pfeiffer Center in Spring Valley, NY. The conference will also include

puppetry with Suzanne Down, a performance by Eurythmy Spring Valley, many workshops and special interest group meetings. Contact Sunbridge College at 845-425-0055.

**February Teachers Conference** on *The Role of Waking and Sleeping in Education and in the Forming of Destiny* Feb. 20-24, 2005, with Michaela Glöckler, Dr. Johanna Steegmans, Suzanne Down and others at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. Conference is open to early childhood educators who are members of WECAN. Call 916-864-4864 for conference registration.

**World Early Childhood Educators Conference**, March 29-April 2, 2005 with Dr. Michaela Glöckler, Dr. Heinz Zimmerman, Joan Almon, Dr. Peter Selg, and Christof Wiechert in Dornach, Switzerland. This conference, which takes place only once every seven years, is open to all who work with children from birth to school entrance out of the spirit of Waldorf education. We will explore the increasing pressures on the young child today, the role of play in childhood and its influence in later development, and the strengthening of the heart forces in order to be able to perceive the individuality of others. There will also be concerts, eurythmy, dancing and fun. There is a travel fund for those who need assistance and we are asking for donations. Contact WECAN at 845-352-1690 or [info@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:info@waldorfearlychildhood.org).

**The First Annual West Coast Early Childhood Therapeutic Education Conference: The Living Word-Where Authenticity Meets Moral Authority-The Art of Educating Therapeutically**, April 9-10, 2005, with Claudia McClaren-Lainson of Wind Rose Therapeutics, and Suzanne Down in Sacramento, California. Join us to explore the ancient art of storytelling, which brings therapeutic resolves and moral authority, so necessary for the spiritual health and well being of our children. Contact Claudia McClaren-Lainson, 303-661-0927, [McLaindog@aol.com](mailto:McLaindog@aol.com)

**11th Gateways Conference, *The Seven Essential Nutrients for a Healthy Child*** April 15-16, 2005, Toronto Waldorf School, Canada, with Dr. Susan Johnson, a behavioral and developmental physician. We will explore the importance of sleep, warmth, harmonious movement, daily rhythms, breathing in and out, nutrition and love. There will also be artistic workshops in the afternoon. Contact Karen Weyler, 905-881-1611, ext. 726 or [kweyler@torontowaldorfschool.com](mailto:kweyler@torontowaldorfschool.com).

**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Magical Years Conference, *Parenting through the Years*** April 16-17, 2005, with Jack Petrash, Director of Nova Institute and author of the new book *Navigating the Terrain of Childhood*, and Linda Knodle, director of Community Education Toward a Healthy Social Life (CETHSOL) and co-author of *I Find My Star Curriculum*, at Sacramento Waldorf School. For information contact Rahima Baldwin Dancy at 303-546-0070 or [www.informedfamilylife.org](http://www.informedfamilylife.org).

### **Early Childhood Teacher and Caregiver Training Programs**

**LifeWays Introductory Seminar**, January 15-16, 2005, with Cynthia Aldinger, LifeWays Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A chance to learn more about LifeWays early childhood work and the practical living arts. Contact Mary O'Connell, 414-562-0818, [mocon74190@aol.com](mailto:mocon74190@aol.com).

**Rudolf Steiner College Early Childhood In-Service Teacher Training**. New program begins in July 2005. Two-year, part-time training designed for those with one year of Waldorf early childhood classroom experience. Three weeks in summer, one week in fall and one week in spring for two years. (thirteen weeks total) Call 916-961-8727 to apply.

**Sunbridge College Part-Time Early Childhood Teacher Education**. New program begins June 2005. A two-year, part-time program, with three week courses each summer for three summers, plus a week each fall and spring (thirteen weeks total). Certificate and Master's degree options. Open to those working in Waldorf early childhood settings with a minimum of one year of teaching experience. For more information contact Matt Burns, 845-425-0055, ext. 24, [mburns@sunbridge.edu](mailto:mburns@sunbridge.edu).

### **Regional Workshops**

**Arizona Regional Early Childhood Puppetry Intensive**, Jan. 22-23, 2005, with Suzanne Down, Mountain Oak Charter School, Prescott, Arizona. Explore the wisdom and enchantment of puppetry for young children-hands on, demonstration, lots of skill building and ideas. Create a one-pocket, wet-felted story landscape with characters that tumble out of the pocket to tell a story. Contact Sharon McFeely, 928-776-8014 or Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

**San Diego Regional Early Childhood Puppetry Weekend**, Jan. 29-30, 2005, with Suzanne Down, San Diego Waldorf School, San Diego California. See description for Arizona Intensive above.

**Puppetry, Storytelling and Supporting the Development of Speech**, March 18-20, 2005, with Suzanne Down and Cynthia Aldinger, LifeWays at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. Contact Cynthia Aldinger at 405-245-8033.

**Early Childhood Teacher Creative Renewal Retreat** , March 21-25, 2005, with Suzanne Down, Annette Lampson (Verbeck Singer), Vancouver Island, B.C. Immerse yourself in five days on healing Vancouver Island, with Verbeck singing, storytelling, puppetry, and learn your seasonal songs and stories for spring. We will live into the Easter mood in the evening times. Contact Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

**Archetypes of the Feminine** , April 9-10, 2005 with Nancy Mellon, sponsored by Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. A weekend's exploration of the feminine in our lives through the window of the archetypes in stories; contact Bonnie Chamberlin 603-357-3755, [info@sophiashearth.org](mailto:info@sophiashearth.org)

**Southern States Early Childhood Puppetry Intensive** , April 23-24, 2005, with Suzanne Down in Gainesville, Florida. See description for Arizona Intensive above.

**The Therapeutic Wisdom and Art of Nursery Rhymes in Circle Time and Puppet Story** , April 30-May 1, 2005, with Nancy Blanning, educational therapist, and Suzanne Down in Seattle, Washington. What is the deep wisdom that lives in the nursery rhyme? We will explore the healing gifts of rhythm, rhyme, repetition, and how that serves as the foundation for our young children's healthy immune system, circulation, deep breathing, sensory integration, and acquisition of language. Contact Nancy Blanning, 303-534-3462 or Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

**The Hope Puppet Project: A Weekend Course on Puppetry for Underserved Children** , May 7-8, 2005, with Suzanne Down and guest TBA, Vancouver Island, BC, Canada. Explore healing methods of using puppetry for children in traumatic settings, which will include hospital bedside, hospice, grief counseling, homeless shelters, safe houses, children living in violence. Contact Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

**The Magical Years with Puppetry and Music** , May 7, 2005, with Connie Manson, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. A weekend with puppetry and music for the young child; contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, [info@sophiashearth.org](mailto:info@sophiashearth.org)

**Michigan Regional Early Childhood Puppetry Intensive** . May 14-15, 2005, with Suzanne Down, Ann Arbor, Michigan. See description for Arizona Intensive above.

**Therapeutic Puppetry Conference** , June 24-26, 2005 with Adola McWilliam, Master curative educator. Contact Suzanne Down, 1-888- 688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

### Other Training Opportunities

**New Pedagogical Eurythmy Training**, a two-year, part-time pedagogical eurythmy training, beginning January 2005, with Sylvia Bardt, Anne Pratt and Brigida Baldszun. An option within the basic training; diplomaed eurythmists and those already teaching in schools are also invited to participate. To be taught in a series of four two- or three-week blocks, totalling ten weeks, including an observation period and a practicum will also be part of the program. Students currently in the basic training will be able to simultaneously work towards teaching certification. Other students can join for one, several or all of the blocks; a diploma granted upon completion of the full course. The first block begins January 3-14, 2005 at the School of Eurythmy in Chestnut Ridge, New York, with a basic grounding in child development and Waldorf curriculum. For further information or to register, call Marcia Rulfs at Eurythmy Spring Valley, 845-352-5020 ext. 13 or [info@eurythmy.org](mailto:info@eurythmy.org).

**East and West Coast Puppetry Trainings** , beginning Summer 2005. Contact Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

**Waldorf Remedial Education Program** now with Master's Degree option, with Dr. Dee Coulter, Joan Ingle, and MaryJo Oresti. Currently accepting applications for new cycle beginning June, 2004. Sunbridge College and the Association for Healing Education co-sponsor this program, with certificate and M.S.Ed. options. For information contact Joan Ingle at 845-425-0055, ext. 31 or [JoanIngle@aol.com](mailto:JoanIngle@aol.com).



### Classified Advertisement

**Earthsong Fibers**- spinning, felting, knitting, dyeing, weaving supplies. 5% discount for Waldorf Schools. Catalogue \$2. Earthsong Fibers, Dept. G, 5115 Excelsior Blvd., #428, Minneapolis, MN 55416, 1-800-473-5350, [www.earthsongfibers.com](http://www.earthsongfibers.com).

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Past issues of *Gateways* are available online with many articles posted at  
<http://www.waldorflibrary.org/gateways.html>. The most recent issues will not be posted online. Hard  
copies of current issues and back issues can be ordered from WECAN.

*Seeking Your Contributions*

- \*Articles based on your experiences, observations or research.
- \*Practical activities such as stories, circle times and crafts.
- \*Book reviews of books that are resources for our work as early childhood educators.
- \*Suggestions of books to review.
- \*Articles about or interviews with the elders in the Waldorf early childhood movement.
- \*Websites that support early childhood work.
- \*Your comments and questions about *Gateways* and past contents.

Annual individual membership, which includes subscription, is \$30.  
Deadlines for articles and advertisements are September 15 and March 15.  
It is preferable that articles be sent on disk or emailed as an attachment to  
[publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org)

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