

# Book Reviews

## Creating Connections

*Perspectives on Parent-and-Child Work  
in Waldorf Early Childhood Education*

Edited by Kimberly Lewis and Susan Weber  
(WECAN, 2014)



*Creating Connections* is a new compilation of articles describing the span of parent-and-child work.

While I picked it up to read out of general interest, I was immediately hooked. When I had read the last page, I had

been informed, stirred to new questions, inspired, and deeply moved by the contents. This stands as important reading for all Waldorf early childhood educators, not just those working in birth-to-three.

Editors Kimberly Lewis and Susan Weber have chosen selections from practitioners in North America and the UK that give a rich picture of the

diversity of approaches in this field. The common thread is that all programs exist to assist family life and support optimal, healthy development for the very young child. Some approach this by primarily supporting and encouraging the parents in this rewarding but demanding—and often bewildering—role. Some groups are quite social in offering crafts, circle interactions, story, and snack to the parent-child couples. Some put the child in the forefront with the parent intentionally assuming a peripheral role as observer; this is a chance to experience one's child with new eyes. And there are different ways to combine and balance these elements in the usual two-hour sessions. These contributions constitute a celebration of many variations of how to serve families, and impressed me as eye-opening and informative reading.

What I did not expect to find was so much wise insight that can be important carry-overs to work in our classes with older children. There is some golden nugget in every article, but space allows mention of only a few.

Jane Swain's "Understanding and Supporting Sensory-Motor Development" gives a clear picturing

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of the important movement work babies do—if left alone to move. All their exploration of body and space sets the stage for coming into secure uprightness in body and later in soul orientation as well. This description ennobles our understanding of the miraculous accomplishments that children have already achieved before coming into our older groups.

“Discovering Gesture” by Marilyn Pelrine and Kirsten Carr is a healthy refresher course in how we can compassionately guide and respond to children without excessive speech. Our older children are usually bombarded by speech, questions, and explanations in the rest of their life. That can wear them out. Marilyn and Kirsten describe how being guided by gesture can be a relief to our children.

Kim Lewis’s article, “The Value of Conflict,” is being included in this issue of *Gateways*. Perceptions and accusations of “bullying” are sweeping through our Waldorf circles as well as the world at large. Kim offers examples and vocabulary for how we can respond when conflict arises. We can take these as prototypes for creating our responses to the children and parents in our older groups. This essay affirms and reassures us of the necessity for some conflict and adversity so children can develop con-

fidence and resilience in solving things themselves where possible.

Joe Robertson is unusual in being a male teacher leading parent-tot groups. Both my thinking and my heart were touched by his observations in his three short pieces. Every single contribution has insights of equal worth for you to discover.

This book also includes reflections from parents. Several parents describe their experience of being in parent-child groups with both benefits and frustrations. Good questions arise for us as educators, such as what one mother describes as lack of clarity between teacher and parent roles during the classes. The final “Parent Perspective” gives a stunning, honest depiction of a family’s entry into the world of autism with their beautiful son. They describe what they gained from a Waldorf parent-child class that they found nowhere else among the therapeutic supports they have explored

Please give yourself the pleasure and reward of reading this valuable volume. Thanks to the editors and all contributors who have gifted this important collection to us.

— Nancy Blanning