

Read with Me

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

February 19, 2006

ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

"Read with Me"

Wordless picture books are amazing journeys into your child's mind. Their stories are told entirely through a sequence of illustrations. As children follow the pictures, they verbalize the action using their own words, building vocabulary and comprehension skills. It is important that children are allowed to interpret the stories in their own way.

Use the Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter series of books by Gerda Muller as a transition into the world of wordless picture books, if they are new to you and your child. These books show children doing what comes naturally in each season of the year and they will encourage your child to begin "telling the story." Six other wordless picture books are recommended here; some of them are parts of entire series (such as the Carl books and the Boy, Dog, Frog series by Mercer Mayer) which you can collect and enjoy. Even the youngest child can join in on the fun.

The story hat is introduced; be aware that you will have to prepare it in advance. Also requiring advance preparation, most of the poems included this week are meant to be memorized by the adult and recited. This is important! It will seem to your child as if you have created the poem all on your own and will serve as an example and an added source of encouragement to him to improvise his own stories and poems. The one exception to this is the poem "Yellow" because you may want to share the illustration with your child. At the end of the week your child will have the ultimate opportunity to explore his imagination with his own story hat or felt board.

For additional suggestions of wordless picture books, visit <http://picturingbooks.imaginarylands.org/resources/wordless.html>

Don't see a favorite on this list? Please share your suggestions with the Group: waldorfcriculum@yahoo.com.



One Room Schoolhouse:

Wordless picture books are amazing sources of inspiration for children of all ages. Use these books for

- ❖ the initial step in writing and reading
- ❖ parts of speech – adjectives, adverbs, etc.
- ❖ writing descriptive passages
- ❖ “thought shots”
- ❖ perspective – tell the story from the point of view of each character
- ❖ building paragraphs – main idea and supporting details
- ❖ an exercise in writing dialogue
- ❖ cause and effect
- ❖ sequencing – photocopy the pages of the story, cut apart, and rearrange
- ❖ making inferences
- ❖ drawing conclusions
- ❖ dramatic exercises – monologues
- ❖ charades
- ❖ creative writing – what happens next?

Daily Schedule

7 am wake up, morning verse, get dressed, breakfast

8 am School

- ❖ opening verse 8 am
- ❖ daily activity 8:05 am

Monday	watercolor painting, dance
Tuesday	visit farmer's market, make vegetable soup
Wednesday	visit library
Thursday	bake bread, churn butter
Friday	handwork project (beeswax modeling, coloring, seasonal crafts)
Saturday	field trip (visit nature center, art gallery, museum, concert, dance)
Sunday	housekeeping (waxing, washing, polishing, mending)

- ❖ independent play (outside) 8:50 am
- ❖ circle time 9:30 am
- ❖ independent play (inside) 9:45 am
- ❖ clean up 10:25 am
- ❖ story, puppetry, drama 10:40 am
- ❖ closing verse 10:55 am

11 am lunch

11:30 am nap

2:30 pm snack

3 pm independent play

4:30 pm nature walk

5 pm prepare dinner, set table

5:30 pm dinner

6 pm bedtime routines

7 pm bedtime

For more details on this schedule, please visit our website at www.waldorfcriculum.com and click on the article "How to Homeschool."

Index Cards

When you follow this simple schedule, the only things you'll really need to plan in advance are

1. the daily activity,
2. circle time,
3. storytelling, and
4. dinner.

Your entire planning can easily fit on a 3x5 index card. Make up a card for the day with notes on what you plan to do and simply carry it with you. Or, if you will have the child on a regular basis, sew a small pocket to keep the card in and hang it on the wall. The child will love to run to the pocket and take out each day's card to see what you'll be doing together. Make note of what resources you need to complete the activities, such as story books, cookbooks, a book of rhymes and fingerplays, craft books, etc.

The Waldorf Way

Some things about the Waldorf way of spending time with preschool children may be new to you. Here are some general notes; feel free to visit our website at www.waldorfcriculum.com for more information and resource links for Waldorf education.

Verses provide rhythm, security, and a transition between one activity to another. They are an important way for your child to take the time to stop, rest, and center himself before beginning the next activity, and they also provide a moment of quiet thankfulness and gratitude for each part of the day.

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

Cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any dietary restrictions (such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc.), food allergies, and common-sense kitchen safety, consider preparing a simple recipe with the child. Children love to wash vegetables, measure and mix ingredients, and set the table for a meal. Preparing and eating a snack is always popular!

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative *Play*. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the *WORK* of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

The Waldorf view of *Handwork* is different from the usual craft projects done with young children. Handwork must have an authentic context – it must be truly useful and must be completed slowly, deliberately, and with pride. As children grow, they benefit from the lessons learned in doing handwork – that taking your time, following all the steps, and doing your best work will result in a product of which you can be proud.

Process – not product – is the emphasis of *Art* time. Be sure that your child understands that art activities are for learning, for exploration, and not to be afraid to have fun! Even many adults in our society are afraid to experiment with art materials because “it won't look right”; nip this attitude in the bud!

Storytelling is an important part of the Waldorf method. A wonderful resource we recommend is [Storytelling with Children](#) by Nancy Mellon. If at all possible try to learn more about storytelling and puppetry. If you just don't feel comfortable telling stories orally, we provide suggestions for picture books you can read which go along with each topic. It will actually be more damaging for your child to experience an insincere story where the adult feels false and uncomfortable. Also, remember that storytime or puppet shows at your local library can be a part of your plans for the day but **DO NOT** take place of reading one-on-one with the child. This personal connection and quiet nurturing time is a very different experience than the social one of experiencing a story in a group.

What follows are my notes for lesson planning this week. We encourage you to share your own ideas; simply email the Group at waldorfcriculum@yahoogroups.com.

Wednesday – February 22

Visit Library

storytime 10:30 am
topic is "Pets"

Circle Time:

recite "The Dog" by Ogden Nash Zoo page 11

play with the dog

make Toby some dog treats Taste of Home 2004 page 29

Storytelling:

have your child read you Look What I Can Do

play Monkey See, Monkey Do

Dinner:

Crunchy Pea Salad

Taste of Home 2006 page 34

Thursday – February 23

Bake Bread, Churn Butter:

Tonya's bread recipe posted to the Group

Circle Time

recite "What Do You Suppose" from Treasury of Children's Poetry page 33

fly around the room being a buzzy bee

take a Nature walk, are the bees awake yet?

Storytelling:

have your child read you Tuesday

Dinner:

Grapefruit Lettuce Salad

Taste of Home 2006 page 184

Friday – February 24

Handwork:

make a story hat for your child

(if this is too complicated for your child or the small pieces would represent a choking hazard for other members of your family, make a felt board instead)

Circle Time:

let your child try out his new story hat/felt board

Storytelling:

have your child read you Pancakes for Breakfast

Breakfast:

Banana Oat Pancakes

Taste of Home 2006 page 185

VERSES

Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day which give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:

In the morning at the sunrise
When the light of day doth break,
Children's souls, by angels guided,
Sleep from rested body shake,
Ready now for work and learning,
Happy, steady, and awake.

Closing Verse

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright
Warms the world with all its might.
It makes the dark earth green and fair,
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,
On bird and beast, on you and me.
So may each deed throughout the day,
May everything we do and say
Be bright and strong and true,
Oh, golden sun, like you!

GROCERY LIST

Produce:

fresh herbs: Italian parsley, cilantro
2 lemons
3 yellow onions
red onion
4 firm bananas
radishes
red bell pepper
2 pink grapefruits
head Boston lettuce
1 ½ lb head green cabbage

Pantry:

pepper mill
wooden spoon
spices: peppercorns, aniseed, poppy seeds
8 oz can water chestnuts
16 oz canned tomatoes, crushed
golden raisins

Meat:

2 lb beef brisket

Dairy:

unsalted butter
milk
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Frozen:

16 oz peas

MATERIALS LIST

Story Hat:

From the back of the book, Tales from the Story Hat:

“There is a story-teller in West Africa who wears a story hat. It is a wide-brimmed hat of guinea corn straw and from its brim dangle many tiny carvings done in wood and ivory. Bits of fur, tips of feathers, and a leopard tooth intersperse the carvings.

“Whoever asks for a story picks an object. Then he is off on whatever tale the thing represents.

“Stories in this book are akin to those he tells – he who carries his stories in his head and the Table of Contents on his hat.”

Create your own story hat. Find a hat with a wide brim, such as a gardening hat. If the hat is fabric or paper, punch holes all around the rim using an awl. If the hat is a woven material, such as straw, simply run your thread in between the openings. From each hole run a loop of thread and dangle a small object. Try to find objects in advance which suggest stories to you or choose objects at random and leave the story which comes out of them a surprise. Periodically change the objects on your hat if you wish.

When making a story hat for a your child, use only a small number of items so that it does not become overwhelming. I would say no more than 5-6.

Felt Board:

I found a bunch of links with suggestions for felt boards; each person used different materials which worked for them. With Waldorf you'll want pure wool felt; two good suppliers for this are Magic Cabin (which sells large and small pieces) and Nova Natural.

felt board from a picture frame:

<http://www.marthastewart.com/page.jhtml?type=content&id=channel1396>

felt board in a shoe box:

<http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/season/feature/famf107project/famf107project03.html>

felt board from a ceiling tile:

<http://www.bright.net/~double/feltbo.htm>

You can also cover one side of an easel and store the felt pieces in the painting tray.

RESOURCE GUIDE

Waldorf Verses for Circle Time and Play

<http://www.waldorfhomeschoolers.com/VERSES.htm>

Activities

- Tales from the Story Hat by Verna Aardema
- Treasury of Children's Poetry ed. by Alison Sage
- Ogden Nash's Zoo by Ogden Nash

Stories

- Storytelling with Children by Nancy Mellon
- Good Dog, Carl by Alexandra Day
- A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog by Mercer Mayer
- Do You Want to Be My Friend? by Eric Carle
- Look What I Can Do by Jose Aruego
- Tuesday by David Wiesner
- Pancakes for Breakfast by Tomie dePaola

Recipes

- Martha Stewart Living magazine February 2000
- Taste of Home Annual Recipes 2004 and 2006
- Nicole Routhier's Fruit Cookbook by Nicole Routhier

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