

Just Right

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

June 8, 2005

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.

Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day to 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.

Rhyme

Children love to learn new rhymes and they are an excellent way to develop memory skills. This one can also be acted out, to get a bit of exercise, or it can simply be used to introduce this week's theme:

I like to be a jumping jack
And jump out from a box.
I like to be a rocking horse
and rock and rock and rock.

I like to be a spinning top
And spin around and round.
I like to be a rubber ball
and bounce way up and down.

I like to be a big, fast train
Whose wheels fly round and round.
I like to be a pony small
And trot along the ground.

I like to be so many things-
A growly, scowly bear-
But really I'm a little child
who sits upon a chair.

Drama

Making make-believe is an important part of early childhood development. A fun way to act out being a different character is Poster Poses. Take a large piece of poster board and cut out an oval the size of the child's face. Draw or paint the rest of the body on the poster together – create a new and different body such as a person, an animal, a tree, a cloud, a color, or any other costume of the child's choice. Be creative! When the body is dry, hang the poster in a doorway or from a clothesline at such a height that the child can stand behind it and have his face fit perfectly in the hole. Let the child act out being this new character. You can even create a second Poster Pose for yourself!

An even simpler way to encourage make-believe play is to establish a dress-up box. If the child doesn't already have one, you can decorate a large box or trunk together. Then fill it with items to encourage fun and safe imaginative play:
http://www.ehow.com/how_4581_together-dress-box.html

Stories

I Like to Be Little

by Charlotte Zolotow

Fish is Fish

by Leo Lionni

Yertle the Turtle

by Dr. Seuss

The Queen Who Couldn't Bake Gingerbread

by Dorothy Van Woerkom

“The Dormouse and the Doctor” poem

by A.A. Milne

found in the books When We Were Very Young
and The World of Christopher Robin

this poem is also available at

http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/A.A._Milne/14279

Art

Try painting a picture of a thing which you cannot see but which someone is describing to you, as in Fish is Fish. Alternate turns with the child as to who is describing and who is painting. If you like, you can label each picture with a description of what inspired it.

Nature

Footprints in the Sand

<http://jas.familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts?page=CraftDisplay&craftid=10694>

Handwork

Read I Like to Be Little. Have the child make a memory box of things which represent what she likes about being little. Have her describe and give a reason for each object and add that paper to the items in the box. Decorate the outside of the memory box with current photos of the child and a handprint.

As an alternative to the memory box, you can make a video or audio tape of the child explaining all the things she likes about being just the person she is. If you are making a video, try to get as much detail as you can to capture the child as she is right now. For example, take a video tour of her room or have her demonstrate prized skills such as doing jumping jacks or cartwheels, learning to whistle, skipping rocks, dancing, or being able to make a bigger splash than anyone else when she jumps in mud puddles.

You can also consider having the child dictate these things and creating a thank you card for her mother, father, or other family member. The memory box or video/audio tape would also make a wonderful Father's Day project and gift (Father's Day for 2005 is celebrated June 19).

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!

OTHER IDEAS

Cooking

No specific cooking activities are suggested because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. However, cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any 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!

Play

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!

Helping

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.

PLANNER

Activities: highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

- candle

Rhyme

Drama

- Poster Poses
- large piece of posterboard
 - scissors
 - crayons, pencils, or paints
 - clothesline or string

Dress-Up Box

- large box or chest
- decorating supplies
- materials for dress-up

Stories

Art

- paper and paints

Nature

- beach OR dishpan filled with wet sand
- bucket
- Plaster of Paris
- water (fresh)
- string for hanging

Handwork

- memory box
- decorating supplies, including current photographs of the child
- items to be placed inside memory box
- audio or video tape & recorder (optional)
- stationery (optional)

Cooking

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

- candle

PLANNER

Book List:

list the books you will be reading
feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand
which relate to this theme

Materials:

list all materials required for your chosen activities

Please feel free to contact me at any time at waldorf_curric@yahoo.com.