

Baby Birds

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

May 07, 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.

"Baby Birds"

What more can be said about this topic? Watching baby birds hatch from their eggs (or any other kind of baby animals being born) is absolutely magical.

While it is common practice, there are a group of people who don't agree with teachers purchasing fertilized eggs and incubators to show baby chicks (or quail or what-have-you) hatching in the classroom:

School Chick-Hatching Projects: <http://www.nj-ara.org/Hatching.pdf>
brochure by the New Jersey Animal Rights Alliance

We agree with this and feel that, whenever possible, you should try to have your child observe animals reproducing in an authentic and natural way. Visit our Group Photos page to see pictures of robin building a nest and hatching her young which were submitted by a member. Feel free to share your own! Remember to never let your child touch the eggs or the young.



One Room Schoolhouse:

With older children, you can use the subject of baby birds to broach the topic "Babies of All Kinds". How do different animals reproduce? How do they feed and care for their children? And how do they ensure the safety of their young?

Some books we love are:

- Baby Animals by Garth Williams
- Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey
- The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck by Beatrix Potter
- Stella's Dancing Days by Sandy Asher
- Mister Seahorse by Eric Carle
- Casper the Caterpillar by Celeste Foster
- Waiting for Wings by Lois Ehlert
- Bashi, Elephant Baby by Theresa Radcliffe
- Katy No-Pocket by Emmy Payne
- Little Lions by Jim Arnosky
- All Kinds of Babies by Millicent E. Selsam
- Old Mother West Wind by Thornton W. Burgess
- Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
- Minn of the Mississippi by Holling C. Holling
- Pagoo by Holling C. Holling
- The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling

If you are expanding this topic to include baby animals of all kinds, visit farms which have new young such as chicks, ducklings, kids, foals, lambs, and calves. Do some research to find farms around you which have school programs (get a group of homeschoolers together and go) by contacting your local board of tourism or agricultural board. You can also check with the 4-H program near you. If you allow your child to watch videos, get "March of the Penguins" – it's stunning. Visit the zoo as well. You might want to call to find out in advance what animals have just reproduced (or visit the zoo's website as baby animals tend to be highly advertised) and plan to have books on these animals on hand to follow up. Our Summer preschool topic "Weather" has the life cycle of frogs as its Nature focus. This is also a great subject for older children to share.

You can also springboard from animal babies to how plants reproduce. Learn about the sex organs of a plant; study how strawberry blossoms lead to fruit; plant a fruit tree in your own yard or cultivate a vegetable garden to observe this development first hand.

Help this list grow! Share your own recommendations with the Group:

waldorfcriculum@yahoo.com

Daily Schedule

7 am wake up, morning verse, get dressed, walk the dog
8 am breakfast
8:30 am outside play time

Morning Schooltime 10 – 11:30 am

❖ opening verse 10 am
❖ daily activity 10:05 am

Monday art (watercolor painting, dance)
Tuesday visit farmer's market, make vegetable soup
Wednesday visit library, choose books
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)

❖ circle time 10:45 am
❖ prepare lunch 11:00 am
❖ lunch 11:30 am

12 pm nap
2:30 pm snack

Afternoon Schooltime 3 – 4:30 pm

❖ story, puppetry, drama 3 pm
❖ independent play 3:20 pm
❖ clean up 4:10 pm
❖ closing verse 4:25 pm
❖ nature walk 4:30 pm

5 pm inside play time, prepare dinner, set table
5:30 pm dinner
6 pm bedtime routines
7 pm bedtime

Index Cards

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

1. the daily activity,
2. circle time,
3. storytelling, and
4. a daily recipe (breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner or dessert).

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.waldorfcurriculum.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! We recommend [The Waldorf Kindergarten Snack Book](#) for simple recipes and information about child nutrition and healthy eating rhythms. You might also want to implement a blessing before each meal, simply thanking the Earth for providing the delicious food before you.

When planning your child's activities, 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. We encourage you to share your own ideas for this topic; simply email the Group at waldorfcurriculum@yahoo.com.

Sunday – May 7

Housekeeping: scrub floors
read Pippi Longstocking, chapter 6

Circle Time:

“All the Birds Sing” (German folk song) Sing Through the Seasons
make Ankle Bells for this afternoon All Year Round page 87

Storytelling:

The Spring Mummers (play) Kings Landing Park 3 pm

Dinner:

Cream Cheese Frittata, green salad Everyday Food (Oct 05) page 25

Monday – May 8

Art: Watercolor Painting

poem “My Lady Spring” Painting with Children

Circle Time:

take a Nature walk, look for bird nests
visit old house where we saw one this Winter, see how the new green leaves
help cover it up

Storytelling:

“Treasure Chests” Nature Stories page 18

Dinner:

Flounder with Tomato-Onion Ragout, couscous Everyday Food page 30

Tuesday – May 9

Visit Farmer’s Market, Make Vegetable Soup
Clagett Farm CSA pickup 3 pm

Circle Time:

Bird Egg Feather Nest
take a Nature walk, look for feathers
use a bird identification guide to determine what kind of bird they are from

Storytelling:

The Happy Owls

Lunch:

Baby Spinach Salad with Tuna, crackers Everyday Food page 42

Wednesday – May 10

Visit Library, Get New Books

Circle Time:

squeeze juice for Ginger-Grapefruit Spritzer

Everyday Food page 152

Storytelling:

“A bird sat on my willow tree”

Around the World with Finger Puppet Animals

Dinner:

Cream of Asparagus Soup, french bread

Everyday Food page 38

Thursday – May 11

Bake Bread, Churn Butter

Coffee-Cake Muffins

Everyday Food page 24

Circle Time:

hang birdfeeder on deck, fill it with food

Storytelling:

“I can see a mama bird flying to her nest”

Around the World with Finger Puppet Animals

Dinner:

Meat Loaf Sandwiches

Everyday Food page 27

Friday – May 12

Handwork:

Flower Crowns

wear to tea party with Grammy and Papa

Earthways page 136
3 pm

Circle Time:

The King with Six Friends

take a Nature walk to thank the trees for holding the nests so gently

Storytelling:

“The Sticky-Sticky Pine”

Spindrift page 191

Breakfast:

Honey Butter (on whole-grain toast)

Everyday Food page 54

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!

VERSES

Morning Verse for Preschool and Kindergarten

(start by bending over touching your toes)

I w-a-ke in the morning

I stre-e-e-tch to the light

(slowly stand up and reach tall with your arms extended above you)

I JUMP *(jump, keeping your arms up high)* **to the Sun**

I am ready to start my day

(bring your arms down to your sides)

Verse before painting

Now I take the brush so gently
In my hand with loving care
Watch the color flow so softly
On the paper clean and clear.

GROCERY LIST

Produce:

4 oz mushrooms, sliced
small red bell pepper
2 small yellow onions
red onion
6 large shallots
3 in piece fresh ginger
4-5 medium grapefruit
cherry tomatoes
salad greens
baby spinach
seedless red grapes
fresh parsley
3 lb asparagus

Pantry:

olive oil
chopped garlic
plain couscous
canned tuna fish
sesame seed flatbread crackers
golden raisins
12 oz can club soda
a can opener!!!

do I already have these?

*muffin cups (standard size)
*muffin tin (standard size)
*dried thyme

Meat:

flounder fillets (5 to 6 oz each)
lb ground beef
½ lb ground pork

Dairy:

shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
plain yogurt
heavy whipping cream
unsalted butter
buttermilk

Bakery:

2 loaves country white sandwich bread
whole grain bread

MATERIALS LIST

Ankle Bells:

from All Year Round page 87

70 cm of cotton tape, 2 cm wide

4 small bells

6 brightly colored ribbons, each 25 cm long and approx. 1 cm wide

basic sewing supplies

Finger Puppets:

from Around the World with Finger Puppet Animals page 101

one Mama Bird

three Baby Birds

wool felt – in appropriate colors for bird body, wings, and beak

basic sewing supplies

brown wool roving for nest

brown silk for background (drape over arm)

Flower or Leafy Crowns:

from Earthways page 136

ribbons –

choose light spring colors: pink, light green, light blue, pale yellow
about $\frac{3}{4}$ wide (grosgrain works better than satin, less slippery)

tissue paper –

again, choose light spring colors

OR deeper green and dark green-blue for Leafy Crowns

cut the tissue paper into rectangles 2 inches wide x 5 inches long and sort
according to color

basic sewing supplies

RESOURCE GUIDE

Waldorf Verses for Circle Time and Play

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

Activities

- [Sing Through the Seasons](#) ed. by Marlys Swinger
- [All Year Round](#) by Ann Druitt, et al.
- [Painting with Children](#) by Brunhild Müller
- [Bird Egg Feather Nest](#) by MaryJo Koch
- bird identification guide
- [Around the World with Finger Puppet](#)
- [Animals](#) by Suzanne Down
- [Earthways](#) by Carol Petrash

Stories

- [Storytelling with Children](#) by Nancy Mellon
- [Pippi Longstocking](#) by Astrid Lindgren
- [Nature Stories](#) by Margaret Peckham
- [The Happy Owls](#) by Celestino Piatti
- [The King with Six Friends](#) by Jay Williams
- [Spindrift](#)
from the Wynstones Kindergarten series

Recipes

- [The Waldorf Kindergarten Snack Book](#) by Lisa Hildreth
- Everyday Food magazine October 2005
- Everyday Food magazine May 2006

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