

Sparkle and Shine

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

May 25, 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. Use the rhyme to introduce this week's topic.

Johnny Johnny Jingles

Johnny Johnny Jingles
Jumped out of bed,
Brushed his teeth and washed his face,
And combed his tousled head.
He put his clothes on carefully,

His shoes he neatly tied;
Then he went to breakfast
And sat by his mother's side.

Nature

Choose one (or more) of the following natural shampoo and toothpaste recipes to prepare: http://indianspringherbs.com/HairCare_Hygiene.htm

Note: do not allow the child to ingest soapwort as it is mildly poisonous in large quantities. For more information on recognizing and using soapwort, refer to <http://www.purplesage.org.uk/profiles/soapwort.htm>

Stories

Dandelion

Veronica's Smile

Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth

Throw Your Tooth on the Roof

by Don Freeman

by Roger Duvoisin

by Lucy Bate

by Selby Beeler

Finger Play

Finger plays are a good way to develop hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and memory. Have the child perform the actions as you recite the verse together.

My Toothbrush

I have a little toothbrush
I hold it very tight
I brush my teeth each morning,
And then again at night

Science

For an older child, try this science project on the use of toothpaste to combat mouth acids which weaken teeth (this project will take 5 to 6 days):

www.crest.com/crest_kids/eggexperiment.jsp

For a younger child, do the following demonstration:

Place an egg in a glass filled with Coke or Pepsi. Make sure you observe and talk together about the color of the egg before it is placed into the liquid (white eggs are best for this project). Leave the egg submerged for 30 minutes to an hour. Remove the egg and observe the brown color covering the egg. Talk with the child about how this is similar to the way in which all of the foods we eat and drink leave our teeth dirty. This is why it is so important to clean them every day. Now use a toothbrush and toothpaste to brush the egg back to its original color!

Handwork

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.

Toothbrush Timer

The best way to brush one's teeth is slowly and gently but for an extended time. This is healthier for the gums than brushing furiously for a short period of time; it is also more effective at removing plaque and mouth acids. Decorate a wooden egg timer (the hourglass type with sand inside) to become a Toothbrush Timer. Paint the timer as desired. Then decorate two white circle stickers, one which says Dirty (or shows a dirty tooth) and the other which says Clean (or shows a happy smiling child), and affix them to the top and bottom of the Toothbrush Timer. Cover the stickers with a waterproof sealant such as carpenter's glue so they aren't damaged by the humidity of the bathroom environment.

Gift Making

A preschool aged child isn't likely to be on the verge of losing her first tooth but a tooth fairy pillow is fun to make and would make an excellent gift for an older sibling, cousin, or friend.

Some Suggestions:

You can either make a full-sized pillow with a pocket for the tooth or make a smaller sachet-sized pillow and add a ribbon so that it can be hung over the door

The following directions and pattern are for a tooth-shaped pillow but the pillow could just as easily be square. Tooth Fairy Pillow Directions & Pattern:
<http://sewing.about.com/library/weekly/aa052998.htm>

If possible, have the child help you choose the fabrics to be used in the project; you could also decorate plain white fabric (such as quilter's muslin) together using tie-dye or fabric painting techniques and use the resulting fabric to make the pillow.

When making the tooth pocket, consider decorating it with the name of the gift recipient using fabric paint, or add a special note on the inside of the pocket which only the Tooth Fairy will be able to read.

If you would like to shorten the length of time spent on this project, consider buying a pre-made pillow cover (surprisingly, 100% silk pillow covers can be found at Wal-Mart in the craft section) – then simply add the tooth pocket and have the child stuff the pillow with wool.

Dried lavender buds can also be added to the pillow to ensure a good night's sleep.

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

Nature

- ingredients for natural shampoo & toothpaste recipe(s) chosen

Stories

Fingerplay

Science: older child

- Crest Cavity Protection toothpaste
- glass measuring cup
- fresh eggs without cracks
- white vinegar
- teaspoon
- plastic wrap
- marker
- clear nail polish
- paper towels

Science: younger child

- white egg
- glass
- Coke/Pepsi
- toothbrush & toothpaste

Handwork

- wooden hourglass-style 3 minute egg timer
- paint
- white circle stickers
- waterproof sealant such as carpenter's glue

Gift Making

- fabric & pattern for pillow OR pre-made pillow cover
- fabric dyes and/or fabric paint (optional)
- wool for stuffing
- dried lavender buds (optional)
- ribbon (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.