

Summer Series at Acorn Hill August 2020

- A month long Acorn Hill newsletter of song & finger games, story, activity and crafts.



Dictionary

Summer-Somer-noun

The warmest season of the year, in the northern hemisphere from to June to August and in the southern hemisphere from December to February: *the plant flowers in late summer. A long hot summer.*

Dear Parents,

Welcome August! *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness* are now more important than ever. And truth, beauty, and goodness are important virtues throughout Waldorf education, and particularly so during these times of uncertainty for the very young child. *The World is Good* is the basis of our work as Waldorf educators of young children. It is the emphasis and foundation of our pedagogy from birth to seven. Children need to feel safe and nurtured. We all, young and old, need to be a part of an environment that focuses on 22 courage, kindness, and love. Yet, for our young children this is especially true.

Families, please enjoy our final summer newsletter. Inside, you will find again many helpful ideas to share with your families and friends as we enjoy the final days of summer. As we move forward to school in September, and hopefully move back towards a predictable school schedule; please do know that as teachers of Acorn Hill, we look forward to returning to our classes. 2020 will always remain, no matter the season, an unforgettable and courageous year!



Literacy Learning in the Waldorf Early Childhood Classroom - Astrid Lackner,

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In Waldorf education, as teachers we continuously seek to find ways to bridge our knowledge practices of education with the language of mainstream education. Recently, I attended a Waldorf early childhood conference and had many good conversations with colleagues and friends.

During a lunch debate, I overheard a well-seasoned Waldorf educator respond to an enquiry coming from a curious mainstream kindergarten teacher: "So what do you do about reading and writing in kindergarten?" was her question. My colleague answered: "Oh, not too much. We leave that up to the grades."

I was taken aback. It astonished me to hear a Waldorf educator not proclaim the important work we undertake. Too often I hear, "All you do in early childhood is bake and sweep." I believe it is time that we stand up and learn to express ourselves eloquently when speaking about our curriculum.

Literacy education, which is practiced so richly in Waldorf kindergartens, is one concrete place where we can start. I was fortunate enough to attend a mainstream "emergent literacy" course this past spring that really helped me put into words what we already know and do. I would like now to share what I have learned.

Literacy taught in Waldorf kindergarten is based on the emergent literacy model. This means that children are always learning language in many different ways. Embraced in a warm, loving kindergarten environment, children experience, among many other things, a rich language-arts program. We offer oral stories, rhymes, riddles and songs that teach syntax, structure, and word order. All these language offerings also teach phonological awareness, the term used to indicate exploring language and sounds. Through phonological awareness we can identify and manipulate units of sounds and whole words.

Literacy learning in Waldorf Schools is also intertwined with other experiences, such as gesture and movement, as means for self-expression and for a wide variety of sensory encounters. Therefore, we are able to meet children in the many different styles in which they learn. In imaginative ways children manipulate and explore symbols, thus gaining insight into the meaning of diverse signs (i.e., a picture in place of a name tag, or a pinecone, whose absence tells us that someone is in the bathroom, and much more).

We offer opportunities for three-dimensional presentations while working with bread dough, beeswax and sand. In our weekly rhythms, children are engaged in artistic experiences, such as drawing and painting. These countless “multimodal ways” of learning literature are the source of creativity and joy and are fundamental to later reading and writing abilities.

In a Waldorf early childhood classroom, children not only learn literacy and language arts in multimodal ways, but also the social contexts of a Waldorf School. We are especially fortunate to have strong school communities, which provide cultural context for our children. Families, administrators, and teachers take part in community life through picnics, dinners, school celebrations, craft circles, work parties, and much more. Through these activities we share in meaningful, common experiences and build relationships and cultural contexts in which our children are firmly rooted. As teachers, being sensitive to the manifold families from diverse cultures and backgrounds enables us to teach a culturally relevant curriculum.

One of the greatest gifts to our children is that we tell stories. When a story is told, rather than read, the narrative is not necessarily culturally bound. Therefore, a story that is told will offer the possibility to all children to identify themselves with the main characters. In children’s imagination, the characters of the narrative can be of any skin shade or culture and can be experienced as all-inclusive if our picturing of the scenes we describe is universal and inclusive in our own minds. We see, therefore, that by paying attention to the current terminology used in mainstream education, we are able to meet and exceed the expectations of literacy learning taught in public schools.

This outline of our literacy education describes only a small portion of what stands behind our curriculum. We need to deepen our own understanding of what stands behind the well-known activities in Waldorf early childhood. We are professionals in the field of early childhood. We need to articulate all facets of our work in a competent manner. Learning this mainstream vocabulary and expanding our own consciousness of the great substance that stands behind our work is our present and future task.

-Astrid Lackner has been teaching preschool and parent/child class at the Squamish Waldorf School for many years. She is passionate about storytelling and inspired by the manifold imaginations with which children try to make sense of the world. She is also a WECAN Regional Representative from British Columbia.



How to plant and nurture a Butterfly garden for Parents, Part Two from June

Now is the time you may be able to spot eggs and caterpillars under the leaves of your milkweed plants! Your butterfly garden should be in full bloom and the leaves of the plants in full abundance. As mentioned in Part One, Monarch butterflies love milkweed. The long tapered leaves of this particular plant allows for the caterpillar to easily navigate up and down the stalks. By gently turning over the leaf, you can spot tiny eggs. Once this is done, soon the ever so tiny caterpillars will begin to emerge. Children are best for spotting them right away, because they are as tiny as an apple stem and as long as a human fingernail.

Once you see nibbling on leaves, you can be assured that baby Monarch caterpillars are around. The caterpillars will get larger as they grow in size. By the time they have finished supplying themselves with all the nourishment they need, they will slow down and sleep a bit, resting on the same leaf they are eating from. This happens in all stages from very tiny to super large; you cannot miss the large-sized caterpillar. Monarch caterpillars will eat until they are ready to shed their skin and become a jade green chrysalis.

Very soon you will notice caterpillars drop (or hang) from the leaf into what is called the J stage. Do your best to leave the caterpillar undisturbed, especially if they are in that

position, and are not moving from leaf to leaf. At this time, the Monarch caterpillar is ready to transform into a chrysalis. In the chrysalis stage, Monarchs split their caterpillar skin from bottom to top, wiggle it off and turn themselves into a beautiful apple-jade, green chrysalis. Then they remain still for 10-14 days, until they become ready to emerge as a butterfly. You will know when this next stage is about to occur, because the clear skin of the chrysalis appears to turn from green to an ebony black color. What a transformation! The color you are now witnessing is the actual wings of the Monarch butterfly, all tucked inside.

Monarchs emerge as a small butterfly staying close to their just opened chrysalis, hanging on to it with their legs, as they air dry and gradually stretch their wings. They pump their interior fluids out into their wings which expand to their full extent in about 10 minutes. After about 3 hours, they feel ready for their first flights, they then will fly a short distance and crawl around a bit to exercise their new potential. If they are in an enclosure one can now let them out to drink their first flower nectar. Ideally, Monarchs do well to go through all the stages while outside in nature. Unfortunately, due to excessive heat and predators like birds or flies their numbers are in decline, and many people help them along by creating an outdoor environment within a caterpillar tent for release at a later date once they have emerged and are ready for their migrating journeys. My family and I have watched them in their natural habitat and have also created Monarch nurseries.

To witness Monarch's life cycles is one of nature's greatest gifts. They will attempt their final journey of life as they migrate to Mexico. When I reflect on their birth and rebirth, what I have been taught is the journey of life and a true practice of patience.

Observation teaches us all so much; and when we respect nature and the cycle of life in so many beings, we come to realize the beauty and gift of time. When school begins for us in the fall, in many ways we too will be emerging from our very own chrysalises. I hope your own journey in cultivating and nurturing your butterfly gardens will have led for you to new insights and your own reflections.

— Leslie Woolverton



Fingergames & Rhymes

The summer's warm showers are falling like mist
My face and my hair by their soft touch are kissed
The dry thirsty ground becomes fragrant and cool
On every green leaf lies a small shining pool
Earth blossoms again
I do love the rain.

**Once I saw a little shell
Upon a garden wall.
I tapped upon the little door.
No answer came at all.
But as I turned to go away,
A snail crept out to see
Who tapped upon his little door,
And waved his horns at me.**

Mud is very nice to feel all squishy squashy between the toes!
I'd rather wade in wiggly mud than smell a yellow rose.
Nobody else but the rose bush knows how nice mud feels between the toes.

Jobs to Grow On-an earlier source from WWS

Age 2 to 3:

Put away toys
Put clothes in hamper Dust
Pile books or magazines

Ages 4 to 5:

Set the table
Clear own Dishes
Make a sandwich or simple breakfast Wash plastic dishes at sink
Sweep
Bring in mail or newspaper

Help clean out car Water plants and flowers

Ages 6 to 7:

Choose weather appropriate clothing Put away cleaned clothes
Keep bedroom tidy
Make bed

Prepare school lunch
Unload utensils from dishwasher Vacuum and rake
Clear table
Carry in light groceries
Take turns feeding pets

Parenting: A Path of Initiation by Anna Hall

Parenting is a profession of love and honor. Our first initiations into truth, beauty, and goodness! Here are some tools for parenting I offer and share:

1. Patience - children will test us while they are teaching us. We are all in a school together called "the family school of life." Children will also test the healthy

boundaries we set, so be prepared for the 2's, 4's, 6's....14's, 16, 19's , etc., It's an evolving journey forward.

2. *Courage*-we need courage to rear a child when we take a stance, we need courage for it.

3. *Give them sensory experiences of the real world, rather than the cyber world.* This develops their capacities, gross and fine motor skills, balance, hand-eye coordination and healthy movement.

4. *Imitation*-children imitate all we do inwardly and outwardly-they read what is behind our words and read us like a book. So provide positive healthy behaviors and habits to imitate and develop.

5. *Sleep*-have a rhythm of going to bed and getting up. Sleep is the greatest gift we have: sleep nourishes us, and makes us strong. It gives us healing, energy and emotional resilience. Lack of sleep does the opposite for all of us.

6. *At the end of the day, review the day before you go to sleep the same times every day.* Consider if something did not go so well, how you might do it better if it comes up again. Learning and adjusting our behaviors based on experiences can help everyone's development.

7. *Listen and have humor.*

8. *Consciousness and consistency make parenting a spiritual path of development.* The path of parenting is the most awesome initiation path. Our children look to us for healthy guidance in meeting this modern world. Strive to offer them your best.



Wee Will's Adventure - Betty Jones

Wee Will was a Dwarf who lived on the land,
But very near by, stood the sea and the sand,
So he ventured to the edge of his home to explore,
Where he met a great Fish, blowing bubbles galore!
"Come," said the Fish, "Come swim with me,
I will take you out to the tides of the sea,
So many treasures beyond your earth home,
Come, travel with me on my bubble to roam."
Wee Will was at first quite frightened and cried,
"I've not been in water, I've never tried!"

And then overhead an Airy Fairy flew by.

"Go on, Wee Will, in a bubble you'll fly!"

So the Dwarf took courage and put out his hand,

And the Fish blew a bubble on which he could land.

Off they went happily on adventures to be,

Far from his earth home, wild and free!

-Children are chosen to act out the parts in circle; all chime in on the spoken parts. Let their "creative drama" emerge.

Stargazing in August

Most of us can recall memories of late summer nights watching the starry night sky with our families, hoping to spot a falling star to make a silent wish upon. My childhood was full of such nights, particularly in August. Our summers were spent at the beach with family and visits from friends, and our evenings, until it was bedtime-which did get later as I grew older, were spent in the backyard as sunlight left the day and night emerged. These evenings were magical for all of us, especially as children.

Nowadays, many of us have back yard fire pits, but in the summer days of my childhood, my parents would load us up in the car to go to the beach for a bonfire, after dinner had been followed with fresh summer fruit or dripping popsicles. Us children would be dressed in our pajamas, hair still wet from a long day of ocean swimming or from being freshly bathed from the popsicles. Once we had returned to the sea shore, we would do our best not to get sandy once we disembarked from the car. Our parent, and other adults, would be first to lay out all the blankets and ready the fire as wooden beach chairs were placed in the outside circle.

Sticks would be ready for us-we gathered them earlier in the day and *SMORES* ingredients were assembled in order for us. Our final indulgent snack before we gathered to lay on blankets to wait and watch for the night sky. For those who do not know the recipe of *SMORES*, it is the quintessential simple summer recipe of graham crackers, that hold the ooey-goey middle of melted toasted marshmallow and 1/2 of a warmed chocolate Hershey bar. An ultimate dessert sandwich especially when you are little and young-and as an adult! Always our wise parents knew that only a little dessert was necessary for us to indulge in and the fun was helping to melt and toast the marshmallows for our older cousins and parents, my aunts & uncles. Always a few

marshmallows would fall into the fire, followed by cheers — the sand needed dessert too.

As the night continued on and the rubbing of eyes were seen by the adults, our parents would begin to tell stories. Each of us would nestle in our parents laps, often with soft acoustic guitar music playing. I and my cousins would recall our favorite moments of the beach day—swimming, building sand castles, tears about who knocked over our sandcastles, then back to laughter, running and swimming. It was hard to tell if the summer warmth of our pinked brown skin was due to a day at the beach or being next to the fire as the wood cracked and popped. Either way, it was one of my best memories to be with family during the end of days of our annual summers. Then came the beautiful sparkling stars as I fell fast asleep next to my brother and cousins. Always the cherry on top!

Once I became a parent, I realized the amount of planning that went into such a night. It still is so worth it because in August toward the end of summer, the night sky is filled with nature's own *Fourth of July* fire show. I too recall as my best friends and their children, along with my son, husband, and I would play out the very same evening with our own children that again to this day marks the end of our summer days. Now as our children have become older, unfortunately, yet predictably the kids (young adults now) laugh and linger to see who amongst the group can count the most fallen stars or meteor shower sightings.

August is a special time of the year in our eastern region(northern hemisphere), where the night sky fills with the brightest stars and meteor showers. The meteor showers I speak of are called the *Perseids*. Each August, they appear and for us this 2020 year, The Perseids are planned to peak on **August 11,12, 13**. They derived their name since they originate near the prominent constellation of Perseus the Hero. And seeing first hand this particular meteor shower is a celestial event. These meteor showers traditionally are seen all over the sky if the conditions are right. They are known for leaving trains, what is depicted often in art, as falling stars. Think about adding this event as one of your own families traditions. An annual event that marks the final month of summer!

-Leslie Woolverton

For more information see the link below.

<https://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/earthskys-meteor-shower-guide>



Ratatouille recipe: Marie-Christine Hoover

It's summer time and a wonderful opportunity to make this simple recipe; children can participate in the vegetable chopping; this dish tastes so much better to children when they participate in making it (this is true with cooking/baking in general). You can collect the fresh vegetables at the local market or perhaps you have grown some in your own vegetable garden (My father grew these vegetables in our garden and we made this dish every summer in my home in France). Have your children help you pick them straight from the plant; it is so good for them to see where their food comes from. It is very healthy for children to participate in chopping the vegetables; it helps with their eye hand coordination and make them feel a sense of belonging as they contribute to the meal.

Ingredients: for 4 to 6 people

1 onion
3 cloves of garlic
Eggplant (about 1 pound)
Zucchini (about 1 pound)
Tomato (about 1 pound)
5 tbsp olive oil
1 sprig of thyme
1 bay leaf
Some fresh basil thinly sliced

Pepper and salt to taste

Cut the tomatoes in quarters, slice the zucchinis and eggplant (or dice), mince the garlic, slice the onion.

Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in a Dutch oven or large heavy bottomed pot, add the eggplant, season with salt and pepper and cook for about 2 minutes. Then transfer to a separate bowl.

Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil again and add the zucchini, season with salt and pepper and cook for about 2 minutes; transfer to the bowl with the eggplant.

Reduce the heat and add 1 tbsp of olive oil, add the onion; season with salt and pepper cook for about 7 or 8 minutes; then add the garlic, thyme and bay leaf; cook another 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and the reserved eggplant and zucchini. Stir to combine.

Bring to a simmer, then turn the heat to medium low. Stir occasionally for at least 20 minutes. You can let it simmer longer (up to one hour) and you will have a silkier stew.

Stir in the basil, taste one more time, adjust your seasoning and serve!

Dutch Baby with Blueberries and Peaches

If you've never made a Dutch baby, prepared to be wowed; this cross between a popover and a pancake which rises dramatically in the oven before collapsing on the table. The show-stopping dish comes together in a flash, making it a great fit for a summer brunch centerpiece — another summer favorite especially with fresh hand picked blueberries. This version also combines two other summer favorites—lightly caramelized peaches and sweet, juicy blueberries! Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

1 peach ripe but still hard

4 tbs unsalted butter

3 tbs granulated cane sugar 1/2 cup all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

1 pinch of ground cinnamon

1 pinch of salt

1/2 cup milk, preferably whole

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

3/4 cup fresh blueberries

confectioner's sugar and lemon juice for serving

Peel a peach into 1/8 inch slices. Melt the butter in a 9 inch cast iron skillet (preferable) over medium heat. Add the peach slices, sprinkle with 1 tbs of sugar and cook, undisturbed, until starting to sizzle, about 3-4 minutes. Flip the peaches and cook for another 4 minutes or until lightly caramelized. Remove skillet from heat.

In a blender, mix 2 tbs of sugar with the remaining ingredients except the blueberries and mix until the batter is smooth. Pour into the skillet over the peaches, sprinkle blueberries on top. Cook for 15 minutes or until the Dutch baby is browned and the edges start to spill. Serve immediately with a dusting of confectioner's sugar and a squeeze of lemon juice. For true decadence you can add a dollop of lemon curd.

Little Grandmother Evergreen, a German tale

Once upon a time there was a mother who had two children, One day when she did not feel very well, she longed for some fresh berries; so she sent her children off to the woods to pick some berries for her. They went along and picked a basket full.

There came along a little old lady, who was dressed in green and she said to the children, "I am very hungry, but I cannot bend down so well anymore, for I am very old. Would you please give me some berries?" The children pitied the old woman, so they emptied a whole basket full of berries into her apron waning to hurry off to pick some more. But Granny Evergreen, for that was her name, took them by the hand and said, "I do not need so many, just a few will do for me, take the others home to your

mother. Because you have such kind hearts, I will give each of you a flower, one yellow and one blue. Look after them well, give them fresh water every morning and do not quarrel with one another.”

The children thanked her and hurried home. No sooner had their mother begun eating the berries than she felt quite well again. That, little Granny Evergreen had done for her. When the children told their mother everything that had happened, she was very grateful to little Granny Evergreen, and was happy that her children had been so kind. Whenever the children looked at their flowers which remained fresh and beautiful, they remembered Granny Evergreen’s words, “Do not quarrel.” one evening, however, they grew very cross with one another. “This is my toy,” cried one of them. “Oh no, I want it!” said the other. Thus it went on and on and on and they went to bed in anger. The next morning when they wanted to water their flowers they had turned all dark and droopy. The children grew very sad and wept many bitter tears. But when the tears fell upon the flowers the one became bright yellow and the other lovely blue. So the children were very happy and never went to bed in a quarrelsome mood again.

...And a Bedtime Song for late starry nights

Twinkle, twinkle little star How I wonder what you are.

Up above the sky so high, Like a diamond in the sky,

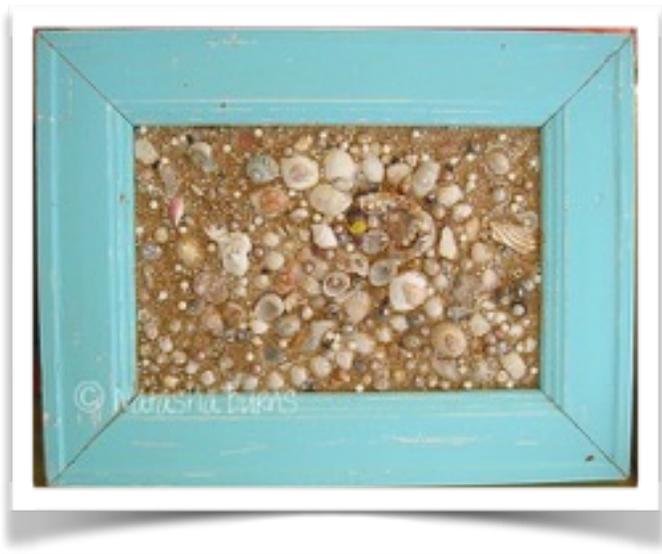
Twinkle, twinkle little star..... How I wonder what you are.

Sidewalk Art:

Materials:

Colored Chalk. Sponges, rags, or brushes; water for clean up.

If there is a sidewalk nearby (or your own path or driveway), a fun outside activity is to let the children draw designs and pictures on the sidewalk with colored chalk. Have your children wear protective paint shirts or smocks. Although this project can tend to get messy, it cleans up easily with a jump through your garden hose. Leave in place for the rain to wash away. Your children can help scrub off the sidewalk with large sponges, rags, or brushes. Have Fun!



Sand Painting/Collage-Marie-Christine Hoover

Materials:

Thick construction paper, small buckets, beach sand (different colors & textures), small shell pieces, glue.

Collect small shell pieces and various colors and textures of sand in small buckets. Children drizzle or brush glue on paper and sprinkle sand on top or/and arrange shell pieces. Let dry before lifting paper and allowing excess sand to fall off.

Encourage children to use all colors and textures of sand on their painting to experience the visual and tactile differences and encourage children to take some sand with their hands, not just with a scoop; feeling the sand through their fingers is important and nourishes the child's sense of touch.

See You Soon!

From everyone at Acorn Hill...