



**Waldorf**  
School of Pittsburgh

**Community Life at WSP**  
(Philosophy, Festivals, and Rhythms)

2020-21 School Year

## Welcome to the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh!

**We are not able to hold festivals and fairs in the same way as we have in years past due to the pandemic, but we continue to acknowledge and celebrate them in ways that are in alignment with our health and safety plan.**

Please read this handbook carefully and refer to it throughout the school year as necessary.

For all school policies and procedures, please consult the Family Handbook available on the school's website.

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# Educational Philosophy

*If the child has been able in his play to give up his whole being to the world around him, he will be able in the serious tasks of later life to devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world.*

- Rudolf Steiner

## Code of Conduct

We understand that we are all part of one human family

We will:

- treat others as we wish to be treated.
- listen when we are asked to stop.
- strive to do our best work.
- find a voice to perceive and speak the truth.
- work to be honest, respectful and kind to others.
- be accepting of the differences of others.
- strive to use friendly and positive words with others, rather than rude, hurtful, or insulting words.
- welcome our schoolmates to join us in activities and games, and we will strive to play fairly at all times.
- think for ourselves and be creative.
- try to keep our minds open, clear, and strong.

Working together in this way helps us keep a healthy, balanced, and kind community that is welcoming to all.

## Mission

The Waldorf School of Pittsburgh fosters each child's capacity to become an independent thinking, compassionate, and purposeful human being.

## Philosophy of the Nursery and the Kindergarten

The Waldorf Nursery and Kindergarten philosophy is based on the conviction that the young child learns best by imitation of what is beautiful and meaningful. Each child's innate capacity for wonder, reverence, and awe is valued and nurtured in a carefully planned program and environment. Learning is joyous because children are guided to healthy, creative self-expression while they develop the foundations for future academic work.

## Philosophy of the Grade School

When the children leave the Kindergarten and move into the Grade School, they carry with them a reverent and loving experience of nature and humanity. In the elementary grades, the content of the curriculum builds on what has gone before and unfolds in a way that is interesting and meaningful to the children of a particular grade because it addresses the development stages of the growing child. The children in a class form a community and travel the journey from childhood into adolescence together with their class teachers.

The children develop in a natural way through the grades. Some learn quickly and others need more time. Rather than describing the children by how much they know or don't know, Waldorf education

emphasizes experiencing the wonder of the world, recognizing and appreciating each others' gifts, working on skills, and being part of the class community.

### **Philosophy of the Special Subjects**

#### *Handwork/Woodworking*

Our hands separate us from other species of the animal kingdom. When children use their hands it strengthens their will, which assists brain development, preparing it for reading and the crossing over of left-and right-brained thinking. Handwork and woodwork in the Waldorf curriculum enhances the main lesson and teaches valuable living skills.

#### *Eurythmy*

*The brain discovers what the fingers explore.*

*The density of nerve endings in our fingertips is enormous. Their discrimination is almost as good as that of our eyes. If we don't use our fingers, if in childhood and in youth we become "finger-blind," this rich network of nerves is impoverished— which represents a huge loss to the brain and thwarts the individual's all-around development. Such damage may be likened to blindness in itself.*

*Perhaps worse, while a blind person may simply not be able to find this or that object, the finger-blind cannot understand its inner meaning and value.*

- Matti Bergestroem, professor and neurophysiologist

Eurythmy means beautiful, harmonious rhythm. The core of Waldorf Education is based on rhythm and feeling; at the center of this rhythmical education lies eurythmy. Founded early in this century, eurythmy is also known as "visible speech and visible song," providing a vocabulary of gestures for the sounds of language and the entire range of musical experience. The eurythmist attempts to make visible through movement the forms sounds create in the air, ordinarily perceived only by the ear. Eurythmy is not a sign language, nor are words spelled out, or actions and situations mimed. Rather, the eurythmist strives to create the quality, mood, and dynamic force of sound through gesture.

All educational exercises in eurythmy have a rhythmical character. Starting from the center, they work in two directions: the experience of movement in space and the experience of knowledge of the mind. A child only gradually wins the freedom of space, and there are many exercises in development—from simply clapping and walking in different rhythms to group exercises with copper rods which require considerable skill and exact timing. A number of exercises are specially designed as social education to make the children aware of each other.

All learning—especially the learning of children—should bring about new distinctions of experience, and there are hardly any such distinctions which eurythmy does not meet or enhance. For example, when children learn grammar, at a certain age they come to terms with past, present, and future tenses; at another, they feel the difference between active and passive tenses; and later, they realize the function of verb, noun, and adjective. Eurythmy meets all these fine distinctions with appropriate movement and gesture, so that the grammar lessons enter the domain of the whole human being. Eurythmy imparts a knowledge captured in the old phrase "to know it in your bones," so different from merely knowing it in your head.

#### *Foreign Languages*

Foreign languages play an essential role in the curriculum of the Waldorf School. It was Rudolf Steiner's plan to have children exposed to two contrasting foreign languages (e.g. a Romance and a Germanic language) beginning in first grade and continuing through twelfth.

Waldorf schools recognize what a profound influence the spoken word has on the physical and mental development of children, how even the sound of a teacher's voice influences their growth, and how we must strive for a reverent attitude toward the words we speak. This is of special significance to language teachers: if they are able to bring to their teaching a rich imagination, a sense of beauty, and a sense of humor, their students will gain far beyond the mere basic knowledge of a particular language. Learning a foreign language can open countless doors to various cultures. It even enables us to think differently and to become more aware of our own language and modes of expression. Each language contributes to our appreciation of the world around us. Perhaps it may be said that the teacher of foreign languages in a Waldorf school is dedicating her/his own efforts to the re-enlivening of language so that a true sense of brotherhood may arise among human beings.

### *Music*

Music is a very important part of the Waldorf curriculum. Singing and playing an instrument require a level of listening that engages the child's whole being. Waldorf teachers gear musical instruction to the child's developmental level and integrate it with the curriculum in a way that strengthens learning as a whole. Music conveys an inner logic, wisdom, and beauty that strengthens the sense of self within the context of the whole and creates a sense of harmony and social awareness.

Students sing with teachers beginning in the youngest Early Childhood classrooms. Beginning in first grade, they play the pentatonic recorder; in third grade, they will play a stringed instrument; and in sixth grade, students will have a choice to switch to play a woodwind instrument.

The long-term goals of the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh's music program are to:

- Provide the best possible experience of choral and instrumental music throughout the entire school, building on the foundation established by class teachers in the early years;
- Ensure that every child in the school is actively engaged in music as a necessary balance to other aspects of the curriculum;
- Develop in each young person effective social abilities, clarity of tone, and capacity for listening, as well as an understanding of music that encompasses the whole human being.

### *Arts in Education*

The arts—drama, painting, music, drawing, crafts, and handwork—are integrated into the entire curriculum, including math and science. Educating through the arts brings vitality and wholeness to learning, balancing intellectual development.

Form drawing, which was introduced by Dr. Steiner, is unique to Waldorf Education. It is designed to enhance eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills and spatial orientation.

Coordination, patience, perseverance, and imagination are schooled through practical work. Other activities—such as woodwork, house-building, gardening, and blacksmithing—give children an understanding of how things come into being and a respect for the creations of others.

In painting, children come to experience the feeling that colors arouse in all of us through stories about them—the challenging nature of red, the stillness and contemplative nature of blue. It is the “soul nature” of the colors that Waldorf Education strives to introduce to young children. As the child matures, the artistic method matches development so that in the adolescent, for example, the experiences of intense likes and dislikes, right and wrong, are paralleled with exercises in black and white.

### *Games/PE*

Movement is an integral part to every day at the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh. In our Games/PE weekly classes, Grades students are given the opportunity to work on physical and social skills that reflect their stage of development.

### *Computer Science*

As students enter the Upper Grades (6th–8th Grades), the use of computers is introduced in a thoughtful manner. This work includes class discussions about the use of social media, understanding how to present one's self in the healthiest manner online, and how to be a discerning user of the internet. Beginning in 6th Grade, students begin to study word processing, keyboarding, and internet research. Throughout 7th Grade, students write essays using word processing and continue learning fundamentals of academic research using the internet. In 8th Grade, students study the structure of computers in conjunction with the Industrial Revolution studies and work on computer programming.

### *Class Plays - Grades Children*

Class plays are an integral part of the Waldorf curriculum. They are unique for each class and based on the curriculum the children have been learning during the year. The plays enhance the child's learning experience, and are exciting, community-building events.

*Every child is an artist.*

*The question is how to remain an artist when he grows up.*

- Pablo Picasso

## Festivals and the Rhythm of the School Year

In our Waldorf School, our annual celebrations and observances of the seasonal and cultural festivals help to develop children's relationships to their larger environment. These yearly rhythms are repeated just as we keep to daily classroom routines and rituals, thus creating a safe, secure environment where learning and growing can occur. These annual observances become opportunities for experiencing nature's seasonal changes. We bring to the children age-appropriate songs, stories, verses, games, and activities for the various turning points of the year.

Year by year, the child's awareness and relation to the cycles in nature is deepened by these observances. We also hope to bring in this experiential way an understanding of the seasons of life itself.

### SEPTEMBER

#### *First Grade Rose Ceremony*

This festival on the first Friday symbolizes the entrance of the first graders into the Grades program. Each student's name is called and she/he receives a rose from a student of the eighth grade. Intended as a welcoming to the Grades, this in-school festival is open to all family members of First and Eighth Grades.

#### *Michaelmas*

Michaelmas, the harvest festival, takes place in late September. It is the time of year to gather the harvest and our strength for the year ahead. In our community-wide weekend celebration, we may plant seeds and bulbs for the future, challenge ourselves through deeds of courage and strength, and, with the fruits of the harvest season, make applesauce and cider.

### OCTOBER

#### *Halloween*

At the end of October, Early Childhood and Little Friends students participate in a Halloween Journey, visiting the archetypes of the farmer, fisherman, wizard (wise one), baker, etc. While on their outdoor journey around the grounds, children recite verses and songs, and receive a treasure to take home from each stop.

The Lower Grades (1-5) celebrate Halloween by participating in an afternoon of folk dancing and storytelling. Called the Halloween Hoe-Down, this uplifting experience allows the Grades to intermingle and have a healthy social experience while sharing dances and songs learned in individual classes.

The Upper Grades (6-8) celebrate Halloween by having Spirited Hair Day where all students are welcome to style and dye their hair in any way they choose (must be temporary). They also hold an in-school dance in the afternoon periods and may bring costumes without masks.

### NOVEMBER

#### *Martinmas*

Each year the students in Early Childhood through Third Grade celebrate Martinmas with a traditional lantern walk. The students make their own lanterns in the classroom, which stand as symbols for their individual light. Typically a walk outside with lit lanterns as the sun goes down sets the scene for preparing ourselves for the approaching darkness of winter.

#### *Thanksgiving*

Gratitude, reverence, and wonder are three of the most important attitudes we can help our children cultivate. This holiday's main motif—the giving of thanks—can elevate it into a celebration that nourishes on many levels.



During this harvest festival, we call to mind the forces of heaven and earth that provide us with food, clothing, and sustenance, and we have the opportunity to remember and thank all who have supported us. In our school, traditionally, the Early Childhood programs invite the families of their students to a Stone Soup Celebration. The students bring in and chop the vegetables for our soup and bread is baked to share. During the celebration, the story of stone soup is told and the families then enjoy a meal of soup and bread that has been prepared by the students.

## **DECEMBER**

### *Advent and the Winter Spiral*

Advent, from the Latin “to come,” is the period including the four Sundays preceding Christmas. A month-long festival, Advent is a time of quiet preparation and waiting. It is signified in classrooms in many ways, one of which being Advent wreaths with four candles, one for each kingdom of nature (minerals, plants, animals, and human beings) as well as each week of Advent.

Even in the darkest of winter we still can find light to lead us on our way, and the Winter Spiral shows us this. This spiral of greens leads to a lit candle which each student walks to in the dark with an unlit candle. The student lights their candle from the center light and walks out of the spiral placing their candle along the way. Usually in early December, families and other community members are invited to walk the spiral.

### *St. Nicholas Day*

The feast of St. Nicholas takes place near the beginning of December. At school, the children put out their shoes for St. Nicholas overnight and return to find them filled with fruits and nuts. St. Nicholas may visit the classrooms in person to bring a golden walnut and a message for each of the children.

### *Hanukkah*

This Jewish festival of lights is celebrated near the time of the winter solstice. Hanukkah represents a rededication to the ideals of religious freedom, commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians in Jerusalem in 165 BC. The eight days of Hanukkah represent the eight days during which a holy lamp remained lit, although it held only enough oil for one day. This festival in the season of light celebrates the victory of inner light over outer darkness. In school, many classes celebrate by lighting the Menorah, making latkes, playing with dreidels, dancing the Horah, and singing Hanukkah songs.

## **JANUARY**

### *Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday*

To recognize the significance of one person’s actions, and to acknowledge the life of Dr. King, all the Grades students participate in an in-school assembly. Some classes share verses or songs, the whole school sings together, and a story is told by one of the teachers.

## **FEBRUARY**

### *Valentine’s Day*

This day is celebrated as a token of love and fondness for one another. In the Grades, students are encouraged to share homemade valentines with their classmates. Children in the Early Childhood program may work on seasonal handwork project and enjoy a special snack prepared by the parents.

## **APRIL**

### *Easter/Spring*

At Easter time we welcome the renewal of spring when the physical world awakens, bringing new life to the Earth. Symbols of life renewing include the egg and the awakening of a caterpillar into a butterfly. These images are reflected in various activities, songs, and stories brought into the classroom.

### *Passover*

Passover is the Jewish celebration of miracle and liberation, the story of leaving Egypt as slaves and entering the Promised Land as free people. The Seder is the traditional meal eaten on the first and second nights of Passover. The Seder plate includes six special foods that symbolize Israel's efforts toward liberation. At school, the Grades may celebrate with a traditional Seder meal; younger children might hear the story of Passover and Israel's flight from Egypt, and become acquainted with the foods on the Seder plate.

### *Evening of the Arts*

The Evening of the Arts is an event for all Grades children to perform, class by class, for our community. This tradition allows for our curriculum to shine and our students to show off what they've learned throughout the year.

## **MAY**

### *May Day*

In ancient tradition, May Day celebrates the beginning of summer. The maypole itself represents fertility and the tree of life. For the children as well as adults, May Day is a reminder that warmer days are ahead. During the Waldorf School's May Fair, children can enjoy the traditional maypole dance accompanied by singing and live music.

### *Knighting Ceremony*

The Knighting Ceremony is the culmination of a school year's worth of work completed by 6th Grade "squires" to become knighted. Projects include community service, helping at home, writing essays, and living by a knight's code. The evening ceremony is a rite of passage for the students at the end of their Sixth Grade year.

## **JUNE**

### *Eighth Grade Rose Ceremony*

This is the book end to the First Grade Rose Ceremony held at the start of the school year. At this assembly, each grade performs for the Eighth Graders, the PA presents them with books, and First Graders give each Eighth Grader a rose. First and Eighth Grade parents are welcomed to this ceremony, which is similar to an in-house graduation ceremony.

### *Commencement*

At the close of the school year, we send off our Eighth Graders in a commencement ceremony. During this program, students may give speeches, sing, play music, and show other skills and talents they have. They are also presented with a certificate of completion, marking the end of their Waldorf School of Pittsburgh career.

## **OTHER SEASONAL FESTIVALS**

We invite and encourage parents to share their traditional festivals and customs with their child's class teacher. The world holds many celebrations marking turning points in the year, recognizing the miracles of life and re-birth and the struggle to overcome darkness that are common to all people. Through stories, songs, and myths, we can share the beauty and richness of our diversity while also confirming that which we all have in common as striving human beings.

# The Role of Religion in the Waldorf School

by Karen Rivers, Waldorf Teacher

The word "religion" is derived from the Latin "religio," which means to reunite. It is an expression of the universal human quest for meaning, for our source and our destiny. Throughout human history, people from all cultures have asked, "Who am I?" -- "What am I doing here?" -- "What does it mean to be human?"

Throughout the world we share questions about creation, good and evil, and what exists beyond the starry cosmos and unknown dark matter. These soul questions live deeply within all humanity. Through different periods of history, great men and women have shed light on these universal questions. They have offered their wisdom to help each individual answer them, to reunite with the cosmic origin and oneness of all existence.

In our school, we seek to imbue all our lessons with questions of universal implication. We seek to explore mythology, literature, history, science, and art in a way that evokes discussions or pondering about these universal questions. We wish our students to live in an atmosphere that is permeated with (not devoid of) the quest for self-knowledge, and for the exploration of life's deepest mysteries.

How is this done? Do we teach religion? The Waldorf curriculum is designed to create the appropriate relationship between a child and these immense questions. Through art, a child builds a relationship with beauty, and in studying science, one seeks an understanding of truth. Out of beauty and truth develops a sense of morality and reverence for life that leads to profound questions of existence.

Through the study of history, our students journey through ancient civilizations, studying the Old Testament, Norse Mythology, Ancient India, Persia, Sumaria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. They enter the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with burning questions of morality that grow out of their earlier exploration. By the time a student reaches the eighth grade, s/he has lived with many noble images, many fallen heroes, and many searching questions about the nature of humankind and our universe. These questions of great magnitude fill the child with a desire to explore the outer and inner realms of his/her life.

In Waldorf schools throughout the world, we aim to celebrate the cycles of life, to address the essence of these questions as they speak to us through nature and the rhythm of the year, and the festivals that have evolved through time. We all long to feel the joy and meaning of life through the recognition and celebration of cornerstone events. The seasons mark the turning points of the year, and each season has festivals around the world that express the inner wisdom of the season's nature. Because we live in a primarily Judeo-Christian culture, we emphasize those festivals at our school. Waldorf schools in Israel feature Jewish festivals; Waldorf schools in Japan feature Buddhist festivals; in India, Hindu festivals are celebrated.

We receive many questions as to whether or not we are a Christian school. We are a school seeking to reunite children with the universal knowledge of self through the study of art and science. We celebrate Christian festivals as well as others.

We seek to educate our students in love and immerse them in the world of great literature, art, and science. We strive to awaken within them the longing to "know thyself." We wish to send them forth into the world in freedom to explore and discover their own beliefs and destinies in the service of humankind. On this journey, each one finds meaning, joy, and reverence for life, creating a new union with her/his spiritual essence.

## Multicultural Statement

The Waldorf School of Pittsburgh is an independent school, committed to fully developing the human potential of each and every child enrolled here, thus reflecting the mission of Waldorf education: To receive the child with reverence, to educate the child with love, to send the child forth with freedom. Waldorf pedagogy is founded on principles that underscore our common humanity and the equality of all people. We welcome children of all races, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and religions. We believe that the educational experience of all children is enriched when they play and learn in the company of peers from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.

It is therefore the policy of the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh to promote diversity within the student body, the faculty, and the curriculum so that it mirrors the richness of the community in which we live. To fulfill these goals, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

- We will strive to promote the school and Waldorf pedagogy to people from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.
- We invite and encourage the parents of our students to share their backgrounds with their children's teachers. Through stories, songs, myths, and customs, we can share the richness of our diversity and enhance the community.
- The faculty will engage in a continuing review of the school curriculum to ensure that the richness and variety of our diverse heritage is communicated to the children in a manner that is both consistent with the principles of Waldorf pedagogy and the vision expressed by the founder of Waldorf Education, Rudolf Steiner.

*We seek to unite people of all races and nations, and bridge the division and differences between various groups of people.*

-Rudolf Steiner, The Universal Human, Lecture 1, December 4, 1909

## The Role of the Parent

### Parent Involvement: The Key to a Child's School Success

Dozens of recent studies indicate that the key to improving student achievement is the involvement of parents or other family members in a child's education. What exactly does this entail? There are four general ways parents can get involved:

1. Provide support at home
2. Communicate with the school
3. Volunteer at the school
4. Support the work of your child's teachers

Where we choose to put our energies depends on our background, experience, skills, interests, and available time. What is crucial is that we do participate. Your child's education cannot be left solely to others. Parents are the first teachers and most significant adults in a child's life. Our actions form the attitudes and outlook toward learning that our children will carry throughout their lives.

### How Parents Can Best Support Teachers

1. *Learn about and embrace the principles of Waldorf education.*  
Throughout the year, the school will sponsor lectures and events covering various aspects of Waldorf education. We grow stronger as a community when the parent body is well represented at these events. The more we know about Waldorf pedagogy—individually and collectively—the better equipped we will be to support the education we've chosen for our children.
2. *Attend all parent evenings regularly to discover how your child's day unfolds in the classroom.*  
Parent evenings are important enough to be considered mandatory attendance events. Teachers arrange quarterly parent evenings throughout the year; they are announced several weeks in advance through the school newsletter. These evenings are relaxed and informal, involving the teacher and all of the parents in discussions about the nature of Waldorf Education and its ongoing evolution in the classroom. Teachers outline the curriculum, broadly sketch the process, and share a picture of the classroom dynamics. Parents are encouraged to bring their questions and insights. It is essential for teachers and parents to communicate as much as possible, and parent evenings are the basis for this communication. Please make every effort to be there; if you cannot, please inform your child's teacher beforehand.
3. *Communicate with teachers regularly, both with your concerns and your positive comments about what your child is learning.*  
Teachers want and need to hear from parents about how various aspects of the curriculum unfold within each child. If you have particular concerns, voice them early. If you notice specific changes—positive or negative—in your child at home, make these known to the teacher.
4. *Create a home environment that supports the teachers' work.*  
Encourage children to play imaginatively, and avoid relying on television to placate or mollify a child. We urge parents to limit television viewing to non-school nights, if at all. Far from being confined to R-rated films, violence, sex, and profanity have slipped into daytime television, impacting children's behavior and language in the classroom. Please refrain from exposing younger children to movies, and monitor the movies older children watch. Visual images on television and in films can interfere with the development of a child's imaginative capacities and

contribute to disruptive behavior; eliminating television, on the other hand, produces no known adverse effects. If your child is especially fond of television, talk to your classroom teacher for practical suggestions on encouraging other forms of play.

5. *Make sure children arrive on time and properly dressed for the weather.*

Unless the weather is dangerously cold or wet, the children will play outside every day, rain, snow, or shine. Make sure your child has appropriate backup clothing, raincoats, hats, and footwear at school. All children need an indoor pair of soft-soled shoes to wear when inside the classroom. (Please avoid open-backed shoes, which can limit mobility.)

6. *Volunteer to assist with special activities such as class trips, plays, and fundraisers.*

In a developing school such as ours, there are almost unlimited opportunities for school-wide volunteerism. From writing grants to mulching the playground, parents can get involved at any level. Please see the Service Contract section of the Parent Handbook for further information. You may also contact any members of the Parent Association. Almost every parent newsletter will include requests and ideas for volunteering. Most importantly, don't wait for someone to contact you! Ask the office staff, your class parent, and board members what you can do to help.

7. *Help with classroom projects such as painting, decorating, fall and spring-cleaning, and moving.*

We save money on cleaning, painting, general repairs, and other classroom maintenance by tapping into the talents of our parent body. Parents do things right, contributing to the safety and beauty of our classrooms by painting walls, sanding and waxing floors, sewing crayon pouches, building bookshelves, cleaning windows—the list goes on. Contact your child's classroom teacher to find out how you can enhance the physical environment where our children spend the bulk of their days. (Work contributed in this way counts toward the 40-hour volunteer requirement).

8. *Inform the teacher if anything special is going on with your child, if there are major changes in the home (death of a loved one or pet, new baby, etc.), or if she/he will be absent from school for more than one day.*

9. *Provide a regular time and space for homework and musical instrument practice.*

10. *Take an interest in all subjects, not just main lessons.*

Your interest in the subjects—handwork, eurythmy, foreign languages, musical instruments, painting, etc.—will communicate their importance to your child. Find out how the stories and activities of the day live in your child by being available for conversation at quiet moments. Children often will not or cannot provide information on demand. Simply asking, “How was your day?” almost always provokes a monosyllabic response. The quiet time just before sleep—after a nightly story, for instance—can be an especially fruitful opportunity for parents to hear real news of the day; older children may open up while occupied with other tasks—helping to prepare dinner, for example. Share with your child's classroom teacher information about stories, activities, or images that seem to strike a chord in your child. Understanding the subjects that take hold of a child's imagination helps the teacher to better know—and teach—that individual.

## Recommended Parent Reading List

For parents who are interested in gaining a more complete understanding of the view of the child inherent in Waldorf pedagogy, we suggest the following books.

### *Childhood by Caroline von Heydebrand*

This is the classic work on the Waldorf Kindergarten. Heydebrand worked with Rudolf Steiner at the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, and her book contains a wealth of insight about working with preschoolers.

### *Creativity in Education by Rene Querido*

Rudolf Steiner recognized that all children are born with the capacity for wonder, gratitude, and responsibility. The Waldorf teacher's task is to awaken these faculties, thereby helping young people to discover within themselves the strength, enthusiasm, and wisdom to become creative shapers of civilization, rather than passive onlookers. In these seven lectures given at the San Francisco Waldorf School, Rene Querido describes an educational approach that has as its goal the balanced development of the whole child—hand and heart as well as mind—an approach that is now being practiced in over 600 Waldorf Schools throughout the world.

### *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*

Another booklet that provides a good introduction to Waldorf pedagogy, as well as to anthroposophy in general. It is one of the few lectures Steiner gave in 1909 that he revised for publication as a written work, 10 years before the first Waldorf School was founded. A main theme here is the “birthing” of the “sheaths” of human individuality. Study of this essay will lead the reader to a rather profound grasp of the Waldorf impulse—as an “education towards freedom.” Although the content may make for difficult reading as a first glance into this field, it should be readily understandable if read as the second or third of these recommended books.

### *Education Towards Freedom by Franz Calgren*

This sumptuous, oversized volume, filled with color and black-and-white images and beautifully designed by Anne Klingborg, is the perfect introduction to Waldorf Education. Following an opening section entitled “Rudolf Steiner and His Ideas on Education,” the evolution of the child from the preschool to high school years is described in detail, in terms both of psycho-spiritual development and curriculum. A final section on “The School in the Modern World” surveys the work of Waldorf schools throughout the world.

### *Encountering the Self: Transformation and Destiny in the Ninth Year by Hermann Koepke*

Between the ages of nine and ten, as children's incarnate more deeply, they often experience themselves for the first time as separate individuals, different from their parents and peers, and essentially alone. This inner experience is sometimes precipitated by a first encounter with death in the child's environment, a first inkling that life is fragile. Koepke provides a lucid and highly readable explanation of the outer signs and symptoms of this essential turning point in the life of a child. He demonstrates the significance of this crucial moment by showing how the destiny and achievements of such personalities as Dante, Schliemann, Kokoschka, Steiner, and Bruno Walter rest upon a fateful encounter or event in their ninth year.

### *Festivals, Family, and Food by Diana Carey and Judy Large*

This is a resource book for exploring festivals—those “feast days” scattered throughout the year which children love celebrating. It was written in response to children and busy parents asking, “What can we do at Easter and Christmas? What games can we play? What can we make? How can we prepare for the

festivals as centers of stability in our family life?” This book is written with families, and especially with children, very much in mind— for children can remind us of the wonders that we might otherwise forget. The underlying theme is a simple but bold suggestion—that if celebrating festivals was formerly the focus of community life, then rediscovered in the modern context, such seasonal activities may enrich family life.

*Festivals with Children* by Brigitte Barz

Celebrating festivals is an important part of a child’s life. Brigitte Barz describes the nature and character of each Christian festival, its symbols and customs, and gives practical suggestions for celebrating these festivals in the family. This book is much more than a craft book describing what to do; it awakens an understanding in parents of the festivals and stimulates creativity toward a meaningful family festival.

*The Four Temperaments*

An early Steiner lecture (1909) and an interesting introductory booklet. Here, the reader can get a feel for Rudolf Steiner’s own style as a teacher of anthroposophy while gaining valuable insight into human character—Steiner’s understanding of the four temperaments. Class teachers, as well as many of the special subject teachers, “teach to the temperaments” to a considerable degree. This lecture also presents the four-fold aspect of the human being in a brief, engrossing context, and is therefore an ideal glimpse into the whole of anthroposophical literature.

*The Kingdom of Childhood* by Rudolf Steiner

Steiner presents the idea of the three seven-year periods of child development and gives many classroom examples.

*Phases of Childhood* by B.C.J. Lievegoed

The author describes the development of the child in phases of around seven years, each phase having its own character. The changes in the body are well known: for instance, change of teeth, puberty, and completion of physical growth. The psychological development parallels with physical and is at least as important. Examining the relationship of children to the world around them, Lievegoed describes the experience of the preschooler, school child, and teenager in a clear and concise way. The latter part of the book is concerned with the practical application of these insights, allowing a method of education in harmony with the stages of development.

*The Recovery of Man in Childhood* by A.C. Harwood

In this absorbing study of Rudolf Steiner’s educational work, Harwood argues that childhood is a time of losing, as well as gaining, capacities. Is there a connection between the loss of a childhood faculty and the acquisition of an adult one? Yes—in fact, a three-fold connection. Harwood gives an insightful survey of the three seven-year stages of child development depicted by Steiner, presented in connection with numerous examples and anecdotes on Waldorf Education, such as foreign languages, eurythmy and music, and the temperaments. These lucid explanations qualify this book as the most intelligent and stimulating introductory work on that unique approach to education known as “education as an art.”

*Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Education* by David Mitchell

This colorful pamphlet with photos, drawings, and simple text is an excellent introduction for interested parents.



*Steiner Education: In Theory and Practice* by Gilbert Childs

This thorough and detailed account of Rudolf Steiner's view of the child's development toward a whole personality shows how the teaching practice of the Waldorf schools is firmly grounded in a rationale which perceives the child's past, present, and future. For the child to mature into a unique and responsible adult, "free" from distorting and harmful influences, certain fundamental human truths, both individual and social, must be respected. The curriculum of Waldorf schools is explained, together with approaches to subjects both familiar and unfamiliar.

*Teaching as a Lively Art* by Marjorie Spock

The author vividly introduces the reader to the important changes in child development and curriculum for each year of the Waldorf elementary school experience, from age six to age 13. She explains how in every subject the teacher strives "to shape each lesson on a rhythmic pattern in which listening or looking is balanced by the child's own activity in doing." This wide-ranging survey concludes with an account of some of the more intimate aspects of Waldorf teaching—the use of the four temperaments to harmoniously orchestrate a class, the necessary qualities of a teacher's character, and the close relationship between teacher and child. This second edition includes a new introduction by Eugene Schwartz and an extensive bibliography.

*The Way of the Child* by A.C. Harwood

Provides an excellent and surprisingly deep and thorough introduction to this "new" approach to child psychology. Several of the themes discussed in the book were first brought by Steiner to the group of teachers he trained in his rigorous 1919 lectures entitled Study of Man. Here the same themes are made remarkably transparent by Harwood, arising from his obvious love for children, long years of experience, and facility of written expression. In his Preface he notes: "I have not endeavored to distinguish between what is immediately contained in Steiner's own works and anything that my own thought and experience have taught me, or that I may have added by way of illustration. Rather have I tried (as I think he would have wished) to present in my own way that limited part of his work which I feel I have best understood and made my own." If parents want to read only one book (for a start) to more fully appreciate and support their children's class teachers, this would be it.

*Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education*, published twice a year by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA).

*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.*

*It is the source of all true art and science.*

*He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.*

- Albert Einstein