

Warm & Woolly

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

April 13, 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 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.

Science

Use a scientific experiment to introduce today's topic. For this experiment you will need:

some ice water or
a feather or
a strip of tissue paper

For this experiment, you are going to give each other goose bumps! Put some water into a bowl and add several ice cubes. Swirl them around to make the water very cold. Now let the child dribble some of the ice water down the back of your neck. As the ice water hits your neck, you should see tiny bumps appear on your arms. Now trade places. If the child doesn't want ice water going down his neck, another way to make goose bumps appear is to tickle the back of his neck very lightly with a feather or a strip of tissue paper. The most effective way to do this is to just barely touch the feather to the base of his neck and gently stroke upwards. This gives the child a chill and produces a nice crop of goose bumps.

Explain to the child that each of the hairs on your skin has a tiny muscle attached to it. When the muscles tighten, they cause the hair to stand up. In fact, when you got the goose bumps, did you feel a strange shivery sensation? That was the feeling of the muscles contracting. Millions of years ago, humans probably had more hair on their bodies than they do now, so their hair standing on end acted as insulation. We don't have enough hair on our bodies to keep us warm anymore, but the little muscles at the end of each hair are still there and still work.

Stories: Hair

Murgatroyd's Garden
Mop Top

by Judy Zavos
by Don Freeman

Stories: Wool

“Baa Baa Black Sheep”
found in Animal Crackers
and in other collections of nursery rhymes

Mother Goose
by Jane Dyer

Pelle's New Suit

by Elsa Beskow

History of Wool: <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/clothing/wool.htm>

A common way of teaching in the Waldorf tradition is through stories. In the case of the History of Wool website, information is presented in a very child-friendly way and can easily be adapted for use as a children's story. Instead of reading straight from the screen or a printout, take the time to learn and understand the information presented in the History of Wool, follow some of the links to gain a better background and to be able to answer any questions, and simply retell the story in your own words.

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.

Field Trip

Take the child to a barbershop to watch hair being cut. How much hair does a barber cut in a day? What does the barber do with all the hair? Maybe you can even get a haircut yourself while the child watches you!

Game

Shaving Race

To begin, you and the child sit facing one another (if playing with more than two people, divide the group into pairs). Each of you gets one small paper cup, one craft stick, and a can of whipped cream. Set a timer; when it goes off, work simultaneously to "shave" the face of the person opposite by filling a cup with whipped cream, spreading the entire cupful on the person's face and then shaving it off with a craft stick "razor". The first person (or team) to completely shave the other wins.

Art

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!

Shaving Cream Art

You can do this activity outdoors, but if you're doing it inside, you may want to lay down a drop cloth to protect your floor and a tablecloth to protect your table.

Prepare for the activity by placing an aluminum pie tin and a blank piece of white paper or cardstock in front of each person. Cardstock, being heavier, tends to work better.

Instruct the child to place the piece of cardstock at the bottom of their pie tin. Have them use a can of shaving cream to cover their piece of cardstock with foam. You may need to spray the foam for a younger child. Make sure the can of shaving cream is non-mentholated, so if any shaving cream gets in their eyes it won't sting. If young children are participating in the activity, monitor them closely. They may want to put the foam in their mouths (while it won't harm them, it's not advisable).

Have each person take eye droppers of different colors of food coloring and squeeze drops onto the shaving cream. Once the child has finished this, have them use their hands to start spreading the shaving cream around their piece of cardstock. After a little while, the food coloring combined with the shaving cream will begin to seep into the paper, creating a marbled effect.

Once the desired effect has been reached, brush off the extra shaving cream and let the paper or cardstock air dry.

Nature

Take the child to see a sheep being shorn. (see Appendix for Resources List)

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

Science

- bowl of ice water
- feather or strip of tissue paper

Stories

Field Trip

Game

- paper cup
- craft stick
- whipped cream

Art

- small aluminum pie pan
- card stock or white paper
- non-mentholated shaving cream
- food coloring

Nature

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

APPENDIX: RESOURCES LIST

In a quick Internet search I found twenty places in the US and Canada to go to see sheep being sheared this April and May (2005) – if you know of any other locations, please email the group at waldorfcurriculum@yahoogroups.com.

Below the website link, you will find the date and approximate location of each event.

1. <http://www.citylifeontario.com/belleville/attractions/comingevents-april.html>

April 23

Greater Quinte Area & Prince Edward County, Ontario CANADA

2. <http://www.atlantaparent.com/05-04%20April%202005/featured-events-apr2005.html>

April 16

Atlanta GA

3. <http://www.dupageforest.com/EVENTS/events.html>

April 16

DuPage County, Illinois

4. <http://www.pec.on.ca/rosehaven/>

April 23

Prince Edward County, Ontario CANADA

5. <http://www.northeasthandspinners.org/html/events/massachusetts.htm>

April 17

Deerfield MA

6. <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/counties/Suffolk/Calendar/Calendar.htm>

April 23

Suffolk County, New York

7. <http://www.visitri.com/events.html>

May 7

Rhode Island

8. <http://www.cce.st-lawrence.ny.us/EventsandActivities.htm>

April 30

St. Lawrence County, New York

9. <http://www.prickettsfortstatepark.com/events.html>
May 21
Fairmont, West Virginia
10. http://www.camlann.org/may_fest.htm#May%20Feast
April 30, May 1
Carnation WA
11. <http://www.pennsburymanor.org/JanAug05.html>
May 1
Morrisville PA
12. <http://www.monmouth.com/~mcha/upcoming.htm>
April 23, April 24
Monmouth County, New Jersey
13. <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/fpp/pdf/fppspringquarterly2005.pdf>
May 14
Fairfax County, Virginia
14. <http://www.oldcitypark.org/shear.htm>
April 16
Dallas TX
15. <http://www.berkshireweb.com/lifestyle/calendar/apr05.html>
April 23
West Pittsfield MA
16. <http://www.thistlecovefarm.com/>
April 16
Tazewell County, Virginia
17. http://www.agriculture.technomuses.ca/english/activities_events/index.cfm
May 21, 22, 23
Ottawa, CANADA
18. <http://www.goreplace.org/events/sheepshearing2005.htm>
April 23
Waltham MA
19. <http://www.shakervillageky.org/eve/evecal2current.asp>
May 2 – 20
Harrodsburg KY
20. <http://www.sunnync.com/events/default.asp>
April 14
Beaufort NC