

Sunshine...

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

July 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 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.

Stories

When the Sun Rose

A Handful of Sunshine

In the Garden with Van Gogh

The Shadow Book

Sun Bread

by Barbara Helen Berger

by Melanie Eclare

by Julie Merberg, Suzanne Bober

by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers

by Elisa Kleven

Rhyme

Five Little Sunflowers

Five little sunflowers, growing in the ground (*crouch down*)

Five little sunflowers, yellow and brown

The sun began to shine. The rain began to fall. (*continue crouching, hold arms over head - fingers flutter down*)

And the five little sunflowers grew up tall (*rise to stand on tiptoes*)

Nature

Read [A Handful of Sunshine](#). Observe a growing sunflower plant, perhaps in your own garden or a neighbor's. Sunflower plants should also be available for purchase from a local nursery or home improvement store. See if the child can locate the tiny seeds. How is the plant helping to keep its seeds hidden, until they are ready to come free? If you have access to a mature plant or dried sunflower head for purposes of comparison, observe how the plant has grown and changed.

Organic sunflower seed heads: <http://www.bluebirdmeadows.com/Sun-Seed-1.htm>

If you are doing this topic with older children, consider also reading [The Tiny Seed](#) by Eric Carle. How do the seeds get free from the sunflower head, travel, plant themselves in soil, and grow to be next year's sunflowers?

Consider returning to this topic in the fall as your first project of the new school year: http://library.unescoicba.org/English/SECONDARY_SCIENCE_SERIES/science_articles/the_flying_sunflower.htm

Science

Sunflowers aren't the only plants whose seeds are easy to locate. Take a trip to the grocery store and find some sunflower seeds. Then walk around and see if you can find other types of seeds; you may be surprised at how many there are. In fact, there is probably an entire garden lurking in your pantry! Consider the following projects:

(If you want to focus the child's attention on how important sunlight is to living things, try sprouting some of your seeds in the sun and some in a dark closet then compare the results.)

- Dried Beans

Drop a dried bean, such as a pinto bean, in a jar with a damp cotton ball or paper towel. Close the lid of the jar. In about a day, it will open, revealing the first signs of the life hidden within. In five to ten days, you'll have a complete plant, including leaves and roots.

Try different kinds of dried beans, such as navy beans, black beans, or lentils and compare how fast they grow.

How it works:

Beans are seeds, and while they don't look alive, they are. They're simply "sleeping" – dormant until sunlight and water wake them up. Placed in a covered glass jar with a wet paper towel, the bean soaks up the moisture, swells, and bursts open its outer shell. The glass jar lets in light and its lid keeps the paper towel from drying out. Indirect sunlight will work best for all of these projects, as it's neither too hot nor too cold.

- Root Vegetables

For onions and sweet potatoes, fill a jar with water. Insert toothpicks into the vegetable, balancing it on the rim of the jar so that only the bottom third is under water. Change the water in your jar when it gets cloudy.

For radishes, beets, and turnips, twist off greens and set the vegetable tops on small rocks in a pie plate. Add water to cover vegetable by 1/8 inch. Change water often to keep it clear and scrape off any slime to keep your plants healthy.

- Fruits

Pineapple and carrot tops can also be planted on rocks in a pie plate (see above, root vegetables). Seeds are easy to find in many other fruits – just take the pit out of a peach, plum, avocado, mango, etc. Seeds are also inside apples, oranges, cherries, raspberries... in fact, storing its seeds inside itself is one of the things that makes a food a fruit. Even things you might not think of as fruits are, if you find seeds inside them – such as olives or eggplant.

To grow an avocado or mango plant, clean the pit well. Soak it in water overnight to help the shell burst open. Then plant it deep in a pot and keep it watered. (These plants take longer to sprout than the others mentioned here so don't lose hope!)

- Spices

Fill a small jar or plastic egg carton with soil-less potting mix to 1/4 inch from top. Press down on mix and moisten slightly. Sprinkle 1/4 teaspoon mustard seeds in each section of carton; close top. When shoots appear (about two days), remove top and spritz with water every other day.

What other spices can you find that are seeds?

Art

As you may have discovered while growing your seeds, sunshine is important to keep plants alive and healthy. This is also true of the grass in your lawn.

- Grass Patterns

Cut shapes out of leftover pieces of cardboard. Arrange your shapes in an artistic way over a patch of green grass, placing a heavy rock or brick on each to keep it in place. Leave your design in place for several days, then lift the shapes to reveal your artwork! Each area where the sun was unable to reach the grass, it will begin to turn yellow. You can help the grass recover by watering it well with a sprinkler or hose – and make sure it gets plenty of sunlight by not placing your shapes in that same location again. As long as you don't keep the shapes on so long that the grass dies, you will be able to do this project over and over in many different ways without harming your lawn. If you withhold sun from the grass for too long, however, it will die.

Game

- Shadow Buff

http://familyfun.go.com/games/indoor-outdoor-games/game/famfcmas_shadow/famfcmas_shadow.html

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

Stories

- When the Sun Rose by Barbara Helen Berger
- A Handful of Sunshine by Melanie Eclare
- In the Garden with Van Gogh by Julie Merberg, Suzanne Bober
- The Shadow Book by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers
- Sun Bread by Elisa Kleven

Rhyme: Five Little Sunflowers

Nature

- The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle

Science

- Dried Beans
- Root Vegetables
- Fruits
- Spices

Art: Grass Patterns

Game: Shadow Buff

Cooking

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

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

JOURNAL

If you choose to use this topic as a mini-unit, use this page to keep track of observations the child has made, the results of your investigations, lists of questions and the resources you found helpful in answering them, and any other items of note. Feel free to add additional journaling pages as needed.

Or consider creating a Big Book about your Kitchen Garden. Feature the variety of seeds, beans, spices, etc. which you grew, each stored in a plastic bag with a label. Include photographs of the planting process, as well as pictures to document each plant as it developed. Add journal entries with your child's observations in his own words, and have him create a painting to illustrate the front cover of your book.

RESOURCES

A Preschool unit on Weather (for the Summer) is also available from Waldorf Curriculum through our website at www.waldorfcriculum.com

Please feel free to contact me at any time at waldorf_curric@yahoo.com.