

... and Rainbows

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

July 27, 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 & Poems

The Storm Book

Sing-Song: a nursery rhyme book

A Rainbow of My Own

A Child's Seasonal Treasury

by Charlotte Zolotow

by Christina Rossetti

by Don Freeman

compiled and written by Betty Jones

Thunderstorm

Read The Storm Book, then watch a summer thunderstorm with your child. Try to find the rainbow after the storm.

Hint: to see a rainbow you need to stand so that the sun is behind you

Water Sprinkler

In the absence of a thunderstorm, you can still create your own rainbows by placing a water sprinkler outside on a sunny day. Walk with your child all around the sprinkler until you find the location where you can see the rainbow appear in the sheen of the water droplets. Of course, don't forget to put your bathing suits on and run and play in the water as well!

If you are lucky enough to live near one, visit a waterfall and observe the rainbows which appear in its mist. Read the poem "Waterfall Fairies" on page 94 of A Child's Seasonal Treasury.

Prism

Read A Rainbow of My Own. Hang a prism in a sunny window and wait for the time of day when rainbows fill your room. It is wonderful to place your Nature table under this window, so that the rainbows become a part of your summertime Nature table display.

Bubble Solution

1 cup water
1/3 cup Dawn liquid soap
1 tablespoon sugar

On a sunny day, go outside and blow bubbles into the air. The bubbles will split the sunlight into its different colors to form rainbows inside the bubbles.

Read the poem "Bubbles" on page 117 of A Child's Seasonal Treasury.

Coloring

Block beeswax crayons are especially suitable for this age group. The size is sturdy and the shape is unbreakable; the lack of paper covering and the rectangular shape allow for all areas of the crayon to be used in creating wide swaths of color or for more controlled coloring. Most importantly, beeswax crayons allow for true blending of color.

Using the verses provided on page 23 of [A Child's Seasonal Treasury](#) will help you to establish an atmosphere of respect for the art materials and will prepare the expectant children for the delights of their journey with crayons.

Watercolor Painting

Experiences in watercolor painting are an integral part of the Waldorf education at all levels. For the youngest child, these soft translucent colors are preferred, lacking the harsher quality of tempera. Use the guidelines provided in [A Child's Seasonal Treasury](#) to help you prepare the painting environment and teach the child respectful use of the art materials. As with the coloring experiences, the use of a verse before painting fills the children with a sense of excitement and wonder.

Book of Poetry

Using either beeswax crayons or watercolors, encourage the children to paint a series of rainbows. Choose the favorites to be the illustrations for a book of rainbow poetry. Some suggested poems are:

"If All Were Rain and Never Sun" by Christina Rossetti
found in [Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book](#)

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/rossetti/singsong/singsong.html#ifal>

"The Rainbow" by Walter de la Mare

I saw the lovely arch
Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude
The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment,
And the Bow was gone.

Feel free to find or write additional rainbow poetry. There are many techniques for making your own books. Here are two (the first is simpler, the second more complicated).

Make a paper bag book:

http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt_room/sparkers/artist_book/make_a_book.html

Japanese book-binding techniques:

<http://www.sff.net/people/Brook.West/bind/bindit.html>

As always, we encourage our Waldorf Curriculum members to participate in our online community. If you have favorite pieces of rainbow poetry to share, or recommendations of simple bookbinding techniques not included here, please write to the group at waldorfcurriculum@yahoogroups.com.

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

- The Storm Book by Charlotte Zolotow
- Sing-Song: a nursery rhyme book by Christina Rossetti
- A Rainbow of My Own by Don Freeman
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Water Sprinkler

Prism

Bubble Solution

Coloring

Watercolor Painting

Book of Poetry

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

RESOURCES

No newsletters will be sent out during the month of August, our summer vacation. If you are looking for ideas to carry you throughout the remainder of the summer, I leave you in the capable hands of Betty Jones. Use [A Child's Seasonal Treasury's](#) collections of Summer

- verses and poems,
- movement and creative drama,
- fingerplays and riddles,
- games,
- art and handwork, and
- cooking and baking

to inspire you and, most of all, to help you enjoy your time together!

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