

Noses and Toes(es)

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

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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.

Fingerplay

Open, Shut Them

This fingerplay will help get you moving! It's also a valuable exercise for children – as they learn to listen and move rhythmically, they are improving concentration and developing large motor skills. At the same time, they are also being exposed to vocabulary and the concept of opposites (e.g. open, shut, lower, higher, faster, slower) which children learn best by hearing and experiencing over and over.

Open, shut them, Open, shut them, Give a little clap clap clap. Open, shut them, open, shut them, Lay them in your lap lap lap.	(open and close hands in front of you) (clap 3 times as you say “clap”) (fold hands in lap)
Creepy crawly, creepy crawly, Right up to your chin chin chin. Open up your little mouth, But do not let them in in in.	(fingers crawl up chest to chin) (open mouth, hesitate) (quickly put hands behind back)
Higher higher, Higher higher, Almost to the sky. Then like little birdies Watch them fly and fly.	(hand over hand like climbing a ladder) (link thumbs together to make a bird)
Lower lower Lower lower Almost to the ground. Quickly pick them up again And turn them round and round. Faster faster Slower slower.	(hand under hand like climbing down a ladder) (hands circle around each other) (hands circle faster) (hands circle slowly)
Open, shut them, Open, shut them, Give a little clap clap clap. Open, shut them, open, shut them, Lay them in your lap lap lap.	(open and close hands in front of you) (clap 3 times as you say “clap”) (fold hands in lap)

Handwork

Handprint Stepping Stone

Use the stepping stone in your own garden or display it; it also makes a wonderful gift!
 Directions: <http://www.pioneerthinking.com/stones.html>

Stories

From Head to Toe

by Eric Carle

Here Are My Hands

by Bill Martin Jr.

What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?

by Steve Jenkins

My Mama Had a Dancing Heart

by Libba Moore Gray

My Cat Has Eyes of Sapphire Blue

by Aileen Fisher

This group of stories is just bursting with potential for movement and FUN.
For example,

- have the child follow along with the movements of each animal in From Head to Toe
- read some of the poems in My Cat Has Eyes of Sapphire Blue and have the child pretend to be a cat, acting out the pouncing, resting, and other activities
- read My Mama Had a Dancing Heart and go outside and dance with joy!
- come up with some inspirations of your own and share them with the group by sending an email to waldorfcurriculum@yahoogroups.com.

Remember that story time 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.

Science

Learn how to balance a spoon on your nose:
http://www.sandiegozoo.org/kids/science_balance.html

(Q: Why would you want to learn this?)
(A: Why not?)

Games:

1. Dancing Eggs Game

Haba has a wonderful game that fits perfectly with this theme called the Dancing Eggs Game. However, if you don't have this game, you should consider making your own rubber eggs and playing games using them. (You can make the eggs in advance and have them on hand when you are ready to play or you can involve the child in making the eggs.)

Make rubber eggs:

Place one raw egg in a clear container. Next, pour white vinegar over the until it is completely covered with liquid. Place the container in an area where it will not be disturbed. After a few days, check on the egg and observe what has happened.

Rubber eggs are useful for the following games:

2. Egg and Spoon Relay

Egg and Spoon Relay

Ages: 3 and up

In this classic game, each person is provided with an egg and a spoon. Choose a spot to be the destination, such as a tree or fence. When the game begins, every person tries to run as fast as they can (while still balancing the egg on their spoon) in order to reach the destination and run back to the starting point again. The first person to achieve this wins. If you drop your egg you are allowed to pick up the egg and place it back on your spoon and continue with the race.

3. Chin-to-Chin Pass

Chin-to-Chin Pass

Ages: 5 and up

You can gather enough people to make teams or you can just play with the two of you; it will still be challenging enough to be fun.

If playing with teams, each team forms a line and is given an egg. The first player places the egg under his chin and bends his head to keep it in place. The second player must use her chin (no hands allowed!) to take the egg from the first player. Players pass the egg from chin to chin until it reaches the last player. The first team to finish wins!

If you are playing with two people, pass the egg back and forth and the first person to drop the egg loses. If you want to play non-competitively you can count out loud as you go along, marking the number of times the egg is passed back and forth successfully. Play the game several times, trying to improve your score by reaching a higher number before the egg is dropped. This version encourages more cooperation between the players.

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!

Pinch Pot Sculpture

Create a sculpture out of an assortment of differently-sized pinch pots, forming them over different parts of your body such as finger, thumb, elbow, big toe, etc. If you are not familiar with working with clay, here is an easy Pinch Pot Construction tutorial:

<http://www.jhpottery.com/tutorial/pinch.htm>

Closing Verse

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and make 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

Fingerplay

Gift Making

- Large Plastic Bucket
- Bag of premixed concrete (or stepping stone mix from craft store)
- Water
- Hand Trowel
- Stepping Stone Mold
- Petroleum Jelly

Stories

Science

- metal teaspoon

Games: Dancing Eggs Game by Haba

or make rubber eggs

- raw egg
- clear container
- white vinegar

Games: Chin-to-Chin Pass

- "rubber" egg

Games: Egg and Spoon Race

- "rubber" egg
- spoon

Art

- clay

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

BACKGROUND

Note: The Dancing Eggs Game by Haba is available through Silly Goose Toys:
<http://www.sillygoosetoys.com/daeggabyha.html>

If you are interested in additional sources for Waldorf toys and materials, visit our website at www.waldorfcurriculum.com and click on Parent Resources.

For more information on the Waldorf method, visit these websites:

reading: What is Waldorf Education?

<http://www.fortnet.org/rsws/waldorf/faq.html>

reading: Why Handwork?

<http://www.weirdolls.com/misc/homeschool.html>

reading: The Importance of Child's Play

<http://www.portlandwaldorfschool.org/lower%20school/our%20community/kinder%20garten.html>

reading: Creating the Play Space

<http://www.threesisterstoys.com/parenting/playspace.htm>

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