

Zin! Zin! Zin!

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

November 9, 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.

Many families also use the weekly newsletter topics in their regular lesson planning, completing the entire group of activities as a homeschooling unit.

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.

Some Thoughts About Unschooling

I have been planning a newsletter called "At the Zoo" for several weeks; last week, Natalie announced she wanted to see an otter, this week she decided she wanted to see a violin. And so we are postponing our trip to the zoo and looking at violins this week. Although unschooling isn't technically our education method of choice, I do feel that it works well for the preschool years.

The biggest thing to remember for unschooling is this:

YOU are the one responsible for preparing the curriculum. Always be organized and prepared with a topic. Don't walk up to a child and say, "So, what do you want to learn about today?" It is a great burden for your child to feel that you have put him in charge of the decision making and preschool children don't like it. But if your child spontaneously comes to you with an interest in a topic, you should feel free to follow it!

Don't hesitate to use the Group as a resource when planning a topic of study; you can ask for picture book recommendations, related Art and Handwork projects, recipes, sources for locating craft supplies, and so on.

Stories

[The Bat Boy and His Violin](#)

by Gavin Curtis

[The Philharmonic Gets Dressed](#)

by Karla Kuskin

[Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin](#)

by Lloyd Moss

[Swan Lake](#)

by Lisbeth Zwerger

See a Violin

Before (and after) seeing a violin performance, take your child to a music store or to the home of a friend to see a violin for herself.

Hear a Violin: Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Schubert

Purchase and listen to several violin recordings by the composers mentioned in [The Bat Boy and His Violin](#). Try not to get too academic with this; don't ask your child to compare the different pieces, just soak the music in and enjoy.

Orchestra

After seeing and hearing a solo violin, your child will be excited to see an entire orchestra. Read [The Philharmonic Gets Dressed](#) as an introduction to the professions of professional musician and conductor. Many orchestras have children's programs, many where you can get to see the instruments and the musicians up close. A good resource for finding programs like this is to contact your local classical music station and ask them for the websites of orchestras and concert halls near you.

Read [Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin](#) as an introduction to the many different instruments one may find at an orchestra performance. They each have their very own sound.

Take the child to see an orchestra performance. Again, resist the temptation to ask your child too many questions, like

Did you like it?

What did you like best?

Could you hear the violin?
Did you see any other instruments that we know?
What did the music remind you of?

and so on... There is time enough for that sort of thing when your child is older. Just let your child absorb and enjoy the music.

Dance Performance: Swan Lake

Read Swan Lake with your child.

Take the child to a dance performance of the Swan Lake ballet. Bear in mind that the performance will most likely will have an unhappy conclusion -- Tchaikovsky's original ending was a happy one and this is maintained in Lisbeth Zwerger's version of the tale; however, as his ballet version of the story was not a success, it was rewritten by his brother after his death to include the now-famous tragic ending.

Violin vs. Fiddle

<http://www.flyinfiddler.com/what.html>

What is the difference between a fiddle and a violin? Listen to several recordings of fiddle playing, such as

- O Brother, Where Art Thou?
- Happy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Celtic Fiddle

Take the child to see a fiddle being played. Seeing and experiencing the energy of a live performance will go a long way toward understanding the difference between the two instruments.

Reread The Bat Boy and His Violin.

Reginald feels very strongly that he wants his instrument referred to as a violin, so much so that he's almost offended when it is called a fiddle. Why do you think that is? Again, this is a thinking question for you to ponder, not for your child to have to articulate.

Chalk Line Art

Where does the music come from? When you put tension on the strings, either by plucking or by bowing, the vibrations and their echo within the hollow instrument body create a sound. Let your child experiment with this concept by using a chalk line (found at the hardware store) and a large sheet of paper to create a piece of artwork. Make sure you place newspaper under your work surface to avoid getting chalk everywhere.

Haven't snapped a chalk line before? Here are some tips:
http://www.ehow.com/how_12235_snap-chalk-line.html

Sing Through the Day

In The Bat Boy and His Violin, Reginald plays for the men a lullaby his mother used to sing to him.

Singing with your child is one of the most important things you can do as a parent.
<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~musi/preparatory/singing01.html>

Maybe you know this but can't quite get up the courage. In my family, singing was completely discouraged – my parents didn't sing and, in fact, always made fun of people who did sing out loud. So struggling to not feel stupid when I sang was one of my first big parenting hurdles when my baby was born. But everything I read told me, don't worry about how you sound – just go for it! So I try not to be self-conscious and just focus on enjoying my time with my children. And they love it so much; their enthusiasm is contagious!

If you don't already sing with your child, we recommend the Sing Through the Day book and CD set to get you started.

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

Because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. we generally do not suggest specific cooking activities for the week's theme. 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!

Independent 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 preschool 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 Bat Boy and His Violin by Gavin Curtis
- The Philharmonic Gets Dressed by Karla Kuskin
- Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin by Lloyd Moss
- Swan Lake by Lisbeth Zwerger

See a Violin

Hear a Violin: Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Schubert

Orchestra

Dance Performance: Swan Lake

Violin vs. Fiddle

- O Brother, Where Art Thou?
- Happy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Celtic Fiddle

Chalk Line Art

Sing Through the Day

- Sing Through the Day ed. by Marlys Swinger

Cooking

Independent Play

Helping

Closing Verse

PLANNER

Book List: list the books you will be reading

Materials: list all materials required for your chosen activities