

Walking and Riding

*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.

Many families also use the weekly newsletter topics as a one week long mini-unit for homeschooling.

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

Ox-Cart Man

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

Johnny Appleseed

My Librarian is a Camel

Giddy-Up! Let's Ride!

by Donald Hall

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

by Reeve Lindbergh

by Margrite Ruurs

by Flora McDonnell

Art

A Foot-Stomping Good Time

Have you ever tried wet felting with your feet? This a new and fun way to expose children to a centuries-old craft.

Take your wool roving and lay it down on a rough surface, such as a plastic dish drainer pan, a bamboo roller shade, or a coir doormat. Squirt it well with Murphy's Oil Soap and fill a pot of hot (but still comfortable) water from the sink. Pour some of the water over your roving and begin to felt with your feet! Jump up and down, do the twist, whatever bouncing hopping vigorous activity you like and watch the wool roving come together as felt. Note: It's difficult to get much control over the finished product with this technique, however, so this activity fits better under Art exploration than Handwork.

You can harden your piece of felt by switching over to using your hands and vigorously rubbing the felt against the textured surface. Add more soap and water as needed until you are happy with the final product; then rinse thoroughly and dry in the sun.

By the way, we learned the hard way that if your felt comes together with a thin place or empty patch in one part of it, you can't get that area to un-felt, nor can you tease the wool threads over to cover that spot, since they become permanently bound together in the felting process. But this Art activity is about exploration and fun, so don't get too caught up in the finished product.

Yankee Doodle

"Yankee Doodle"

Yankee Doodle went to town
A-riding on a pony
Stuck a feather in his hat
And called it macaroni.

Chorus:

Yankee Doodle, keep it up
Yankee Doodle dandy
Mind the music and the step
And with the girls be handy.

Father and I went down to camp
Along with Captain Gooding
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.

Chorus

There was Captain Washington
Upon a slapping stallion

A-giving orders to his men
I guess there was a million.

Chorus

(for more verses, see appendix)

Hobby Horse

Playing at riding a horse is a popular activity with children.

Make a hobby horse (directions and pattern):

<http://www.bluebonnetvillage.com/horse.htm>

As an alternative, your hobby horse can have a wooden head. This can easily be worked from a 'sandwich' of three short planks which can be individually cut to shape then glued together prior to sanding and painting.

Ponyride Sound Effect

Children can also pretend to be riding a horse by galloping around making sound effects. A beautiful Ponyride Sound Effect musical instrument is sold by Kindermusik: <http://www.kindermusik.com/store/trans/productDetailForm.asp?maxItems=13&imgid=352&Seq=9&CatID=1350&fromh=-1&fromw=-1&tow=-1&toh=-1>

Of course, you can also make your own. Coconut shells have been a traditional horse riding sound effect for hundreds of years; tips on how to cut a coconut shell in half and hollow it out: <http://wiki.ehow.com/Carve-a-Coconut>

Horse Harness

Toymaking with Children gives directions for a game played by two children, one as the horse and the other as the coachman. For instructions on how to make the harness, see pages 148-149.

Music

"Donkey Riding" CD

by Ship's Company

<http://www.hmtrad.com/catalog/recordings/shipsco.html>

Ship's Company website: <http://www.shipscompany.org/chantysingers.htm>

Movement

Take your child down to the beach or to a sandbox (although wet sand works better for this). Have them practice making a variety of prints in the sand by jumping, hopping, etc. For fun, you can also try mimicking the different paces of a horse:

<http://www.horseclub.co.uk/oldsite/paces.htm>

Field Trip

Last, but not least, you'll want to try to expand upon this theme by visiting a stable and actually riding a horse if you can. Pony rides are offered at many county fairs. Look around you for farms which offer other animals to ride. The Maryland Renaissance Festival even gives families the chance to ride an elephant! <http://www.rennfest.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

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!

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

- Ox-Cart Man
- The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere
- Johnny Appleseed
- My Librarian is a Camel
- Giddy-Up! Let's Ride!

Art

Handwork

- "Yankee Doodle"
- Hobby Horse
- Ponyride Sound Effect
- Horse Harness -
Toymaking with Children

Music

- "Donkey Riding" by Ship's Company

Movement

Field Trip

Cooking

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

PLANNER

Book List: list the books you will be reading

Materials: list all materials required for your chosen activities

APPENDIX

Tradition has it that Yankee Doodle had its origins in the French and Indian War when New England troops joined Braddock's forces at Niagara. In contrast to the spit and polish of the British army, the colonials were a motley crew, some wearing buckskins and furs. Dr. Richard Schuckburg, a British Army surgeon reportedly wrote the tune ridiculing the Americans in the early 1750s. Some scholars believe it is a variant of the nursery rhyme *Lucy Locket*.

Despite the fact it began as ridicule, the colonials took the song for their own. Countless versions and parodies evolved, many of which made fun of their officers, including George Washington. These verses are included at the end of the tune. When Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown it is said while the British played "The World Turned Upside Down," the Americans played Yankee Doodle.

There are said to be as many as 190 verses of Yankee Doodle.

And then the feathers on his hat,
They looked so' tarnal fin-a,
I wanted pockily to get
To give to my Jemima.

Chorus

And then we saw a swamping gun,
Large as a log of maple;
Upon a deuced little cart,
A load for father's cattle.

Chorus

And every time they shoot it off,
It takes a horn of powder;
It makes a noise like father's gun,
Only a nation louder.

Chorus

I went as nigh to one myself,
As' Siah's underpinning;
And father went as nigh agin,
I thought the deuce was in him.

Chorus

We saw a little barrel, too,
The heads were made of leather;
They knocked upon it with little clubs,
And called the folks together.

Chorus

And there they'd fife away like fun,
And play on cornstalk fiddles,
And some had ribbons red as blood,
All bound around their middles.

Chorus

The troopers, too, would gallop up
And fire right in our faces;
It scared me almost to death
To see them run such races.

Chorus

Uncle Sam came there to change
Some pancakes and some onions,
For' lasses cake to carry home
To give his wife and young ones.

Chorus

But I can't tell half I see
They kept up such a smother;
So I took my hat off, made a bow,
And scampered home to mother.

Chorus

Cousin Simon grew so bold,
I thought he would have cocked it;
It scared me so I streaked it off,
And hung by father's pocket.

Chorus

And there I saw a pumpkin shell,
As big as mother's basin;
And every time they touched it off,
They scampered like the nation.