



The Universal Human Spirit of Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Born out of Rudolf Steiner's, the first Waldorf school was founded in Germany in 1919. The first Waldorf kindergarten followed seven years later. Since then a deep interest in anthroposophy and Steiner Waldorf early childhood education has resulted in more than 2000 kindergartens being founded in 80 countries around the world.

The International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) provides a meeting place for early childhood educators from the many countries striving to uphold, deepen and renew/Waldorf early childhood education. Our shared task is to ensure that Waldorf pedagogy becomes neither a theoretical system, nor a collection of outer methods, but a wellspring of living insight.

To serve the healthy development of childhood is to develop the potential to perceive, through our own self-directed inner activity, not only the physical nature, but also the soul and spirit of each child. Through this ongoing study and research we deepen our appreciation of the spiritual individuality of all human beings, as distinct from but working within and through the sheaths of their given, temperament and personality, well as through the traditions and values of their particular family and cultural community.

Every culture contributes uniquely towards the evolution of anthroposophy and Waldorf education, and we honor the way Steiner/Waldorf early childhood educators work within their specific cultural contexts. At the same time, we would like to express our hope that, by encouraging the autonomy and initiative of each individual, Anthroposophy and Waldorf education may contribute to the evolution of the "whole," such as family, community, nation, and humankind.

IASWECE gives us, as educators from diverse nations and cultures, the opportunity to meet and get to know and understand one another on an ever-deeper level. Developing relationships of trust, openness and reverence among colleagues, with the young child always at the center of our vision, is the starting point for educating in freedom and toward freedom.

Out of this ideal comes our intention to participate in a dynamic and artistic process that will enable the universal human spirit of Waldorf pedagogy to light up in the hearts and creative will of educators of all cultures. Only then can we give children in every corner of the world the opportunity to develop their true and full humanity.

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