



Orientation for Site Visits to Home Programs

2018-19

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Dear Colleague,

Thank you for serving as a site visitor for WECAN! Most site visitors find that the visit is both enjoyable and satisfying. It is a wonderful way to support teachers, schools, and programs in the deepening and strengthening of their work, and also to further the WECAN view of membership.

The WECAN Path to Membership, including membership renewal, is designed to support the growth and development of Waldorf early childhood education among the members. Our intention is to help member institutions and individuals to deepen their roots in anthroposophy and the WECAN Shared Principles. We celebrate diversity among programs and consider this diversity a strength; we are not seeking to ensure uniformity of Waldorf programs.

WECAN is a membership organization, with membership criteria based on a culture of self-study and peer review. WECAN is not an accrediting or licensing body, and we wish to avoid using these terms, since they do not accurately reflect our membership activity.

While the decision to grant or renew membership will be made by the appropriate Regional Representative(s) and the WECAN Membership Coordinator or Membership Committee, they will be relying on your report to round out the picture presented in the applicant's self-study, and you will be asked to express in your report any concerns you may have about the applicant's readiness for membership or membership renewal.

To help you prepare for the site visit, we have created this Orientation Handbook. It offers practical details about your role and responsibilities in relation to both the program and WECAN, including arrangements for your honorarium and travel expenses.

If the program has not forwarded their self-study to you two weeks prior to the date of your visit, please contact them to remind them to do so.

Again, we are very grateful to you for taking a role in this important work. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

With best wishes,

Laura Mason, WECAN Membership Coordinator
425-837-9192 (Issaquah, WA)
membership@waldorfearychildhood.org

Purpose of the Site Visit

The purpose of the WECAN site visit is to identify strengths and challenges in the program, and to review the health of the program as a whole. The site visit report is not meant to focus on specific pedagogical practices or to reflect the visitor's personal preferences in this regard.

You will be seeking to gain as full a picture as possible of the program in relation to the completed Self-Study and the WECAN Shared Principles, and will make commendations and recommendations for the growth and development of the program. It is helpful if you can offer a broader picture of the work and activities in the wider Waldorf early childhood movement.

In home programs with a single care provider, or provider and assistant, the provider's development is a key element. For this reason, commendations and recommendations may also address the self-development of the provider on the path of membership.

The usual WECAN site visit is one person/one day. However, programs seeking extra support may want to arrange for a longer visit.

Preparing for the Site Visit

At least two weeks prior to the site visit, the program provider should send you:

- The site visit report form
- A copy of the self-study (and, if this is a renewal, or application to move up to Full Membership, the previous self-study and site visit report)

Please familiarize yourself with:

- The self-study (and other documents, as above)
- The recommendations from any previous site visit
- Criteria for Associate and Full Membership (see Appendix II)
- WECAN Shared Principles (see Appendix III)
- WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix IV and V)

Some site visitors find it helpful to "pre-write" before the visit, at least mentally, some commendations and recommendations based on their study of the above documents. While these can always be revised or even replaced on the basis of the actual visit, they do offer a framework or focus for the observations and conversations during the visit.

Honorarium, Expenses

- The program is responsible for the honorarium, travel expenses, and, if needed, meals and accommodations for the site visitor by prior arrangement. The honorarium is \$350 for a one-day site visit or \$600 for a two-day visit; this includes the writing of the report. For car travel, the reimbursement is \$.54 per mile.

- For programs in Mexico, Puerto Rico and on tribal lands, a lesser honorarium may be mutually agreed upon by the program and the individual site visitor prior to the visit.
- Programs are expected to pay the full honorarium for the site visit unless the site visitor agrees to a different amount in advance.
- The site visitor's school may choose to support the Waldorf early childhood movement by covering the cost of a substitute when the site visitor is out of the classroom for the visit. In this way, the school extends a hand of collegueship to an early childhood program in the region. The site visitor should discuss this with the appropriate person(s) in his/her school in advance.
- Please see Appendix I for a sample invoice form. It is good to provide a written statement to the care provider and to confirm the financial arrangements (as well as other logistical details) before the visit.

Carrying Out the Site Visit

In planning your schedule with the program provider, it is helpful to note that you will need time to eat lunch (find out how your lunch will be provided), and also some time following your observation to collect your thoughts and make note of some of your observations, questions, and concerns. This is a time when you can plan what preliminary commendations and recommendations you want to share when you meet with the provider (and assistant, if any).

A site visitor has three responsibilities: observing; listening and sharing; and completing the Site Visit Report.

Observing

- You will be weighing the self-study's description of the program against actual practices. Are these consistent with one another?
- You will be considering whether the program is working out of WECAN's Shared Principles. If this is a Full Member, or an applicant for Full Membership, are the program, policies, and practices *fully aligned* with the WECAN Shared Principles? If it is an Associate Member or applicant, are they on the *path towards alignment* with the Shared Principles? (See Appendix III for Shared Principles)
- In applications for Full Membership, you may consider that there will always be hurdles to overcome, and the measure of maturity and strength of a program is not a static picture. Therefore, an important consideration is your perception of the strength of the program's foundation and its ability to meet unforeseen challenges in a positive way.

- As you observe, consider the following qualities:
 - Love and warmth: How are the social relations within the program? If there is more than one caregiver, are the relationships between the adults warm, respectful and collaborative? How are the relationships between the adults and children, and among the children themselves?
 - Care for the environment: Are the physical spaces clean, well cared for and furnished to meet the needs of the children?
 - Rhythm: Are the activities integrated into a healthy rhythm? Are transitions smooth and predictable?
 - Nourishment for the senses: Are there ample opportunities for sensory experiences both in and out of doors?
 - Creative, artistic experience: How do the arts live in the children's play, the work of the adults and in the spaces and activities of the program?
 - Meaningful adult activity: Is the work of the caregiver worthy of imitation?
 - Free, imaginative play: Does the environment support healthy play? Is the play active, dynamic, diverse and self-directed?
 - Gratitude, reverence, wonder, joy, humor and happiness: How do they these qualities live in the program amongst both adults and children?

- The site visit is a time to focus on the program as a whole rather than specific aspects of pedagogy as you would if you were mentoring or evaluating a teacher. Personal preferences for pedagogical practices should be set aside in favor of open-minded observation. As stated above, however, commendations and recommendations may also address the self-development of the provider on the path of membership. If you see areas of real concern you will want to include this in the report, and could offer a strong recommendation that the provider arrange for mentoring. Otherwise, you can just make more general comments or suggestions.

- Be sure to see the outdoor play area, preferably while it is in use by the children.

Listening and sharing

- Meeting with parents
 - Ask the provider ahead of time to arrange for you to meet with 2 or 3 parents, perhaps those especially involved in the program; or the provider could ask for parents to volunteer to meet with you. This meeting could take place the evening before the site visit or first thing in the morning, after they drop off their children.

 - It is helpful to begin by explaining to the parents why you are there, reassuring them that you will not be judging or rating the program, but rather helping the provider see the strengths and challenges more clearly, to support the provider in her/his development. You can let the parents know that by sharing their experiences they will be helping the program by offering a clear picture of parent perspectives.

- Sample questions to ask the parents about their experiences:
 - Do you feel welcomed and included by the program provider?
 - What are your experiences of communication with the provider? How does the provider deal with parent questions or concerns?
 - What do you see as the strengths of the program? What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- Meeting with the provider
 - In planning the site visit, it is good to make clear that you will need an hour or more to meet with the provider and the assistant, if any. They may need to make arrangements for substitution, if it is a full-day program. It will be important to have a quiet space where an uninterrupted meeting can take place.
 - This meeting is a key aspect of the site visit. It will allow you to hear from the provider about any questions you may have and any challenges they have identified in the self-study. You will want to encourage an open conversation about their work in which you can offer support through your observations and insights.
 - Possible topics to address in the conversation:
 - If the provider works with an assistant, are there regular meetings to discuss pedagogical practices, deepen the work through anthroposophical study, and discuss the children? Do they review policies, events, programs, and parent work?
 - How is the provider working with parent education?
 - WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix II & III below): Meeting these expectations is *a process*. WECAN is looking for progress toward meeting them, and at the provider's efforts toward ongoing professional development.
 - What does the provider see as the program's main strengths and challenges?
 - How is the provider working with practical activities both indoors and outdoors?
 - The conversation is an opportunity to bring a sense of the wider Waldorf early childhood movement by sharing your knowledge and experience.
 - In the conversation, you should share commendations and recommendations, preparing for what you will be submitting in your site visit report. It is a good practice to choose a limited number of fairly specific commendations and recommendations, to avoid overwhelming the provider and to encourage a focus on what you consider most important for the program's growth and development.

- It may happen that a substantive recommendation occurs to you after the visit. Such a recommendation may be included in your report, even though it has not been discussed with the provider; in this case, you may wish to have a phone conversation with the provider before writing the report. This, however, is not a requirement.

Completing the Site Visit Report

It is best to complete the site visit report while the visit is fresh in your mind, but in any case it must be completed and sent electronically to the provider ***within 30 days of the visit***.

- Please include clearly-articulated commendations and recommendations, preferably in bulleted points. Limit these (for example, three of each) as explained in the section above.
- Please note that you are not being asked for a recommendation or decision regarding membership but rather to express in your report any concerns you may have about the applicant's readiness for membership or membership renewal.
- After sending your completed report, please allow the provider to respond with any concerns they may have, for example if they think you have misunderstood or misrepresented anything in your report. You can then decide whether you want to modify your report to reflect this. If there is a difference of opinion which cannot be resolved, you can invite the provider to write an addendum which we will file with your report.
- Once the report is in final form, please remind the provider to forward a copy electronically to the Regional Representative(s) and the Membership Coordinator, keeping a copy for their own files.

Appendix I: Sample Invoice

INVOICE

Name
Address
Phone number
E-mail address

Social Security number:

For: WECAN Site Visit
Date of visit:

Honorarium: _____

Mileage: ____miles round trip @ \$.54/mile _____

Tolls (receipt attached): _____

TOTAL _____

Site Visitor Signature: _____

Appendix II: Criteria for Membership

The WECAN path to organizational membership is intended for schools and programs working on behalf of the young child out of the insights of Waldorf education. WECAN invites and encourages all early childhood programs identifying themselves as inspired by the ideals of Waldorf early childhood education and working with the WECAN shared principles to apply for WECAN membership. WECAN organizational membership is not open to programs that identify with a different or additional set of principles and practices.

Criteria for Associate Membership:

- The program has functioned as a program inspired by Waldorf education for at least one year, with a minimum of 6 children in regular attendance.
- The program is committed to the ideals and practices of Waldorf early childhood education and anthroposophy, the philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925).
- The program is in process of becoming aligned with the WECAN Shared Principles.
- The program complies with the AWSNA Service Mark policy (see section on Use of the Name “Waldorf”).
- The program is legally licensed at the federal, state or provincial, or local level.
- The program intends to support and contribute to Waldorf early childhood education in North America.

Criteria for Full WECAN Membership:

- The program has functioned as a program inspired by Waldorf education for at least three years with children in regular attendance.
- The program is working out of Waldorf education and anthroposophy as described in the WECAN Shared Principles and is committed to furthering among faculty and staff a deepening of an anthroposophical study of the human being.
- The program can stand as a representative of Waldorf early childhood education in the world through its alignment with the Shared Principles.
- The program is legally licensed at the federal, state or provincial, or local level.
- The program has demonstrated viability in terms of finances, enrollment, and personnel.

Appendix III: WECAN Shared Principles

The WECAN Shared Principles form the basis of our understanding of our work together in association, and are used in our membership application and self-study processes. As a living document, the Shared Principles will continue to be refined through the work of the Board, Regional Representatives, and Full Member schools and programs.

A. Purpose, Goals, and Educational Philosophy

- A1** In our work with children from pre-birth to age seven (in nursery-kindergartens, home care programs, child care centers, parent-child programs, etc.) we are committed to the ideals and practices of Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education.
- A2** This education, developed by Rudolf Steiner and based on an anthroposophical understanding of the human individuality as a being of body, soul, and spirit, offers protection and respect for the dignity of childhood.
- A3** The future development of each individual child and of humanity as a whole depends on health-giving experiences in the first seven years of life. An atmosphere of loving warmth and guidance that promotes joy, wonder, and reverence supports such healthy development.
- A4** We recognize that free creative play, imitation, exploration of the social and natural world, practical and meaningful work, artistic activities, and nourishing sensory experiences are essential in the development of the young child. Through our programs and activities, we offer children a rhythmic experience of each day, week, and season of the year.
- A5** Our activities are based on the insights of Rudolf Steiner, and on the continuing research of Waldorf/Steiner educators and other compatible pedagogical approaches.
- A6** We strive for diversity in the racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds of children coming to our schools. We strive to meet the unique developmental needs, capacities, and cultural background of each child.
- A7** We recognize that healthy child development takes place best in the context of a community based upon healthy social relationships among parents, teachers, and children, and we strive to create such conscious, collaborative communities around our care for children.

B. Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

- B1** Our faculty and staff are qualified for their positions and responsibilities by education and/or experience. Teachers have a formal preparation, or the equivalent, for Waldorf/Steiner early childhood teaching, or are engaged in such preparation, as well as meeting state or provincial licensing requirements. [See “Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education: WECAN Expectations” in the following section.]
- B2** Our faculty and staff are committed to ongoing self- and professional development as demonstrated by participation in conferences, courses, professional development workshops, etc.

- B3** We support teacher development through regular mentoring, peer partnerships, review and evaluation.
- B4** We recognize that developing artistic and practical abilities and capacities for observation and perception contributes to our ability to meet the needs of the children in our care. Our faculty and staff are actively engaged in deepening our understanding of Waldorf/Steiner indications for early childhood through collegial work, individual study, artistic activity, and meditative practice.
- B5** Our faculty and staff demonstrate professionalism and respect in their interactions with children, parents, colleagues, and other professionals.

C. Governance, Finances and Administration

- C1** Our program recognizes and complies with applicable legal and licensing requirements and meets health, fire, and safety standards.
- C2** Our program is typically not-for-profit, as an expression of the free cultural life, and is not based on self-interest or personal gain.

(Note: The form most suited for such activity is usually that of an incorporated, not-for-profit organization. There may be exceptions to this in certain situations such as home programs, and this WECAN membership criterion may be waived through a decision of the WECAN Board or board-designated committee.)

- C3** We have clearly-stated processes for making administrative decisions, future planning, and review and development of programs, administrative, and financial policies.
- C4** Our program has clearly-defined employment, evaluation, and review procedures for faculty and staff, including agreed-upon compensation, terms of employment, and principal duties and responsibilities. Procedures for non-renewal or termination of employment are clearly delineated.
- C5** Our program complies with all applicable laws regarding discrimination based on any and all protected categories, in all areas, including admissions, employment, and personnel.
- C6** We have demonstrated our ability to generate sufficient resources to maintain our educational programs and facilities, and to support our faculty and staff. We strive to cultivate socially responsible practices in the setting of tuitions, tuition assistance, and salaries and benefits.
- C7** Our organization engages in regular self-study/peer review process on an organizational, institutional basis, as well as with individual teachers.
- C8** In our administrative and financial practices, we work collaboratively rather than hierarchically, in an effort to be socially responsible in our work with colleagues, parents, the institution, and the wider community.

D. Relations with the Wider Movement

- D1** We recognize ourselves as colleagues in a world movement on behalf of the young child. As such we are committed to collaborating with our colleagues on local, regional, North American, and international levels as a fully-established, healthy representative of Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education.

Appendix IV: Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Expectations for WECAN Member Schools and Programs

The expectations for **WECAN Full Member schools and early childhood programs** are as follows:

- For lead early childhood educators who carry responsibility for the care and education of the child from birth to school entrance (lead child care providers, nursery, pre-school and kindergarten teachers, and parent-child class leaders), completion of a Waldorf early childhood teacher education program recognized by WECAN is expected.
- Additional specialized professional development coursework in birth to three/child care is expected for those working in lead positions with children under the age of three. This expectation is consistent with the guidelines of the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (see www.iaswece.org).
- For assistants, introductory coursework of at least one week (or its equivalent) in Waldorf early childhood education is expected; for those who intend to continue in this position, further coursework is expected, and a full WECAN-recognized training is recommended.
- The member program is expected to demonstrate a commitment to hire lead early childhood teachers (for nursery, kindergarten, and pre-school positions, and if possible also for parent-child group leaders and extended care providers) who have completed or are currently enrolled in a WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education program.
- If a member program is unable to hire a trained early childhood educator for a lead teaching position and hires someone without training, or if an assistant moves into a lead teaching position, the program is expected to strongly encourage the teacher to enroll in a part-time training course and provide some financial support if possible. (Often there are AWSNA teacher training loan funds available for support as well).
- The member program is expected to demonstrate a commitment to mentoring and evaluation of the early childhood faculty, as well as supporting other professional development opportunities.

Associate WECAN Member schools and early childhood programs are expected to demonstrate that they are *working toward* meeting the above expectations for Full WECAN Member schools.

During its WECAN membership renewal process, member programs are asked to provide information about the level of training of each of its early childhood faculty members. The program should describe the training plans for lead teachers who have not yet completed a training course, and should also describe policies and plans for ongoing teacher education for all early childhood faculty, or demonstrate equivalency for non-recognized trainings.

If during the renewal process it becomes apparent that a WECAN member program is not demonstrating commitment to the WECAN Shared Principles and Statement of Expectations regarding the training of teachers, then the WECAN site visitor will engage with the program around this question, to support the program in actively taking steps to work towards the training and ongoing professional development of its early childhood teachers. The WECAN Membership Committee may also, in some situations, make a recommendation to the school to encourage further work with the Expectations.

Curriculum and Course Content Areas included in WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be found in Appendix I of the *WECAN Membership Handbook*. A list of WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be found in Appendix II of the *WECAN Membership Handbook* and on the WECAN website.

We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions about the situation in your school. You can contact Laura Mason, Membership Coordinator, at membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org, or Holly Koteen-Soule, Teacher Education Coordinator, at teachered@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Appendix V: WECAN-Recognized Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Institutes

Recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs are listed below. They offer a minimum of 450 class contact hours, plus mentored teaching or extensive practicum or internship experiences. Programs not on this list are *not* recognized by WECAN. Curriculum and Course Content Areas included in WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be found in Appendix I of the *WECAN Membership Handbook*. More detailed information about criteria for recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be found in the *WECAN Teacher Education Membership Handbook*.

WECAN-Recognized Full Member Teacher Training Institutes:

Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training - El Sobrante, CA
Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto – Thornhill, ON
Sunbridge Institute – Chestnut Ridge, NY
Waldorf Institute of Southern California – Northridge & San Diego, CA
Waldorf Teacher Education Eugene – Eugene, OR
West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy – Sechelt, BC

WECAN-Recognized Associate Member Teacher Training Institutes:

Alkion Center for Adult Education - Ghent, NY
Sound Circle Center Teacher Training – Seattle, WA
Waldorf Institute of Southeastern Michigan – Ann Arbor, MI
The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth – Keene, NH
Great Lakes Waldorf Institute – Milwaukee, WI