



Orientation for Site Visits to Schools and Centers

2019-20

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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 school 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 early childhood program(s), and to review the health of the institution or program as a whole. The Site Visit Report is not meant to focus on specific pedagogical practices of individual teachers or to reflect the visitor's personal preferences for classroom practices.

You will be seeking to gain as full a picture as possible of the early childhood program(s) 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 also helpful if you can offer a broader picture of the work and activities in the wider Waldorf early childhood movement.

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

Preparing for the Site Visit

Prior to the site visit, the school or program should send you:

- The site visit report form
- A copy of their 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 III)
- WECAN Shared Principles (see Appendix IV)
- WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix V and VI)

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 school or 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 \$.58 per mile.

- For programs in Mexico, Puerto Rico and on tribal lands, a lesser honorarium may be mutually agreed upon by the school and the individual site visitor prior to the visit.

- Schools and programs are expected to pay the full honorarium for the site visit unless the site visitor agrees to a different amount in advance.
- Please note: If you are carrying out the WECAN site visit as part of an AWSNA support visit, AWSNA will be paying your honorarium, rather than the school. AWSNA's honorarium rate is \$300 per day, divided between the support team members, so you will be receiving less than the WECAN-recommended rate. The school will still be responsible for travel expenses and any meals or accommodations needed.
- 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 another school 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; most schools ask for a written statement. It is important to confirm the financial arrangements (as well as other logistical details) before the visit.

Carrying Out the Site Visit

Please see Appendix II for a sample schedule for a site visit.

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 of the school and early childhood program(s). 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 IV 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 school or program is not a static picture. Therefore, an important consideration is your perception of the strength of the school's or program's foundation and its ability to meet unforeseen challenges in a positive way.

- In larger schools, it may not be possible to observe all the early childhood groups, as some may not be in session on the day of your visit. It is always important to visit a representative cross-section of all programs including childcare, parent-infant, parent-child, nursery/preschool, kindergarten, before school, afternoon and extended care. Please spend at least 30 minutes in each program. (See Appendix II for sample schedule)
- As you observe each class, consider the following qualities:
 - Love and warmth: How are the social relations within the class? 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 teachers and in the spaces and activities of the program?
 - Meaningful adult activity: Is the work of the teacher 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 these qualities live in the kindergarten amongst both adults and children?
- The site visit is a time to focus on the early childhood program(s) as a whole rather than specific aspects of pedagogy as you would if you were mentoring or evaluating an individual teacher. In addition, your personal preferences for classroom practices should be set aside in favor of open-minded observation. If you see areas of real concern you may want to speak to the administrator of the school, and could offer a strong recommendation that the school arrange for individual 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 and teachers.

Listening and sharing

- Meeting with parents
 - Ask the school ahead of time to arrange for you to meet with several parents, perhaps those active in the parent organization or especially involved in the early childhood program(s); or the school could ask for parents to volunteer to meet with you. It is important for these parents to represent a cross-section of as many programs as possible, including childcare, parent-infant, parent-child,

nursery/preschool, kindergarten, before school, afternoon and extended care, if possible. 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 school or program, but rather helping the school see their strengths and challenges more clearly, to support them in their 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 in the early childhood program and in the full school?
 - What are your experiences of communication with the school and the early childhood program? How does the school/program deal with parent questions or concerns?
 - What do you see as the strengths of the early childhood program and the full school? What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- Meeting with an administrator
 - Ask the school in advance to schedule you some time with an administrative representative (see sample schedule). You may want to meet with the administrator, but if it seems that admissions/enrollment may be a significant question, you might instead ask to meet with the enrollment director.
 - In general, you will want to learn whether actual administrative practices are consistent with the information given in the self-study and to get a sense for the general health of the school or program and the relationship of the early childhood program(s) to the full school.
 - Sample questions to ask (depending on what you have read in the self-study and may wish to explore further):
 - Are the early childhood teachers active in the committee work of the school? How active are they in the life of the full school (if relevant) and its decision-making processes?
 - How is the school working with Shared Principle C6 regarding the cultivation of socially-responsible practices in the setting of tuitions, tuition assistance, and salaries and benefits?
 - Are the administrator and the College or core group aware of the WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education? How is the school working toward meeting these expectations in terms of new hiring and support for ongoing professional development, mentoring, and evaluation of current teachers?

- Are there job descriptions for all positions in the school, including assistants?
 - Is the administrator aware of issues posing a challenge to the early childhood department?
 - How is the school working with parent/adult education, especially in the early childhood area?
- Meeting with Board members
 - Meeting with one or more Board members provides an opportunity to hear the Board's perspective and for the Board to become more aware of WECAN.
 - Sample questions to ask:
 - How is the financial health of the school and how does this affect the early childhood work?
 - Is the Board aware of the WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education? How is the school working toward meeting these expectations in terms of new hiring and support for ongoing professional development, mentoring, and evaluation of current teachers?
 - How is the school working with Shared Principle C6 regarding the cultivation of socially-responsible practices in the setting of tuitions, tuition assistance, and salaries and benefits? How is this principle applied to assistants, parent/child leaders, and extended care teachers and childcare providers? Do faculty receive any tuition remission for their children?
 - Is the Board aware of any issues posing a challenge to the health of the early childhood department?
- Meeting with the teachers
 - In planning the site visit with your contact person, it is good to make clear that you will need at least 90 minutes to meet with as many early childhood teachers who carry responsibility for each of the programs as possible, including parent-infant, parent-child, childcare and afternoon teachers. If assistants can attend as well, that is ideal. Some of the teachers may need to make arrangements for a substitute and more than one meeting may be required in order to meet with all teachers.
 - This meeting is a key aspect of the site visit. It will allow you to hear from the teachers on any questions you may have and any challenges they have identified in their self-study. You will want to encourage an open conversation about their work in which you can offer support through your observations and insights. It will be important to have a quiet space where an uninterrupted meeting can take place.

- Possible topics to address in the conversation:
 - WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix V & VI): Meeting these expectations is *a process*. WECAN is looking for policies and practices for working toward meeting them; for example, a policy of hiring new faculty who have completed or are in process of completing a WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education program; expectations for ongoing professional development, mentoring, and teacher evaluation; planning for financial support for professional development.
 - Early childhood meetings: Do these occur regularly? Are assistants and care providers included? Do the meetings include study, child study and artistic work? Do they regularly review policies, events, programs, and parent work?
 - You might ask if the teachers make time to observe each others' classes.
 - What do the teachers see as their main strengths and challenges?
 - How are the teachers working with practical activities both indoors and out?
 - Is the school experiencing a higher need for childcare or other expanded programs? If so, how is this being addressed?
 - Are adult caregivers on a path of inner development?
 - The conversation is also 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. Be sure to consider all programs when considering commendations and recommendations. It is a good practice to choose a limited number of fairly specific commendations and recommendations to avoid overwhelming the faculty and to encourage them to focus on what you consider most important for their 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 faculty members. In this case, you may wish to have a phone conversation with the early childhood contact person 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 both the admin and EC contacts at the school ***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 school 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 school to write an addendum which we will file with your report.
- Once the report is in final form, please remind the school 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 @ \$.58/mile _____

Tolls (receipt attached): _____

TOTAL _____

Site Visitor Signature: _____

Appendix II: Sample Schedule

Here is a sample schedule, which can be adapted to the situation. Your plans will depend in part on the number of early childhood groups in the program and your sense of how much time you want to spend meeting with the various constituents of the school. This is something you will want to work out with your early childhood contact person before the visit.

You will need some time to eat lunch (find out how your lunch will be provided), and also some time to look at school documents and 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 early childhood teachers and caregivers. Be sure to let them know in advance that you will need a quiet space for this.

Day 1	7:45-8:15	check in and tour school
	8:15-9:00	meet with parents
	9:00-9:45	observe a kindergarten or preschool class
	9:45-10:00	break
	10:00-10:45	observe a parent-child class
	10:45-11:30	observe a kindergarten or preschool class
	11:30-12:15	meet with Board member
	12:15-1:30	lunch break and quiet time to reflect on observations and meetings and prepare for afternoon
	1:30-2:15	observe afternoon program
	2:15-3:15	meet with administrator
3:15-4:00	observe aftercare program	
Day 2	7:45-8:15	observe before school care
	8:15-9:00	observe a kindergarten or preschool class
	9:00-9:45	observe childcare program
	9:45-10:00	break
	10:00-11:30	meet with afternoon teachers and caregivers
	11:30-12:15	observe a kindergarten or preschool class
	12:15-1:30	lunch break and quiet time to reflect on observations and meetings and prepare for afternoon
	1:30-3:00	meet with morning teachers and caregivers

Appendix III: 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 IV: 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
The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth – Keene, NH
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
Great Lakes Waldorf Institute – Milwaukee, WI
Little Lions Teacher Training Institute – Thunder Bay, ON
Sound Circle Center Teacher Training – Seattle, WA
Waldorf Institute of Southeastern Michigan – Ann Arbor, MI