



Site Visitor Orientation

for WECAN site visits to schools aligning WECAN
Full Membership renewal with AWSNA Full
Member accreditation

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. To help you prepare for the 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.

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. However, please be aware that the school that you will be visiting is going through an AWSNA accreditation and their WECAN renewal decision will be based, in part, on the findings of the AWSNA accreditation team. In light of that, this site visit is slightly different from a site visit to a school not engaging in AWSNA accreditation. Your visit will be focused solely on the early childhood program.

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

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
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membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org

Purpose of the Site Visit

The purpose of the site visit is to address WECAN shared principles that are not covered in the AWSNA accreditation process, by providing:

- a. Observation of the early childhood program
- b. Review of the completed *WECAN Abbreviated Self-Study*
- c. Focused support time between WECAN and the school's early childhood program faculty

You will be seeking to gain as full a picture as possible of the early childhood program in relation to the completed abbreviated WECAN self-study. It is also helpful if you can offer to the school a broader picture of the work and activities in the wider Waldorf early childhood movement.

Preparing for the Site Visit

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

- A copy of their completed *Abbreviated WECAN Self-Study*
- Their previous *WECAN Site Visit Report*.
- *WECAN Site Visit Report Form*

Please familiarize yourself with all of these documents in preparation for the visit. Take particular notice of the recommendations from the previous site visit and be sure that you are familiar with the WECAN Shared Principles and WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix III and IV below).

If the school has not forwarded these documents to you two weeks prior to your visit, please contact them to remind them to do so.

Honorarium, Expenses

- The school 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.
- 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.
- 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

A site visitor has three responsibilities: observing; listening and sharing; and completing the site visit report.

Observing

- You will be weighing the school's description of the program (as shared in the WECAN abbreviated self-study) against actual practices of the early childhood program. Are these consistent with one another?
- 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 they these qualities live in the kindergarten amongst both adults and children?
- The site visit is a time to focus on the early childhood program 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 also include this in the report, 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 areas, preferably while they are 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 a few parents from the early childhood program. 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.
 - 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 in the early childhood program 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?
 - What are your experiences of communication with the early childhood program? How does the program deal with parent questions or concerns?
 - What do you see as the strengths of the early childhood program? What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- Meeting with the teachers
 - In planning the site visit with your contact person, it is good to make clear that you will need an hour or hour-and-a-half to meet with the early childhood teachers who carry responsibility for the program. If assistants can attend as well, that is ideal. Some of the teachers may need to make arrangements for a substitute. 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 reflect on your visit and hear from the teachers about the program. 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:
 - WECAN Expectations for Early Childhood Teacher Education (see Appendix IV): 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?
 - Do the teachers make time to observe each other's 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 the administrative and early childhood contacts at the school ***within 30 days of the visit.***

- After sending your completed report electronically to both the WECAN early childhood and administrative contacts at the school, 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 @ \$.54/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 school or program, your sense of how much time you want to spend meeting with the faculty and whether the school is having a one or two-day visit. 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 you want to share about your observations when you meet with the early childhood teachers.

Day 1	7:45-8:15	check in and tour school
	8:15-9:00	meet with parents
	9:00-9:45	observe childcare, parent-child, preschool or kindergarten
	9:45-10:00	break
	10:00-12:15	observe childcare, parent-child, preschool or kindergarten
	12:15-1:30	lunch break and quiet time to reflect on observations and meetings and prepare for afternoon
	1:30-2:15	meet with morning program teachers and caregivers
	2:15-4:00	observe afternoon/aftercare programs
Day 2	7:45-8:15	observe before school care and/or morning drop-off
	8:15-9:45	observe childcare, parent-child, preschool or kindergarten
	9:45-10:00	break
	10:00-11:30	meet with afternoon teachers and caregivers
	11:30-12:15	observe childcare, parent-child, preschool or kindergarten
	12:15-1:30	lunch break and quiet time to reflect on observations and meetings and prepare for afternoon
	1:30-3:00	final meeting with all available teachers and caregivers

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