Handbook for Regional Representatives

2017-18
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WECAN Regional Representatives
2017-18

NORTHEAST/QUEBEC/MARITIME PROVINCES

Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Rhode Island, and Vermont
Su Rubinoff
Wakefield, RI
401-783-5556
surubinoff@gmail.com
Somer Serpe
Great Barrington, MA
413-884-2874
somerserpe@gmail.com

Mid-Atlantic

Mary Maschal
Ballston Spa, NY
518-587-4629
mmaschal@waldorfsaratoga.org

Southeast

Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia
Lisa Bechmann
Rockville, MD
443-352-7892
lmb619@gmail.com

Great Lakes

Ontario and Western New York
Heather Church
Richmond Hill, ON
905-780-7819
church1888@gmail.com

Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Western Pennsylvania
Maggie Crawford
Dexter, MI
718-637-9456
mcrawford@steinerschool.org

Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin
Martha Flores
West Allis, WI
414-256-0934
martha.flowers@tamarackwaldorf.org
Jane Danner-Sustar
Milwaukee, WI
414-234-7436
jane.danner-sustar@tamarackwaldorf.org
TEXAS-MEXICO-SOUTHWEST-ROCKIES

Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and Alberta
Laurie Clark
Denver, CO
303-698-9604
laurieclark525@comcast.net
Betty Jane Enno
Austin, TX
512-922-5577
msbettyjane@yahoo.com

Mexico
Louise deForest
Mill River, MA
413-229-0470
loudeforest@gmail.com

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

British Columbia
Astrid Lackner
Brackendale, BC, Canada
604-898-1338
astridlackner99@gmail.com

Alaska, Idaho, and Washington
Vanessa Kohlhaas
Langley, WA
360-221-2270
butterflygarden@gmail.com
Dyanne Harshman
Langley, WA
360-507-3013
dyannedeagmail.com

Oregon
Sacha Etzel
Cornelius, OR
503-329-4982
sachaetzel@yahoo.com

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Diane David
San Francisco, CA
415-751-0798
dianejohndavid@sbcglobal.net
Dagmar Eisele
San Francisco, CA
415-826-4159
dagmar.b.eisele@gmail.com

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA/HAWAII

Heike Adamsberger
Santa Monica, CA
213-840-3170
wecan.heike@gmail.com
Kim Raymond
Kula, HI
808-268-0497
alohakimr@gmail.com
WECAN’s Membership Mission

*The following thoughts may be of help in speaking with new initiatives, programs newly seeking WECAN membership, or programs who need to be encouraged toward renewal of their membership.*

WECAN’s mission is to foster a new cultural impulse for the work with the young child from pre-birth to age seven. Based on an anthroposophical understanding of human development, WECAN is committed to protecting and nurturing childhood as a foundation for renewing human culture.

The Path to Membership, including membership renewal, is designed to support the growth and development of Waldorf early childhood education among our 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.

**Sometimes schools ask why they should seek or maintain WECAN membership,** especially if they are also members of AWSNA. For talking points, please see (and refer them to) the *WECAN Membership Handbook*. Page 4 lists WECAN’s activities on behalf of our members, and page 10 and 12 list the benefits of Associate and Full Membership. A key aspect to point out is the strengthening of the work as a result of the self-study and site visit processes.

Another helpful reference is **Appendix I: WECAN’s Unique Contributions to Waldorf Education and AWSNA Member Schools**, a document which is sent out to member schools with their acceptance or renewal letters.
Your Role in the Membership Process

The WECAN Membership Handbook and the Application and Renewal Instructions offer a step-by-step guide for you and the school/programs. There are Instructions tailored for schools/centers and home programs—Associate Membership application or renewal, and Full Membership application or renewal.

Your specific responsibilities in the membership process:

1) Following up with schools on the renewal reminders in the fall;
2) Assisting programs in finding a site visitor, and helping clarify processes if needed;
3) Reading the self-studies and site visit reports of applicants and renewing schools/programs and making recommendations about acceptance or renewal;
4) Initiating plans for regional gatherings of early childhood colleagues (See Section 2 of your binder for details);
5) Collaborating as needed with AWSNA, including, if possible, attending at least one regional delegates’ meeting each year. (See Section 4 of your binder for details on collaborating with AWSNA.)

In the sections that follow, details for each of these responsibilities are offered.

1) MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTIFICATION

Spring reminder: In the spring preceding each membership year, you will be copied on reminder emails to schools and programs in your region that are due to renew their membership the following year. The membership office sends these notices to make sure they are aware of the need to renew, to remind them to budget for the site visit, and to confirm that we have the correct early childhood contact person. You need not contact the schools at this time.

Fall reminder: In late September you will be copied again on reminders to these same programs. Following these reminders, please reach out to programs in your region to encourage them to get started on the self-study process and to recommend a site visitor from our site visitor list. Some schools/programs may require more active involvement on your part than others!

If a school is an Associate Member of AWSNA, they may be able to fulfill the WECAN site visit requirement through their AWSNA support visit. (See Section 4 of your binder for details.) This is sometimes complicated to arrange, and requires working with the regional AWSNA LC member, but it is a financial benefit to the school since AWSNA pays the honorarium. The AWSNA support visitor must write a WECAN site visit report. In this case, the visitor’s honorarium will be less than the WECAN-recommended amount, since AWSNA budgets $300 per day and this is divided between the team members. In addition, in some cases the site visitor will not have as much time with the early childhood teachers.

WECAN Associate Members renew membership every three years. An application to move up to Full Membership can be made at any time, but a self-study update and site visit will always be required. It is good if Regional Reps can stay in touch especially with new or struggling schools during the 3-year period to offer support as needed.
**WECAN Full Members** renew every five years unless they are part of a school accredited by AWSNA. In that case, their renewal rhythm may be aligned with the AWSNA schedule and they may engage in a combined process. Alignment is overseen by the Membership Coordinator; see Section 4 of your binder for details.

**Deadline for site visits:** The deadline for the site visit is February 1 of the renewal year. If winter weather is likely to be a factor, the visit should be scheduled for fall or late fall, and/or schedule a “snow date.” In exceptional cases, the school can request a deadline extension by contacting the Membership Coordinator. An extension can be granted once a site visit date has actually been set, and this needs to be done by February 1.

Schools or programs that miss a deadline are considered overdue. If two deadlines are missed, the Membership Committee will consider whether the program should be dropped from our membership. If it is an AWSNA-affiliated program, we will need to consult with the regional LC member about the situation.

2) **FACILITATING SITE VISITS**

**Documents for the site visitor:** The school or program is responsible for providing the site visitor with the appropriate Orientation and site visit report form. However, if you or the school let me know the name and e-mail address of a school’s site visitor, I will be happy to send the visitor these documents, in hopes that this will make things go more smoothly.

**Purpose of the site visit:** The purpose of the WECAN site visit is to identify strengths and challenges and to offer commendations and recommendations for the overall growth and development of the school/program on the path toward Full Membership in WECAN. It is also helpful to the school/program if the site visitor can offer a broader picture of the work and activities in our Waldorf early childhood movement. The site visit is not meant to serve as pedagogical mentoring or teacher evaluation.

While the decision on the membership application or renewal will be made by the Regional Representative(s) and the Membership Coordinator (renewals) or Membership Committee (applications), we rely on the Site Visit Report to round out the picture presented in the Self-Study. The site visitor is asked to express in the report any concerns about the applicant’s readiness for membership or for membership renewal. We do not ask the site visitor to recommend acceptance (or not).

**Length of site visit:** Some larger schools or schools who are in need of additional support have wished that the visit had been longer. Schools are encouraged to arrange for a longer visit if finances are not an obstacle. You may want to urge schools to consider this.

**Honorarium and travel 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 2-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. New applicants for
which this is a serious financial challenge may contact Melissa Lyons at 845-352-1690 or info@waldorfearlychildhood.org to discuss temporary adjustment to first-time dues. Some site visitors may be willing to accept a lower honorarium for small home programs.

Cost of a substitute for the site visitor: 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 one-day visit. In this way the school extends a hand of colleagueship to another school in the region. The site visitor should discuss this with the appropriate person(s) in his/her school in advance. The Membership Coordinator is available as a resource if support is needed.

Potential site visitors: Included in the Regional Rep binder is a list of potential site visitors for your region. These are people who have indicated an interest in serving as visitors and who are approved to do so by WECAN; being on the list does not constitute a WECAN “recommendation.” It is up to you and the school/program to determine if a particular person would be a good match. If you and a school/program wish to invite an experienced Waldorf early childhood educator who is not on the list, please let me know in advance so that I can follow up with the potential visitor and get their name added to the list. We are asking potential new site visitors to submit a resume and letter of recommendation, unless he/she is personally known to the Regional Rep or Membership Committee.

Site Visit documents: Please become familiar with the Orientation for Site Visitors (in your binder and on the website). There is a separate version for home-based programs. Also on the website are Site Visit Guidelines. These Guidelines contain instructions for the school/program in preparing for the visit.

3) READING THE SELF-STUDIES

Please read the self-study as soon as possible; you will be the first to read it. If you feel that the self-study does not address the questions completely or adequately, please ask the school or care provider to revise it accordingly, offering practical suggestions for its improvement. We want the site visitor to have as complete a picture as possible to help prepare for the visit.

The school/program is asked to send this document to the Membership Coordinator at the same time. If there are concerns, we can discuss them before you contact the school/program, if you feel it would be helpful.

4) READING THE SITE VISIT REPORT

The Site Visit Report is due within 30 days of the visit. The site visitor sends the report to the school or provider, giving them an opportunity to request corrections in case of misunderstandings or mistakes in information. The visitor may decide whether/how to amend the original report. If there is not agreement on the report, the school may write an addendum which will be filed with the report. Then the school or provider sends you and the Membership Coordinator the final version of the report. Please be aware of this time frame and contact the school if you do not receive the report in a timely way.

Your recommendation: Once you have read the site visit report, please let the Membership Coordinator know of your recommendation regarding acceptance or renewal. If you have concerns about
the school’s application or renewal, we can have a phone call. Occasionally we may decide to add recommendations to those of the site visitor.

**Associate Members applying to move up to Full Membership:** Criteria for Full Membership are listed in the Membership Handbook. Associate Members should be in the process of becoming aligned with the WECAN Shared Principles; Full Members should demonstrate alignment with the Shared Principles. In addition, you might consider the following: A school/program ready for Full Membership should generally have had a good start and gained a solid foundation. While there may have been challenges in its biography, a measure of a school’s maturity and strength is its ability to have recognized, met, and overcome these challenges. Also, a school ready for Full Membership must be well-organized enough to follow the procedures we have laid out, including using the appropriate forms!

An application to move up to Full Membership can be made at any time, but a self-study update and site visit will always be required.

New/first-time WECAN applicants should apply for Associate Membership, not directly to Full Membership. (There may be rare exceptions, for example if an experienced, trained teacher has been offering a well-established home program for a number of years. In such a case, I will talk with the person and make a decision.)

**WECAN expectations for teacher training, mentoring/evaluation, and professional development:** School/program policies regarding the hiring of teachers with Waldorf early childhood training, providing mentoring and outside evaluation of teachers, and fostering ongoing professional development for teachers and staff are important considerations in the health of an early childhood program. Please see Appendix II, “The Training of Waldorf Early Childhood Educators: WECAN Expectations” and the accompanying letter. These Expectations also appear in the *Membership Handbook.*

Meeting these expectations is a process. WECAN is looking for school 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 recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education program; expectations for ongoing professional development, mentoring, and teacher evaluation; planning for financial support for professional development.

Site visitors are not asked to take responsibility for interpreting/upholding these expectations, since they may not fully understand them yet. The Regional Rep and/or Membership Coordinator may decide to add specific recommendations as an addendum to the site visit report if needed.

**Membership decisions** are made as follows:

- **Applications:** The Regional Rep(s) and Membership Coordinator make a recommendation; the final decision is made by the Membership Coordinator and the WECAN Coordinator.
- **Renewals:** The Regional Rep(s) makes a recommendation; the decision is made by the Membership Coordinator.

All schools/programs are notified first by e-mail, and then by a letter, when their renewal or application has been accepted. The e-mail will be copied to you, and you will receive an electronic copy of the
acceptance letter. New and renewing Full Members receive a membership certificate. A membership process survey is included with the acceptance letter, inviting comments from the schools on the membership process they have just completed. The Membership Coordinator responds to all these surveys and addresses issues or concerns that may be expressed.

5) PLANNING REGIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD GATHERINGS

Regional gatherings and conferences offer important opportunities for colleagues to meet one another, share questions and experiences, and participate in deepening their work. These are a way for schools/programs to experience a connection to WECAN through the Regional Rep(s). In some regions, colleagues meet very informally in small gatherings; in other regions, these meetings have evolved into large regional conferences.

We are grateful for the support that Regional Representatives offer in the planning of these conferences. More extensive guidelines for planning conferences, including book sales and the handling of the budgetary/financial aspect are given in Section 2 of the Regional Rep binder.

6) COLLABORATING WITH AWSNA

WECAN and AWSNA have agreed on the possibility of collaborating in specific ways in membership processes for Associate and Full members. This collaboration continues to be a work in progress.

Please see Section 4 of the Regional Rep binder for details about:

1) Coordinating Associate Member renewal site visits with AWSNA support visits;
2) Combining WECAN Full Member renewal with AWSNA accreditation;
3) Regional Rep reports at regional AWSNA delegates’ meetings;
4) Contact information for AWSNA Leadership Council members.

Please note that WECAN Associate Members applying to move up to Full Membership must have a separate WECAN Site Visit and cannot use an AWSNA support visit for this purpose.

AWSNA regional conferences: Your LC rep may ask you to help with these conferences by attending and by helping ensure that early childhood discussions or workshops are included. The annual regional WECAN gathering can sometimes be held in conjunction with the AWSNA gathering if this seems beneficial from time to time.

Keeping Files on the Schools in Your Region

School contact information: Our most recent contact information is included in your binder. The WECAN Membership Office Administrator, Susan Wallendorf, will attempt to keep information updated. Please help us by letting us know of changes you become aware of— the early childhood contact or administrative contact— so that we can be sure all the schools receive Gateways and updates!

School documents: You will probably want to keep the following documents on file; you may choose to keep them in paper form as well as electronically.
o WECAN letters of acceptance and renewal;
o Site Visit Reports (or a copy or summary of the Commendations and Recommendations);
o Any correspondence of note with the school;
o At your discretion, Self-Studies and Self-Study Updates.

Susan Wallendorf (ofcmembership@waldorfearlychildhood.org) also keeps these documents on file, and she can forward them to you or to a school on request.

Additional Information

Regional reports: Please be prepared to write and submit brief reports on regional activity when requested for WECAN news updates. These might include plans for, or a report of, your regional gathering.

Regional Reps as site visitors: We recommend that every Regional Rep make at least one site visit each year. This will help you keep in touch with the membership process, strengthen your connection with the schools in your region, and perhaps inspire you to make suggestions about how we can strengthen the effectiveness of the visits. However, it is not expected that Regional Reps carry out every site visit in your region or visit every school. We would like to cultivate as many potential site visitors as possible.

Expenses for home-based providers: WECAN is making an effort to reach out to home programs and to make our membership process accessible to them. If a provider says that the site visit honorarium followed closely by a dues payment will make membership costs prohibitive, please encourage her to contact Melissa Lyons in the WECAN Office at 845-352-1690 or info@waldorfearlychildhood.org to ask whether special arrangements might be made for the first year’s dues payment. We do expect all programs to pay the full site visit honorarium, though in some cases a site visitor may be willing to accept less for a small home program.

New applicants: When the office receives an application from a prospective new member in your region, a copy of the form will be forwarded to you. It would be nice if you could contact the applicant, introduce yourself, and offer help and support for the application process.

Introducing the WECAN Staff

The following is a list of the WECAN staff, here to serve you in your work with the regions.

Susan Howard, WECAN Coordinator
showard@waldorfearlychildhood.org, 413-549-5930: Susan carries the overview of WECAN and our membership activity. She is responsible for the major communications to members (Gateways, News Updates), writes grant proposals to fund projects, tracks the activities of task forces or working groups and represents WECAN internationally and in relation to AWSNA. Susan is a founding member of the WECAN Board and coordinates its activity. She works for WECAN half-time from her home office in Amherst, MA. She is also a half-time member of the Coordinating Group of IASWECE (International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education).
Melissa Lyons, WECAN Office Administrator/Bookkeeper
info@waldorfearlychildhood.org, 845-352-1690: Melissa receives all the general WECAN inquiries. She coordinates the Individual Memberships, sends out dues invoices for individual and organizational memberships, handles book orders and sales, serves as our bookkeeper, and works with the publications processes. Melissa works full-time in Spring Valley.

Laura Mason, WECAN Membership Coordinator
membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org, 425-837-9192: Laura is the first stop for most Regional Rep questions and concerns. She oversees the activity of applications and renewals, composes membership documents and communications, and supports the regional work. She is also the WECAN representative on the AWSNA Leadership Council, and works part-time from her home office in Issaquah, WA.

Susan Wallendorf, WECAN Membership Office Administrator
ofcmembership@waldorfearlychildhood.org, 443-562-9414: Susan cares for our database and membership documents. She sends out acceptance letters and membership certificates, compiles the Regional Rep binders, and sends out school contact information to the Regional Reps. Susan works part-time from her home office in Baltimore, MD.

Holly Koteen-Soule, WECAN Teacher Education Coordinator
teachered@waldorfearlychildhood.org. Holly is the chair of the WECAN Teacher Education Committee and our representative on the AWSNA Teacher Educators Network (TEN). She oversees the membership processes for WECAN teacher education institutes. She works part-time from her home in Langley, WA.

Sarah Arnold, WECAN Public Policy and Outreach Coordinator
syarnold@waldorfearlychildhood.org. Sarah represents WECAN in collaborative activities with other organizations.

WECAN Publications and Communications

Nancy Blanning, Gateways Editor, Denver, CO, nblanning@waldorfearlychildhood.org, 303-534-3462
Nancy compiles and edits Gateways in her home office in Denver, CO. She is also the WECAN Board chair and chairperson of the Publication Committee.

Donna Miele, Publications Manager, Nanuet, NY, publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org
Donna works for WECAN on a part-time basis. She prepares WECAN Books and other materials for publication and assists with the production of Gateways.

Laura Miller, Communications Coordinator, Amherst, MA, communications@waldorfearlychildhood.org
Laura works for WECAN on a part-time basis. She carries responsibility for the WECAN website, Facebook and Instagram, advertising, sponsorships, and other communications.
APPENDIX I
WECAN’S Unique Contributions to Waldorf Education and AWSNA Member Schools

Early childhood programs are the gateway for most of the families who enroll and sustain enrollment in the Waldorf schools. While parents are newly forming their family life, they find strength and support in the care and attention the Waldorf early childhood educator provides them. Support for parents and families in creating a healthy home life in harmony with the Waldorf school’s values is critical in building a core enrollment of families who are thinking, feeling, and acting in the world as representatives of Waldorf education.

Programs for the very young child allow families to explore Waldorf education, receive supportive attention to their questions and concerns, and find the community they are seeking for themselves and their child. Early childhood educators generally spend more hours in direct contact with parents than teachers in any other section of the school. These frequent parent interactions help families build a home life of habits and care that accords with the Waldorf teachers’ work through classroom life in creating fertile ground in the child for future academic work. Waldorf early childhood educators also nurture the seedlings of commitment so parents can be well rooted in their dedication to their child’s education in a Waldorf school. This commitment contributes to sustained enrollment in Waldorf elementary schools.

Time, attention, and interest from WECAN are needed to continue to deepen our schools’ early childhood programs by educating and supporting our teachers and keeping them current with contemporary educational offerings and research. Some of the important ways in which WECAN strengthens the early childhood programs in Waldorf schools are described below:

Through its Path to Membership WECAN provides collegial support to its organizational member schools and programs in their development. This support includes the membership process of self-study and peer review of early childhood educational practices. Site visits, regional gatherings, and early childhood conferences allow WECAN to research and harvest the current needs of programs in the vast geography of North America.

WECAN Books provide resources needed by early childhood teachers on many aspects of child development, therapeutic approaches to early childhood education, teacher development, mentoring and teacher review, practical activities for parent/child, nursery and kindergarten classes, resources for working with parents, and much more.

WECAN brings together collaborative research groups to focus on issues of concern in the Waldorf early childhood movement. These have included groups working on birth to three and childcare, meeting the needs of the older child in kindergarten, mentoring, teacher review, the transition from kindergarten to school, and work with medical doctors.

WECAN works to strengthen the training of Waldorf early childhood educators through its Teacher Education Committee and a Path to Membership for teacher education institutes based on guidelines and shared principles developed in collaboration with IASWECE. WECAN brings together early childhood trainers from throughout North America, providing opportunities to exchange healthy practices and improve the quality of the preparation of Waldorf early childhood educators, and offers travel support to North American trainers attending international Waldorf early childhood trainers’ meetings every two years in Europe.
WECAN works in partnership with the world early childhood movement as a Full Member of the **International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE)** with two representatives on the IASWECE Council. This allows us to share research, news, and an awareness of the developing worldwide movement with North American early childhood educators, through e-newsletters, conference offerings, and publications. WECAN also raises funds to support North American Waldorf early childhood educators in participating in international Waldorf early childhood conferences.

WECAN **collaborates on behalf of Waldorf Education with organizations concerned with** a host of early childhood specific interests outside of our immediate movement that have an impact on Waldorf education. This collaboration includes work on questions of standardization, assessment of quality in early childhood programs, and advocacy for child-centered early education and healthy childhood.

We welcome further discussion and questions about the benefits of membership in WECAN.

Nancy Blanning, WECAN Board Chair (nblanning@waldorfearlychildhood.org)
Susan Howard, WECAN Coordinator (showard@waldorfearlychildhood.org)
Laura Mason, WECAN Membership Coordinator and AWSNA Leadership Council Member for WECAN (membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org)

Members of the WECAN Board:
Sarah Arnold, Harvard, MA
Nancy Blanning, Denver, CO
Heather Church, Toronto, ONT
Louise deForest, Mill River, MA
Adrienne Doucette, Bellingham, WA
Susan Howard, Amherst, MA
Ruth Ker, Duncan, BC
Holly Koteen-Soule, Langley, WA
Magdalena Toran, Conway, MA
APPENDIX II
Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education: WECAN Expectations

[The following section is an excerpt from the WECAN Membership Handbook.]

For early childhood educators who carry responsibility for the care and education of the child from birth to school entrance, completion of a Waldorf early childhood teacher education program recognized by WECAN is expected.

Recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs offer a minimum of 400 class contact hours, plus mentored teaching or extensive practicum or internship experiences. The Shared Principles for Early Childhood Teacher Education describe the course content and criteria for recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs.

This is the expectation for lead nursery, pre-school, and kindergarten teachers, lead extended care providers, and parent-child class leaders in Waldorf schools and early childhood settings. 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.jaswece.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 (but not required).

Ongoing participation in mentoring, evaluation, conferences, deepening courses, and workshops is an essential part of the continuing professional development of the Waldorf early childhood educator.

For Curriculum and Course Content Areas included in WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs, and a list of WECAN-member programs/institutes, please refer to the WECAN Membership Handbook.

Frequently-Asked Questions about the WECAN Expectations for Teacher Education—A Letter from the WECAN Coordinator

January 2014

To WECAN Member Schools and Early Childhood Programs,

In 2012, WECAN published a Statement of Expectations for the training of Waldorf early childhood educators. The statement is intended to serve as a stimulus for Waldorf early childhood programs to take up the question of training among their carrying faculty, in the hopes of deepening and renewing the work with children.
For Full WECAN Member schools, WECAN expects the following:

- The school demonstrates 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 400+-hour WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education program.

- If a school 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 school will strongly encourage the teacher to enroll in a part-time training course and will provide some financial support if possible. (Often there are AWSNA teacher training loan funds available for support as well).

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

During its WECAN membership renewal process, a school provides information about the level of training of each of its early childhood faculty members. The school 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.

If during the renewal process it becomes apparent that a WECAN member school 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 school around this question, to support the school 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.

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.

Sincerely,

Susan Howard
WECAN Coordinator