Healthy Organizational Practices On-line Resource-Section II

Section II EARLY CHILDHOOD FACULTY/STAFF RESOURCES

1. **Introduction**
The young child’s need for a sense of safety and ease is met in a trusting relationship with an adult who is educated in child development, provides genuine warmth and practical care, and is consistently present. Trained Waldorf early childhood educators lead early childhood groups in schools, early childhood centers and home-based programs.

2. **General Overview on Roles and Responsibilities of the Educator**

2A **Lead teachers and Co-teachers**

“Lead teacher” is the term most often used for the early childhood educator who carries the responsibility for the pedagogical planning and activity, parent education and administrative reporting and duties of an early childhood group. Depending on the size of the group of children they may be accompanied in their work by an assistant. “Co-teachers“ are equal partners in this responsibility and organize themselves sharing the pedagogical components of the day.

Early-childhood educators who lead the morning portion of the day in a K–12 school are typically with children for 4–5 uninterrupted hours each day. They are usually full-time employees with benefits equal to those of class teachers. Many schools require or expect these educators to remain on campus until the end of the elementary-school day. One school schedules a break for the educator after the morning teaching hours and before afternoon activity. Another school has educators leave school at 1:00 p.m. and return for the weekly faculty meeting. Afternoon hours are typically used for contacting parents, attending to other early-childhood committee work (festivals, etc.), admissions activity, a weekly early-childhood faculty meeting, preparing marionette performances, tending the classroom environment, and other school committee participation. Generally, early-childhood staff is given time to attend to necessary professional activities related to their work with young children and their families.

Beyond school hours, full-time early-childhood educators participate in faculty meetings and study, and in other school committees, including the College of Teachers.

2B **Assistants**

An assistant is often assigned to work with a lead teacher in groups larger than 10-12 children or according to local regulations for child : adult ratios. The lead teacher determines the role and activity of the assistant according to the needs of the pedagogical
design for the group. The adults’ mutual respect and regard for each other’s work is essential to the quality of the children’s experience. Young children learn from imitation and work with colleagues is an opportunity to model respectful professional relationships. There are a variety of factors that influence the assigned or agreed upon activity of the assistant. Some of the factors include: if the assistant is in Waldorf teacher training or is a student teacher, or, if the assistant is inexperienced or experienced in working with this teacher or others in Waldorf settings.

If assistants are full time they are usually with children for the whole day (generally 8:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.) with a typical break of 45 minutes to one hour. As full-time employees they receive benefits and assume committee responsibilities as defined for support-faculty positions. Part-time assistants usually work a day that begins before the children arrive and includes time to help with classroom care after dismissal. They are paid hourly or in a wage scale assigned to other support and specialty faculty. Hourly assistants are paid for their hours with the children, classroom care and in mandatory meeting attendance.

2C Care providers, staffing patterns

Care providers usually staff the afternoon hours for programs in schools. There may be lead and assistant roles and responsibilities assigned depending on the size of the program. How many hours they work is determined on program design for hours of care offered and age groups, and if morning assistants continue work into the afternoon care hours.

The most successful extended day programs have a staff member who directs the program, is responsible for program design and needs, hires assistants and substitutes, and is also a care provider. These are typically full-time salaried faculty members who receive benefits. Programs with a dedicated director report continuity of leadership that contributes to program development and stability. Alternatives include staff paid by the hour for hours with the children, classroom care and time in mandatory meetings. One school created a full time staff position that combined leadership of the extended-day programs with the direction of the school’s summer programs.

Successful programs have reported a variety of staffing patterns. Below are some examples:

• The morning assistant remains through the afternoon and is a full-time salaried faculty member with benefits. The assistant takes a break during lunch and returns to care for the children until 3:00 p.m. as leader of the afternoon program. The children eat lunch with the morning teacher, and possibly an afternoon assistant who arrives at 11:30.

• The morning teacher stays with the children until 3:00. This allows the teacher to arrange activities usually reserved for the morning (circle, story, creative play, etc.) throughout the longer day. The teacher has a scheduled break. Other staff care for the
children from 3:00 to the end of the day (5:00–6:00 p.m. depending on the program definition).

- An extended-day director (full-time salaried with benefits) who is also a care provider joins the children at lunchtime and continues with the children throughout the afternoon, joined by afternoon assistants or the morning assistant who continues for the day.

- Extended-day staff arrive at noon and remain until the end of the day (5:00–6:00 p.m.). Sometimes this includes two or more caregivers, and sometimes staffing is decreased or increased at 3:00 p.m. depending on enrollment.

2D Parent-Child educators

Parent-child group leaders carry the responsibility for the pedagogical planning and activity, parent education and administrative reporting and duties associated with the group.

Parent-child group teachers are often paid hourly for the classroom hours, preparation time, classroom care and meeting attendance. Some of these teachers are full time staff teaching three-day or two-day classes along with the parent-child classes.

3. General Overview on Training and Qualifications and Continuing Education

What young children need most of all is ample time and space to explore the world and discover their precious human capacities through joyful play and imitation. This reality stands in sharp contrast to the dizzying pace and complex technology offered by modern life today.

Essential qualities for working as a Waldorf early childhood educator that are cultivated through professional training and lifelong professional development include:

- Love and respect for children as spiritual individuals who bring with them their own destinies and gifts

- The ability to create nurturing environments that support the needs of the young child

- A commitment to life-long self-development in becoming a model worthy of imitation by the child

- Skills for building collaborative relationships with parents and colleagues
There are several professional profiles within the field of Waldorf early childhood education. These are described below, along with minimum training requirements usually set by the school or local, state or provincial licensing agency for each:

- **A Lead Waldorf Kindergarten or Early Childhood Educator** usually works in a Waldorf School and carries responsibility for the developing the school’s early childhood programs, working with a mixed-age group of children from 3 to 6 years of age, and participating with others in carrying responsibility for the whole community. Local licensing statutes define minimum education and continuing education requirements for teachers and care providers. The lead teacher in morning programs is typically trained in an AWSNA-member training institute for Waldorf Education or commits to such training after hiring. Most schools require a B.A. degree.

- **A Lead Waldorf Pre-kindergarten or Nursery Educator** may also work in a Waldorf school setting and carry similar responsibilities, usually working, however, with children from 2 1/2 to 5 years of age. Some pre-kindergarten or nursery teachers run home-based programs in which they carry responsibility for all aspects of the program, including managing a business. Expectations for training and continuing education are often the same as with a lead kindergarten or early childhood educator.

- **A Waldorf Parent & Child Group Leader** is often the first Waldorf educator a parent meets. The parent & child group leader has the responsibility of modeling healthy parenting practices and introducing anthroposophical child development principles to new families in an inviting and non-judgmental way. Parent & child group leaders usually work with parents and their children up to the age of three; some also offer pre-natal and infant classes. A Parent-child educator is typically trained in an AWSNA-member training institute for Waldorf Education or commits to such training after hiring. Expectations for continuing education are often the same as with a lead teacher.

- **Waldorf Center-based Child Care Providers** offer all-day child care, or on-site after-school care for children of working parents, including the children of the school’s teachers and staff. **Home-based childcare providers** offer part-time or full-time care for young children in a home or in a larger home-like setting with more than one provider. This specialization includes important responsibilities with regard to safety, health and licensing. A childcare giver, like the parent and child group leader, may also be the means by which a family is first introduced to Waldorf educational principles.

- **Extended Care Providers in Waldorf Schools** must usually be at least 21 years old, have some college and have Waldorf training or its equivalent or are experienced working with young children and commit to continuing education for Waldorf education. Leaders in a school’s early-childhood department supervise the extended care providers in a school program. In programs where the young
children join elementary-aged groups later in the day, an early-childhood educator and a member of the elementary faculty carry supervision jointly. Where there is a director of extended care this is part of the director’s responsibilities. Directors have completed a Waldorf early childhood educator training.

- The role of assistant is typically held by an individual who is on the path to becoming a lead teacher or care provider. Working as an assistant offers valuable practical experience to those in training. For assistants and care providers most Waldorf Schools seek some college or training, previous experience, and some specific training in Waldorf early-childhood education. Some are willing to train their staff, and offer good mentoring.

While Waldorf training programs for these different professional profiles will have many common elements, there are also significant differences in the lengths of trainings and requirements for certification. Training programs will also have particular areas of emphasis based on the setting and ages of the children being served.

Training programs for Waldorf educators are based on Rudolf Steiner’s insights and research into the nature of the human being, referred to as anthroposophy. All Waldorf early childhood training programs include the study of child development, artistic work, development of relevant skills, and opportunities to observe and practice in Waldorf early childhood settings.

Full-time training programs generally provide students with more opportunities for personal development and a more extensive foundation in the anthroposophical basis of Waldorf education. Part-time training programs, ranging in length from two to four years, provide less extensive coursework and offer students more time between sessions to digest and practice what they are studying. Practitioner-based programs augment coursework with ongoing experiences working with young children in Waldorf settings, mentored by experienced Waldorf educators. Introductory and short courses tend to focus on basic knowledge and skills.

There are many considerations in choosing a training program - location, full or part-time options, and particular professional goals. The preparation for becoming a lead educator in a Waldorf kindergarten is typically more extensive than training for work in a home-based child-care center.

With all training courses, there is an expectation that students will continue with professional Waldorf development activities after completing their studies. Distinguishing characteristics and recommended levels of training for each specialization or professional profile are detailed in the chart below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Attitudes and Interests</strong></th>
<th>All Waldorf Early Childhood Educators</th>
<th>Lead Kindergarten or Nursery Teachers</th>
<th>Parent &amp; Child Group Leaders</th>
<th>Center or Home-based Caregivers and Extended Care Providers in Waldorf schools</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Core Content Areas of Study</strong></th>
<th>All Waldorf Early Childhood Educators</th>
<th>Lead Kindergarten or Nursery Teachers</th>
<th>Parent &amp; Child Group Leaders</th>
<th>Center or Home-based Caregivers and Extended Care Providers in Waldorf schools</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of Human Development &amp; Child Development (Birth-21), Role of Imitation and Play for the Young Child, Importance of Rhythm, Principles of Child Observation, Discipline in the First 7 years, Nature and Practice of Inner Work, Rudolf Steiner’s Social Ideas, Evolution of Human Consciousness, Role of Karma and Destiny in Self-Development</td>
<td>3,4,7,12-Fold Human Being, Child Study, Sensory Development in the first 7 years, First Grade Readiness and the Birth of the Etheric, Overview of Waldorf Education, Waldorf School Organization,</td>
<td>Significance of the Milestones of Walking, Speaking and Thinking in the first 3 years, Awareness of Parenting Resources, Knowledge of Waldorf Education, Understanding of Adult Education Principles</td>
<td>Understanding of the Importance of the Four Foundational Senses and Warmth, Archetypes of Home, Family and Neighborhood Play, Knowledge of Nutrition, Health, Safety and Hygiene, Program Administration, Licensing Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Cultivation of Capacities</strong></th>
<th>All Waldorf Early Childhood Educators</th>
<th>Lead Kindergarten or Nursery Teachers</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Competencies and Skills</strong></th>
<th>All Waldorf Early Childhood Educators</th>
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<tr>
<td>Skills in Singing, Music and Storytelling, Use of Appropriate Gesture and Speech, Creating a Health-Giving Environment, Healthy Communication with Parents &amp; Colleagues</td>
<td>Skills in Bringing Life Professions to the Classroom, Skills in Arts, Handcrafts &amp; Household Arts, Child Study</td>
<td>Skills in Demonstrating Support for Children, Speaking about Waldorf Education in a Way that is Accessible for New Families, Sharing Observations with Parents</td>
<td>Skills in Domestic Arts, Helping Children with Transitions, Clear and Timely Communications with Parents, Colleagues and Administration, Advocacy for Children</td>
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<th><strong>Recommended level of training</strong></th>
<th>All Waldorf Early Childhood Educators</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent on specialization</td>
<td>Waldorf Early Childhood Certificate</td>
<td>Waldorf Early Childhood Certificate</td>
<td>Waldorf Childcare Provider Certificate</td>
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The professional journey of an early childhood educator may begin with his or her training, but the journey of learning, changing and growing continues throughout one’s career. Professional development courses help teachers deepen their understanding and renew their commitment to becoming healthy models for the children in their care. The children themselves bring educators many challenges and opportunities for growth. Meeting those challenges out of compassion and helping the children with their questions of becoming continuously enrich an educator’s own life and journey of becoming.

See appendix for a list of the training programs and contact information for each specialization.

4. Working Together

4A General overview of the challenges and opportunities

The essentials of Waldorf early-childhood education and care guide and inform our work. When there are multiple groups within a school or center the culture of practices and events that has evolved there creates a framework for individuals to work within. Pedagogical decisions regarding program design that affect the cooperative work of all the educators are made within the whole faculty, or by a leadership group of early childhood faculty. Pedagogical differences are taken up for study, with final decisions made by either the whole early childhood faculty or a leadership group. Committed lines or systems of communication are key to harmonious coexistence of differences. (See Section II: 4E Resources).

Waldorf education recognizes seven-year cycles in child development, and in each period the pedagogical approach is different. These stages include early childhood (parent-child/infant groups, and mixed-age groups for nursery and kindergarten-age children); elementary school (grades 1–8); and high school (grades 9–12). We work differently with the children in each of these areas, and need specific knowledge, skills, and capacities to appropriately address the children’s various ages and developmental stages. The hours of child/student contact vary in each of these areas because of the different needs and qualities of each age group. Thus, there is no objective basis for comparing the work of teachers in different areas of the school in terms of “classroom hours.” In addition to teaching, faculties participate in the administration of their departments and of the school as a whole.

4B Faculty Meetings and the Early Childhood Faculty Group

The Early-Childhood Faculty Group

A school or center is built on the work of its faculty. Cultivating social practices that grow our interest in one another and develop professional skills will contribute to building the spiritual vessel to contain our work with children and their families. As
professionals, we gain appreciation for each other’s work, successes, and challenges through direct experience and our study of Waldorf Education. Educators in a school work with a vision of what lies ahead for the children. Early-childhood teachers need to cultivate an appreciation for the work of colleagues in the elementary and high school.

*What successful communications process is used between the care providers and the other educators working with a child?*

When children receive care from different adults throughout the day these adults must communicate with one another regularly to optimize continuity in service to the children and their families. The adults’ mutual respect and regard for each other’s work is essential to the quality of the children’s experience. Young children learn from imitation and work with colleagues is an opportunity to model respectful professional relationships.

Successful programs report regular weekly meetings and/or frequent informal contact among the educators. Extended care providers often keep journals to record their observations of children and particular situations, and pose questions regarding particular children to be carried by their colleagues.

Waldorf schools and early childhood centers participate in collaborative leadership processes. These take many forms. The freedom for our spiritual work and research arises from within the forms we build together and the leadership wherein we place our trust. A culture of meetings, communication protocols, and other collaborative practices within a school’s early-childhood department builds professional colleagueship, including mutual support for our work with children and families, study together, and departmental administration. Faculty members can seek training to learn how to provide guidance and leadership in these processes. The leadership of a school or center usually mandates departmental meetings. For more discussion on building the faculty community see *Rejuvenating Impulses in Waldorf Education*, by Heinz Zimmerman.

*In what collaborative work (outside of pedagogical and administrative requirements) do the early childhood educators participate?*

In addition to pedagogical and administrative duties, early-childhood faculties often collaborate in puppetry work, festival preparation and celebration, parent evenings, and in-house professional development sessions. Some faculty groups also report working together on outreach activities. In one example, once a year teachers sponsor a parent evening for the combined groups, inviting expert speakers on such topics as movement and sensory integration. Educators often meet during afternoon school hours to make puppets and rehearse marionette plays.

Schools report opportunities for educators to share in activities, such as groups coming together for a table puppet play or festival activity; taking nature walks with another group; and attending elementary-school assembly presentations and class plays. In the weekly whole-school faculty study there may be occasions for curriculum sharing, or curriculum study and “class study.” Early-childhood faculty meetings may also include
child studies or group activity reports. Most schools report that their early-childhood teachers attempt to visit each other’s groups at least once a year (See Section II : 4C “Peer Mentoring”).

Early-childhood faculty groups can explore other ways to collaborate that will build positive working relationships. Many groups who engage in artistic activity together report that this collaboration benefits the social fabric of the group, enlivening formerly routine business discussions. One school reported that a simple social activity practiced throughout the year also builds bridges to facilitate the business discussion—they celebrate each other’s birthdays with time together for tea, cake, a simple gift, and biographical sharing. Some faculties come together in the early morning, before children arrive, to join in a verse to begin the day, or work individually with the same verse for a period of time.

*Early Childhood Faculty Meetings*

R.Steiner, *Spiritual Grounds of Education, L. VII*

Thus the heart of the Waldorf School, if I speak of its organization, is the teachers' staff meeting. These staff meetings are held periodically, and when I can be in Stuttgart they are held under my guidance, but in other circumstances they are held at frequent intervals. Here, before the assembled staff, every teacher throughout the school will discuss the experiences he has in his class in all detail. Thus these constant staff meetings tend to make the school into an organism in the same way as the human body is an organism by virtue of its heart. Now what matters in these staff meetings is not so much the principles but the readiness of all teachers to live together in goodwill, and the abstention from any form of rivalry. And it matters supremely that a suggestion made to another teacher only proves helpful when one has the right love for every single child. And by this I do not mean the kind of love which is often spoken about, but the love which belongs to an artistic teacher.

R.Steiner, *Spiritual Grounds of Education, L. VII*

*Who is responsible for deciding the required meetings schedule for the early childhood educators in the school/program?*

The early childhood faculty decides the number and frequency of early childhood faculty meetings. Some schools report this is decided in cooperation with the College of Teachers.

It is common to have two meetings. One meeting occurs during school hours in the afternoon, and addresses business and planning. The meeting typically includes full-time early-childhood faculty who are free of after-school childcare responsibilities and are members of the whole school faculty. The second meeting is scheduled at a time when as many part-time and assistant faculty as possible can attend. This can occur weekly, or in
another periodic rhythm. One school reports that two weekly meetings are taxing. There, the weekly whole-school faculty meeting includes a time for lower school, high school, and early-childhood faculties to meet separately. In one example, extended-care teachers were able to attend the faculty study once a month, with the other early-childhood teachers rotating as substitutes to make this possible.

Among the early childhood educators in a full school, how is their level of interest made visible in the whole school’s curriculum and in the work of colleagues?

Schools with successful social practices and mutually respectful collegial attitudes report a high level of interest among early-childhood faculty in the school as a whole. Early-childhood faculty participate in school committee work, are members of the College of Teachers, represent faculty on the board of trustees, and support all school events, such as workshops, lectures, and fundraisers. The level of participation is balanced against the committee and planning needs within the early-childhood department.

4C Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is a process offering educators partnership and feedback for ongoing personal and professional development (See Mentoring in Waldorf Early Childhood Education, N. Foster, ed.). All programs interviewed reported having some form of peer mentoring. Schools and centers with well-established processes for collegial observation report successful follow-through in all their programs. The challenge is to arrange scheduling and substitution so that a mentor is free to visit colleagues’ classrooms. New and first-year educators are often assigned an in-house mentor who consistently works to support their self-education, professional growth, and integration into the school culture. Frequently, resources are also allocated to provide an outside mentor for first-year teachers. Success is attributed to an open attitude on the part of the new teacher, and the dedication and experience of mentors.

Peer mentoring is part of teacher development activity in a school that also includes regular, periodic reviews or performance evaluations. These reviews occur every 2–3 years, and involve a review committee, feedback from colleagues and parents, a self-review, and classroom observations. A teacher development committee or a committee of the College of Teachers carries the oversight for this work. (See Professional Review and Evaluation in Waldorf Early Childhood Education, H. Koteen-Soule).

4D Addressing Conflict and Social Difficulties

Young children learn through imitation. In our early-childhood groups we have the opportunity to model human interaction and relationships with our coworkers. What better way for young children to gain healthy attitudes than to witness two or more people working earnestly together with mutual regard and respect, with a humorous
acceptance of our human challenges and willingness to find positive ways to communicate and resolve differences. Historical practice has embedded terms for the roles of the adults in the early-childhood group: lead, assistant, co-leads. These terms or others are useful in delineating the different roles and levels of responsibility assigned to each adult. Although there are differences in roles and responsibilities, the work of each adult is equally valued and acknowledged. Relationships are successful when there is a regular meeting time for coworkers to organize their tasks, plan, air questions, and discuss approaches to pedagogical issues.

Clearly articulated job descriptions and responsibilities are a means of preserving professional relationships and preventing misunderstandings among colleagues. Referring to these as guidelines is important—strictly literal interpretation can also be a deterrent to the flexibility required for collaborative relationships.

Should conflicts arise among coworkers, the first step is to address the issue together. If necessary, schools and centers have procedures for inviting others to facilitate communication (See samples below).

There are inevitable conflicts that arise in professional circumstances. Schools and centers attribute success in conflict resolution to having a documented process for addressing difficulties, and to the willingness of the parties involved to work toward a solution. In some cases, a brief statement of the issues and written summary of the meeting are recorded, and all involved parties approve it. The leadership of a school or center sets an expectation for professional conduct that should be clear to all at the outset of employment. Sample procedures are in the appendix.

4E Resources


Addressing Social Difficulties- Process examples from schools

Sample #1: Our process includes offering to mediate between colleagues and we are usually successful in achieving professional demeanor and respect for one another as colleagues. Most of the time it doesn’t go beyond that…we can’t expect everyone to be friends with everyone else. We do expect courtesy and respect between colleagues.

Sample #2: The process includes conflicts between teacher and parents as well as well as between faculty members. Personnel Circle used the process last year and this year in six instances or incidents. The success of the process hinges on the use of direct speech as
the first step. A faculty member or in the case of a parent and faculty member are encouraged to meet with the person with whom they are in conflict. They are asked to bring a friend or colleague to the meeting as a support person. This step must occur before it comes to Personnel Circle or to the Faculty Chair if pedagogical in nature. We provided two possible routes after direct speech has occurred; one meeting with Personnel Circle or the alternative is a meeting with the Faculty Chair. (This option was provided in case the conflict is with the Faculty Chair since she is also a classroom teacher.)

*Sample #3:* There is no formal procedure, but the Collegium Committee, the inner circle (comprised of Collegium members from each section of the school, the College chair, and the administrator) are available to faculty for mediation and assistance with conflict resolution between colleagues and with parents.

*Sample #4:* There is no formal procedure. It is understood that we first address each other regarding concerns and that the Collegium and the Personnel Committee are always available for assistance and mediation if needed.

*Sample #5:* One school uses a process referred to as “Plan, Do, Review”. This is attributed to Christopher Schaefer, PhD and his work with administration and community development outlined in his forthcoming book.

**APPENDIX**

**Training Programs offering Waldorf Early Childhood certification:**

Rudolf Steiner College, California  
[www.steinercollege.edu](http://www.steinercollege.edu), tel: 916-961-8727  
9200 Fair Oaks Blvd., Fair Oaks, CA, 95628

Rudolf Steiner Centre, Toronto  
[www.rsct.ca](http://www.rsct.ca), tel: 905-764-7570  
9100 Bathurst St. #4, Thornhill, ON L4J8C7

Sound Circle, Washington  
[www.soundcircle.org](http://www.soundcircle.org), tel: 206-925-9199  
PO Box 15279, Seattle, WA 98115

Sunbridge College, New York  
[www.sunbridge.edu](http://www.sunbridge.edu), tel: 845-425-0055  
285 Hungry Hollow Road, Spring Valley, NY 10977
Waldorf Teacher Education Eugene, Oregon  
www.wtee.org, phone 541-683-6951  
1350 McLean Blvd., Eugene, OR 97405-1998

Waldorf Teacher Training Programs offering early childhood courses in the context of class teacher training:

Bay Area Teacher Training, California  
www.bacwtt.org, tel: 415-332-2133  
215 Caledonia Street, Sausalito, CA 94965

Antioch New England Graduate School  
www.antiochne.edu, tel: 603-283-2311  
40 Avon St., Keene, NH, 03431-3516

Waldorf Institute of Southern California  
www.waldorfteaching.org, tel: 877-394-1444  
17100 Superior St., Northridge, CA 91325-1999

Childcare Provider Training Courses:

LifeWays North America – various locations  
www.lifewaysnorthamerica.org,  

Sophia’s Hearth, New Hampshire  
www.sophiashearth.org, tel: 603-357-3755  
36 Carpenter St., Keene, NH 03431

Many of these programs also offer introductory courses and workshops. Please check the links or the WECAN website at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org for further details.