



Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Waldorf education was founded 100 years ago in Germany. Today it is a global movement. There are more than 2000 early childhood programs world-wide. In the US and Canada, we have over 220 early childhood programs situated in public and independent schools, as well as in stand-alone settings. In the US and Canada, Waldorf education is governed by three membership associations: the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, and the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education.

Waldorf Education offers a developmentally appropriate, experiential and academically rigorous approach to education. We integrate the arts in all academic disciplines for children from birth through twelfth grade to enhance and enrich learning. The primary goal of Waldorf education is to inspire life-long learning in all students and to enable them to fully develop their unique capacities.

Waldorf Early Childhood programs are caring communities, where each child experiences love and respect. Children learn through relationships, exploration, engagement, and play. The teacher is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-creator of knowledge. Daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms are incorporated into the classroom and provide predictability and security for the children. Early childhood is respected as a unique time in an individual's life.

Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education

Within the US and Canada, there are ten independent Waldorf early childhood teacher training institutes and one Waldorf teacher training institute situated in an institution of higher education. The quality of our teacher trainings is overseen by a rigorous membership process governed by WECAN. Our teacher candidates receive a minimum of 450 hours of in-person class instruction and participate in a minimum of 8 weeks of observation and practicum in an early childhood setting. In addition to this work there is extensive out of class reading, writing, and reflection. All students complete an independent capstone research project.

WECAN Teacher Institute Membership Process

WECAN's comprehensive membership process supports teacher education programs to take responsibility for their ongoing development and growth. The goal of this process is to ensure the programs are preparing teacher candidates who are competent, caring, and ready to teach. There are four Shared Principles which guide the program's work in the membership process:

- Alignment of the program with the Purpose, Goals, and Educational Philosophy of Waldorf Education
- Program and Faculty Quality
- Quality of Governance, Financial, and Administrative Practices
- On-going Relationship to the Wider Waldorf Education Movement



WECAN's membership process begins with a program completing an in-depth self-study, in which the program describes how they are preparing their teacher candidates for successful matriculation into the early childhood classroom. The self-study documents with evidence, how the program engages in on-going quality development for each of our four shared principles in relation to the goal of producing successful early childhood teachers.

When the self-study is complete and has been reviewed and accepted by the WECAN Teacher Education Committee, site visitors schedule a program visit. The visit is a two-day process in which the program demonstrates that candidate learning meets the high expectations described in the self-study report.

Waldorf Credential Recognition

Inspired by the successful work of our pedagogical colleagues in the Montessori educational movement, WECAN has just begun the process of engaging with states to achieve appropriate recognition for the knowledge and competencies that individuals holding a Waldorf early childhood teacher credential have achieved. Acknowledgement of the rigor and quality of Waldorf teacher education ensures that Waldorf classrooms have appropriately trained teachers, which promotes a coherent and meaningful experience for children through fidelity to the Waldorf early childhood educational model.

There are three ways in which a Waldorf credential needs to be recognized: through a state's teacher licensure system, in a state's early childhood workforce registry or career lattice, and within a state's child-care licensing regulations.

In late 2019, WECAN completed our first process with the state of Oregon. In this process we have received recognition with the state workforce registry and achieved a pathway to teacher licensure for individuals holding Waldorf credentials from WECAN full-member teacher training institutes. We are beginning to engage with the state of Washington and are also in conversation with Minnesota to achieve a pathway to state teacher licensure.

*"The need for imagination,
a sense of truth and
a feeling of responsibility –
these are the three forces
which are the very
nerve of education."*

Rudolf Steiner