



WECAN Shared Principles for Early Childhood Teacher Education

The *WECAN Shared Principles for Early Childhood Teacher Education* form the basis of our understanding of our work together in association and are used in our self-study and membership processes. As a living document, these Shared Principles will continue to be refined through the work of the WECAN Board, the WECAN Early Childhood Teacher Education Committee, and our Member Teacher Education Programs and Institutes. The current version of the Shared Principles was adopted by the WECAN Board in May 2023.

A. Purpose, Goals, and Educational Philosophy

A1 In our work with adult students, we support the preparation, ongoing professional development, deepening and renewal of the work of Waldorf early childhood educators and caregivers.

A2 We are committed to the ideals and continually developing practices of Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education, which are founded on anthroposophical pedagogical principles and an understanding of the human individuality as a being of body, soul, and spirit. We respect the dignity of childhood and educate our students to offer care and protection for children from all communities and backgrounds.

A3 Rudolf Steiner's educational insights are our primary, but not exclusive, source of guidance for understanding the developing human being. Our activities are based on contemporary research in anthroposophy, Waldorf education and other compatible pedagogical approaches. We work to ensure that Waldorf pedagogy becomes neither a theoretical system, nor a collection of outer methods, but a wellspring of living insight and inspiration.

A4 It is our intention to provide an inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible program for our community so that every member can experience a sense of belonging. We recognize and value the race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, learning style, religion, nationality, and socio-economic status of every member as well as the traditions and values of their cultural community.

B. The Educational Program and Faculty

B1 Our programs incorporate historical and contemporary educational research, the evolving practice of Waldorf/Steiner education, and other relevant approaches to pedagogy and adult education.

B2 The program director or person responsible for the early childhood training program - including curriculum development, review and evaluation - is qualified through active training and experience in Waldorf early childhood education and work with adults.

B3 Our faculty members are qualified for their positions and responsibilities by education and/or experience in their recognized field.

B4 We recognize that Waldorf teacher education is a process of lifelong learning. Our faculty and staff are committed to ongoing self- and professional development as demonstrated by active participation in conferences, courses, and professional development workshops.

B5 We have processes in place for mentoring new faculty members and for regular self and peer review for all faculty members.

B6 Our faculty actively strive to implement inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible practices for working with all adult learners within our community.

B7 Instructors intentionally create an environment of belonging and inclusion. Our instruction reflects an understanding of differences in individual and cultural learning styles, balancing conceptual, self-reflective, artistic and experiential/practical activity. Instructors encourage and cultivate creativity and independent thinking.

B8 Our program provides equitable individual student advising, means of student assessment, and maintains records of attendance, course completion and other relevant documentation.

B9 Our program offers a minimum of 450 class contact hours for birth to seven trainings or 300 hours for birth to three trainings. Curriculum and course content includes a balance of the following areas, with the understanding that program elements may be configured in a variety of ways. (See Curriculum and Course Content for a listing of specific course content areas.)

1. Anthroposophical Studies and Human Development (20 – 25%)
2. Child Development and Waldorf Education (20 – 25%)
3. Practical and Artistic Activities for the Classroom or for the Birth to Three Program (20 -25%)
4. Professional and Social Aspects of Waldorf Education (10 - 20%)
5. Artistic and Handwork Activities for the Educator (20 – 25%)
6. Independent research project

B10 Observation, mentored teaching, practicum or internship in well-established Waldorf early childhood settings is an essential component of the training. In addition to the above course content, our program provides a minimum of the following:

For birth to three programs:

1. In-service students (those working at least 3 days per week in a Waldorf birth to three setting) must have a minimum of three weeks (fifteen days) of observation and practicum in a Waldorf birth to three program, (of which one week may take place in their own classroom with a mentor, one week may be in another classroom in the same center, and at least one week must be in a center other than their own), and an additional two days each year of mentoring visits in their own classroom.
2. Pre-service students (those not yet working at least three days a week in a Waldorf birth to three setting) must have a minimum of one week (five days) of observation plus four weeks of practicum with experienced Waldorf birth to three early childhood teachers in a birth to three setting and will be visited during a practicum by an Institute-approved Advisor at least once during their training.

For birth to seven programs:

1. In-service students (those working at least three days per week in a Waldorf early childhood classroom with children ages three to seven) must have a minimum of three weeks of observation and practicum, (of which at least two weeks must be in classrooms other than their own), and two days of mentoring per year in their own classrooms.
2. Pre-service students (those not yet working at least three days a week in a Waldorf early childhood setting with children ages three to seven) must have a minimum of two weeks of observation and six weeks of practicum with experienced Waldorf EC teachers and would be visited during a practicum by an Institute Advisor at least once during their training

C. Governance, Finances and Administration

C1 Our program complies with all applicable laws regarding discrimination based on any and all protected categories, in all areas, including admissions, employment, and personnel. We work to ensure that students and colleagues in our program do not experience discrimination in admission, retention, or participation. All staff and faculty are expected to participate in ongoing anti-bias training.

C2 Our program is a collaborative and cultural activity and not a profit-oriented business. In our administrative, financial, and leadership processes, faculty and staff work to be socially responsible and equitable in our work with colleagues, families, the institution, and the wider community.

C3 Our program has the physical facilities and clearly defined, effectively implemented organizational structure necessary for the healthy functioning of the program. We have clear processes for making administrative decisions regarding current and future planning, review and development of programs, and creation of inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible fiscal, administrative, legal, and personnel policies and procedures.

C4 Our program has clearly articulated, inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible student-related policies and procedures for admissions and dismissal, enrollment, tuition, and program completion.

D. Relations with the Wider Movement

D1 We are part of a worldwide cultural impulse and consider ourselves colleagues in a world movement on behalf of the young child. As such, we are committed to collaborating with colleagues on local, regional, North American, and international levels as a fully-established representative of Waldorf/Steiner early childhood teacher education. Our early childhood program director and/or faculty participate in activities such as teacher trainers' meetings and conferences, collaborative research groups and colloquia, and task force activity of the broader Waldorf/Steiner movement.