



# WECAN 2024 Early Childhood Educators Conference

February 9-11, 2024

## In-Person Workshops

In-person attendees, please choose one two-session workshop.

### 1. **Creating Home Away from Home: New Adult Learning**

Marg Beard

How do we come to know and experience the archetypal gesture of home that every human being yearns for and needs? How do we, as caregivers, educators, and parents, develop out of our higher Self, a connection to the important spiritual task of creating and ensouling a 'home-like space' for the young child to experience? The intention of this workshop is to grow an understanding of home and its fundamental and universal importance for all of humanity, to develop a heart connection to the archetypal impulse of home, and to support one another as we creatively explore 'the next step' in creating the space that is needed for the children that are coming toward us.

Supplies: paper/pen/pencil

*Creating home has been a life-calling for **Marg Beard**, from playing house as a young child to becoming a homeschooling parent and co-founding the anthroposophically informed and Waldorf-inspired Rosewood Homeschooling Group. Now, as a New Adult Learning (NAL) Educator, Marg wishes to offer support and opportunities for creative inspiration to parents, caregivers, and teachers through NAL programs. Marg has also brought the transformative work of NAL into her work as Rudolf Steiner College Canada (RSCC) Foundation Studies mentor, and as co-director of RSCC's Healing Education and Remedial Training (HEART) program, as well as into her work as an independent education consultant, and 'Life in the Home Coach', through her private practice, KALLIAS.*

### 2. **Enrichment Movement for Pandemic-deprived Children**

Nancy Blanning

This workshop is in response to seeing that children were deprived of sensory development opportunities because of pandemic restrictions. Their sensory development remains young. We will look at movement and sensory strengthening ideas to use with our children. The children seem to need extra enrichment above and beyond what our typical classroom day from pre-pandemic times provided. We want to give them fun and satisfying enrichment boosts to fill in developmental gaps so they can be happy and secure in their bodies.

Supplies: Eurythmy shoes, clothing for active movement, and note-taking supplies. An email of materials —movement information and imaginations – will be sent to workshop participants the week before the conference for them to print out and bring along to the conference.

***Nancy Blanning** (she/her) spent 40-plus years as a mixed-age kindergarten teacher and then incarnational support teacher at Denver Waldorf School. She is currently Co-director of Early Childhood Teacher Training at Sunbridge Institute. Nancy also works as a mentor, site visitor, and editor of the WECAN journal Gateways.*

### 3. **Tales that Speak the Language of the Heart: New Adult Learning**

Kati Gabor

After a brief presentation about the nature and significance of folk and fairy tales, participants will work together in acting out a short tale and have a chance to experience how children immerse themselves in that world of goodness, beauty, and truth. Creative writing, drama, and movement exercises will inspire shifts in consciousness and warm interactions in the true spirit of childhood. Following the seven-fold learning processes of New Adult Learning will ensure that everyone emerges from the journey with treasures in hand. No previous training in movement or drama is necessary. Calling on your playful, joyful nature is recommended.

Supplies: Notepad and pen for writing, sketch pad, and colored pencils for drawing.

**Kati Gabor** (she/her), New Adult Educator, Mentor, Parenting Coach, and Waldorf Consultant is an experienced Waldorf teacher who has also worked with parents, teachers, and healing professionals for the past 15 years. Her focus on the inner work of the teacher led her to Michael Chekhov's drama exercises which inspired her to complete the Art of Acting course at the Threefold Educational Center, NY. Kati teaches the Connections and the My Child Myself programs of NAL incorporating her observations and experiences about movement and gesture with a focus on embodiment practices, creative processes, and destiny learning.

#### **4. Heart Work and Hard Work: Finding Balance through Mindfulness Practices**

Meggan Gill

As educators who often wear many hats, we find ourselves in the ebb and flow of learning and vigor, stagnation and resistance; fear, frustration, exhaustion and overwhelm, or energy and joy. It's all in the soup! As we navigate our own path alongside colleagues, we can aspire to openness - to the ever-changing opinions and perspectives, to giving and receiving feedback and integrating feedback into action. This is hard work and heart work!

This workshop is designed to allow participants to engage in self-reflection and explore meditative and mindfulness practices of inquiry that help sustain us in hard times and give us courage when we need it most. Through presentation, discussion, small group sharing, journaling, and light movement, we will practice active listening and preparing for "hard conversations," explore the anatomy of an apology, identify our symptoms and habits of spiritual by-passing, and look at approaches to self-care, interrupting (micro)aggressions, and setting healthy boundaries versus shutting down. To build the courage and will that are needed to step into personal accountability, we will approach our time together with a gesture of healing, inquiry, and compassion.

Supplies: Journal, comfortable clothes.

**Meggan Gill** (she/her) serves as Director of Education and Organizational Culture at Sunbridge Institute, where she helps to guide and teach in Waldorf teacher education programs. Meggan is a graduate of Sunbridge Institute and has worked in Waldorf schools in Olympia, WA; Minneapolis, MN; Manhattan, and Brooklyn, NY. She strives to combine the pedagogical and philosophical tenets of Rudolf Steiner while meeting the children of today responsibly and responsively. Meggan is engaged in conversations about race, social/economic status, academia, privilege, and safety in Waldorf schools as a board member, speaker, teacher mentor, and evaluator.

#### **5. Inner Movement, Inner Word**

Virginia Hermann

This eurythmy workshop will incorporate avenues of inner exploration and self-reflection as a means of entering into meaningful gesture. Along with guided group eurythmy exercises, participants will be led through an individual artistic process involving drawing, writing, gesturing, speaking aloud, and ultimately finding a single word-gesture in eurythmy. Lastly, a portion of time will be given to building a eurythmical relationship to Rudolf Steiner's strength-giving verse, 'Quite I Bear within Me.'

Supplies: Eurythmy Shoes if you have a pair

**Virginia Hermann** (she/her) is in her sixth year on the faculty at Eurythmy Spring Valley and a seasoned member of the touring ensemble, performing worldwide with the stage group since 2013. A native Texan, Virginia is a K-12 graduate of the Austin Waldorf School and holds a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University and an MA in Performance Eurythmy from Alanus University, Germany. Virginia is deeply interested in the dynamic inner relationship between movement, language, and our imagination.

#### **6. Seven Essential Nutrients for Health: New Adult Learning**

Fiona Hughes

In this workshop, we will explore how seven processes - Connection, Warmth, Nutrition, Presence, Rhythm, Movement, and Sleep - provide a foundation for the health of the body and soul. We will then look at various ways we can support these processes in both children and adults. This workshop will start with a presentation which we will then individualize by using the New Adult Learning process "taking it through the loop". Participants will also be introduced to several Anthroposophical remedies.

Supplies: None

**Fiona Hughes** (she/her) is a health coach and New Adult Learning Educator. She has a degree in medicine from the University of Witten/Herdecke in Germany, a cultural studies degree from Trent University, and extensive training in anthroposophical medicine. Fiona is passionate about healing, karma, and creating the new.

## **7. Creating and Implementing the 7-Step Learning Process: New Adult Learning**

Arlene Kamo

This workshop will begin with a case study presentation of how the Trillium Waldorf School implemented the 7-Step Learning Process to bring greater inclusivity, transparency, and cohesion to its community of faculty/staff, board, and parents and led to the development of a 7-year strategic plan that creatively and actively addressed the needs of its school community. Through small group conversation and artwork, participants will identify needs within their communities. Each participant will then develop their own 7-step process related to that particular need. The intention is for participants to complete the workshop with a clear outline of a process that they feel prepared and ready to implement in their work organization.

Supplies: Notebooks (Art materials will be supplied)

**Arlene Kamo** (she/her) is a trained psycho-educational consultant with an MA in Clinical Psychology. Since being introduced to Waldorf education in 1987, she has taught grades one through eight, kindergarten, and parent and child classes. Arlene completed the Foundations in Anthroposophic Art and Biography Counseling program with Arscura and received her Anthroposophic Art Therapy diploma from the Tobias School of Art in England. She is a graduate of Healing Education and Remedial Training (HEART) and is the Director of the HEART program now offered at Rudolf Steiner College Canada. Arlene is also a New Adult Learning (NAL) facilitator and is on the faculty of the Trillium Waldorf School where she provides educational support for students, mentors, and supports adult education.

## **8. Orienting Children in Disorienting Times: Nourishing the Foundational Senses Outdoors**

Rachel Kennedy

Children are struggling like never before to inhabit their bodies. This orientation is the birthright of all human beings. Rudolf Steiner gave us a map for supporting children's embodiment in these times. The map of the incarnating human being through the development of the 12 senses forms the pathway for our daily work with the children. This non-negotiable developmental path leads children into an essential inner sensing of their body, which is the foundation for a whole and healthy life. The natural world is a wise learning environment, supporting the full engagement of our senses. This workshop will include a presentation, time outside in active movement, a sharing of ideas for practical activities, and a slideshow.

Supplies: Bring warm clothes and sturdy shoes/boots for some time outdoors.

**Rachel Kennedy** (she/her) grew up exploring the Maine woods, and knows the healing effects of authentic sensory experience and being held by the earth. After many years as a kindergarten teacher at the Hartsbrook School, she founded their Forest Kindergarten in 2015. In 2021, she founded Tree of Life Forest School, a home-based, outdoor program serving children ages 4.5 - 9 years old. Tree of Life is deeply inspired by Rudolf Steiner's Curative Education and Robyn Brown's work at The Mulberry Center for Curative Education.

## **9. Knowing What's Essential: Reimagining Our Approach**

Melissa McPartland

When questions of inclusion and representation arise, we are asked to reimagine our approach to education. But how do we discern what to change and what to keep? With Susan Howard's article, *The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education*, as a primary resource, we will explore what is essential to our work, through guided conversation and meditation. We will talk about how to use these essentials as a tool for shaping an inclusive curriculum and building a community of belonging.

Supplies: None

**Melissa McPartland** (she/they) has been on the faculty of City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis for 18 years, teaching in both the preschool and kindergarten programs. In her teaching role, she was especially interested in developing outdoor education in an urban setting. Most recently she has been serving her school as the full-time Early Childhood Faculty Chair, and working toward a vibrant future for Waldorf Education on the WECAN IDEA committee.

#### **10. Healing Storytelling: How your Inner Storyteller can Transform Troubles and Increase Well-Being**

Nancy Mellon

Find and empower the wise storyteller within you! Discover creative courage to nourish storytelling arts that support the resilience of both adults and children. During this workshop, we will experience together story dynamics that awaken practical guidance for meeting some of today's most bewildering challenges.

Supplies: Bring a notebook and colored pencils.

**Nancy Mellon** (she/her) teaches storytelling as a healing art worldwide. A counselor, mentor, and experienced Waldorf teacher, her workshops and courses brim with creativity. She encourages practical wisdom to strengthen resilience amidst pervasive screens and robotics. Her inspirational books are available in several languages. See her website [healingstory.com](http://healingstory.com)

#### **11. The Rainbow - A Puppet Play for Our Time**

Janene Ping

In this workshop participants will explore The Rainbow - a fairytale that brings a metaphor for the climate crisis we currently face. Presentations include a simple puppet presentation for a class or community festival, as well as engaging older Kindergarten children in an end-of-the-year play for parents and friends. Participants will make simple rain and sun fairies, as well as a wind figure of plant-dyed silk.

Supplies: Please bring a simple sewing kit. Please bring \$20 for material costs.

**Janine Ping** (she/her) has been a Waldorf Early Childhood Educator for over 30 years. In 1992, she founded the Magical Puppet Tree Theatre, a puppetry arts group dedicated to bringing world wisdom tales to children of all ages. She is a carrying faculty member at Sophia's Hearth Waldorf Teacher Training Center and President of the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts.

#### **12. Building Relationship with the Elemental World**

Elyse Pomeranz

The children incarnating on earth today arrive with purpose, at a time when we are all facing questions about how to be supportive of life in all forms. Are we ready to work diligently to be consistently awake inwardly to the demands of the children of today, many of whom do not adjust to what we consider to be "normal" classroom practices? We are being asked to be receptive to the elemental aspect of nature and to develop a new imaginative, inspired, and intuitive perception of the formative principles that we are to co-create with in the future. In this workshop, we will work artistically with several practices of listening deeply from our inner heart-centered selves to the inner worlds of the other; an adult partner, a child in our care, and that of a mature tree.

Supplies: None

**Elyse Pomeranz** is a former class teacher in Toronto and has been a mentor and teacher trainer with Rudolf Steiner College Canada since 2012. In addition to Waldorf teacher training, she has additional training in biography, art therapy, geomancy, and biodynamic beekeeping. She has been a Class member since 2003. Her current area of research is focused on Imaginative Cognition ([www.thetreeconversations.com](http://www.thetreeconversations.com)): exploring art processes as a path of communication, conflict resolution, and awakening new capacities of perception.

### **13. Working with Wood in Early Childhood**

Su Rubinoff

Making something new emerge from what appears to be just a piece of wood is very exciting and empowering for adults as well as children! It also connects one with nature and brings forth the magic of using one's hands together with the imagination. This workshop will support beginners in feeling more comfortable working with wood in their classrooms and with children. It will include hands-on work, conversation, and sharing of information.

Supplies: Please bring any woodworking projects you have made to show.  
Please bring \$5 for material costs.

***Su Rubinoff** (she/her) has been working with children for over 40 years, 30 of those in Waldorf education. She has an early childhood Waldorf teacher certificate, a BS in natural resources, and an MS in remedial education. Besides being a parent of 3 and a grandmother of 3, she brings many interests to students, including gardening and nature, woodworking, cooking, crafts, animals (chickens and bees), and more.*

### **14. The Neighboring Tree Project: Reaching Out to Our Communities**

Motria Shuhan, Elia Gilbert and Joanna Dorman

In this workshop, the Neighboring Tree Project will be the starting point for questions of accessibility and justice. How do we build on our DEIJ work within our schools and bring nature-based, self-initiated play to children regardless of which school they attend? How do we meet the children coming towards us, not just in our Waldorf schools but in our communities? How do we build on our intention to nurture childhood and increase our impact on children's lives today? What is our own entry point towards working with our neighboring colleagues?

Supplies: None

***Motria Shuhan** (she/her) has eighteen years of experience working with young children and completed her Waldorf Early Childhood training at Sunbridge College in New York and a three-year Advanced Therapeutic Course for Early Childhood Educators in Colorado. She spent nine formative years at the Mountain Laurel Waldorf School and then went on to found Acorn Waldorf School, a Full Member of WECAN, where she directs the program and teaches mixed-age kindergarten. Motria also serves as a mentor and teacher educator for Sunbridge Institute and has a special interest in nature-based education and the art of puppetry.*

***Elia Gilbert** (she/her) is a licensed teacher with a birth-5 endorsement who completed her Waldorf Early Childhood training at the Alkion Center and teaches mixed-age kindergarten at Acorn Waldorf School. She is a Waldorf alumna, having attended Rudolf Steiner School of New York City and Green Meadow Waldorf School. She began teaching in Waldorf EC programs in 2008 and also served as program director for a Waldorf forest kindergarten and Emmi Pikler-inspired school. An avid gardener, she takes care that the spaces surrounding her children invite and inspire imaginative play, and support their developmental growth. As part of school leadership, Elia works closely with her colleagues around questions of inclusion and belonging within her classroom and in the school as a whole.*

***Joanna Dorman** (she/her) is a Waldorf alumna, from nursery through Grade 12, of Waldorf School of Garden City. After a career focused on the healing arts, Joanna turned her attention to teaching and has been working in Waldorf early childhood classrooms ever since. She completed her Waldorf Early Childhood training at the Sunbridge Institute, worked as a nursery teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in NYC, and is currently a nursery teacher at Acorn Waldorf School. Joanna is passionate about working with young children, is a deep believer in the power and beauty of Waldorf education, and strives to help parents feel empowered and confident in their parenting choices.*

### **15. Developmental Movement for the Well-being of the Children and Ourselves**

Lynn St. Pierre and Beth Daly

Today young children are often surrounded by fear and anxiety. Learn to create a space filled with warmth, a sense of deep peace, and gentle joy; an antidote to today's complicated world. With the touch and elemental plays created by Wilma Ellersiek, we create a welcoming, warm space for the children, where they can breathe deeply and relax into a rich, health-giving, developmental

movement experience. This is an experiential workshop full of gesture, singing in the mood of the fifth, and large movement; wear loose comfortable clothing and layers. For our presence, well-being, and rejuvenation, we will learn a Spacial Dynamics® form and a hands-on technique that you can use in your classroom to warm the space and support your colleagues.

Supplies: None

**Lynn St. Pierre** (she/her) joyfully presents developmental movement in the form of loving touch, hand gesture, and large movement plays and Spacial Dynamics® at Waldorf teacher training centers, conferences, and schools internationally. Lynn is a certified trainer in the developmental movement for early childhood created by Wilma Ellersiek and a certified Spacial Dynamics Teacher Trainer. At Whidbey Island Waldorf School, Lynn leads the Little Woods Toddler Program.

**Beth Daly** (she/her) After receiving her Waldorf Teacher certificate, Beth continued to explore the deeply therapeutic aspects of Waldorf early childhood through the Nurturing the Roots course and Dancing Hands and Frolicking Voices course. Beth delights in her kindergarten classroom as well as her work as the early childhood coordinator at Waldorf Teacher Education Eugene.

## **16. Movements and Gestures in the Classroom to Mitigate the Effects of Trauma**

Jane Swain

“That felt like a gut punch.” “I feel like I was run over by a truck—flattened.” “I’ve been rung out like a dishrag.” There are spatial components to all of these common phrases. In people of all ages, trauma impacts the spaces in and around the body. When the person’s space is restored to its archetypal form, the trauma may be released.

In this workshop, we will explore the spatial aspects of trauma and how to recognize and work with them. The participant will learn archetypal movement gestures that support the health and well-being of the teacher as well as the young child. Jane will present tried and true movements and how to use them in circles and activities in the classroom. These activities can be as simple as including a Spacial Dynamics ‘stream’ during hand washing, for example.

Supplies: None

**Jane Swain** (she/her) is an associate director and core faculty member of the teacher education program at Sophia’s Hearth. She’s a pediatric physical therapist & movement therapist, a Level IV graduate of Spacial Dynamics, and is certified in Sensory Integration and Bothmer Gymnastics.

## **17. The Art of Biography and Social Renewal**

Lynn Turner

Every morning offers us an opportunity to step into a new day: to learn, grow, transform, and take a new direction in our lives and work as Waldorf early childhood educators. What do we want to cultivate more of in our lives? What nourishes our bodies, minds, and souls as we create heart-centered communities for families and children, as human beings and educators? Join me for a biography workshop in which we will work with the color magenta and the natural and rhythmical gift of the sunrise, and consider these questions through guided exercises, self-reflection, and conversation. Be prepared to practice witnessing each other in an engaged and meaningful way and to be surprised by what we discover together.

Supplies: A donation of \$10 per person will cover artistic supplies for participants. Please bring cash at the time of the workshop for this.

**Lynn Turner** (she/her) is a native Washingtonian, wife, mother of two children, and the proud descendant of enslaved people. She has been a culturally responsive early childhood educator, teacher trainer, and leader in the movement of Waldorf Education in Northern America for over twelve years. Lynn currently serves as a WECAN Coordinator of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access. She is also a second-year student in the Biography as Social Arts Training. Lynn holds a BA in Fine Arts, and an MAT in Early Childhood Education, and received her Waldorf Early Childhood Teaching Certificate in 2017. Lynn has been published in Gateways and has been a workshop presenter and keynote speaker at recent WECAN conferences.

## **18. Deepening Puppetry and Storytelling Roots: Sukey and the Mermaid**

Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton, Anne Birney, Wendy Abate, and Angela Gladstone

Deeply inspired by the puppet show presentation at last year's WECAN conference, early childhood colleagues at Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor asked Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton to mentor them through a process of story selection, research, and culturally rich story puppet making. This workshop will include a summary of the process we all went through together to create the puppet show Sukey and the Mermaid, which will be presented as part of this year's conference opening. We will discuss the themes and considerations we took into account to make this tale culturally accurate and appreciative. We will discuss the difference between cultural *appreciation* and cultural *appropriation*, and consider how to research stories from other cultures and look for sources of materials that enrich the cultures of the stories we're telling. Participants will then create a puppet to take home for use in their classroom.

Supplies: small sewing kit & notebook for journaling.

Additional materials cost: Bring \$25 for materials - wool roving, fabric, beads, felting pad and needles, and a needle and thread. Participants may also bring extra cash for optional purchases of vintage fabrics, plant-dyed silks/felt, and accessories.

***Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton** (she/her) is a WECAN I.D.E.A Coordinator, a member of the WECAN Early Childhood Research Group, and a core faculty member for Sound Circle Center for Arts & Anthroposophy. She has taught Waldorf parent and child & nursery classes in Silver Spring, MD, and has been a Waldorf parent, for over twenty years. Leslie is also a textile artist and enjoys writing and compiling early childhood stories that reflect the world in the interest of advancing inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.*

***Anne Birney** (she/her) has worked with children in a variety of settings for many years including in child care, working with children with learning differences, and as a stay-at-home mom to her two daughters. For the past nine years, Anne has led a mixed-age kindergarten class at the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor.*

***Wendy Abate** (she/her) started her career as a teacher at the Detroit Waldorf School and has continued teaching at the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor for the past thirteen years where she leads a mixed-age kindergarten class. She has trained with various teachers including Suzanne Down and Barbara Patterson, and is currently taking the Nurturing the Roots training.*

***Angela Gladstone** (she/her) has spent the majority of her career at the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor teaching parent and child and preschool classes. She serves as the school's early childhood pedagogical coordinator and is the WECAN regional representative for the Great Lakes II Region.*