



# **Membership Handbook**

**For Schools, Centers  
and Home Programs**

**2026-27**



## Table of Contents

|                                                                                             |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b><i>Welcome Letter .....</i></b>                                                          | <b><i>3</i></b>  |
| <b><i>Introduction to the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America.....</i></b> | <b><i>4</i></b>  |
| <b><i>WECAN Shared Principles .....</i></b>                                                 | <b><i>5</i></b>  |
| <b><i>WECAN Diversity Statement .....</i></b>                                               | <b><i>7</i></b>  |
| <b><i>WECAN Affiliation and Membership .....</i></b>                                        | <b><i>8</i></b>  |
| <b><i>Individual Membership.....</i></b>                                                    | <b><i>8</i></b>  |
| <b><i>Organizational Affiliation and Membership .....</i></b>                               | <b><i>9</i></b>  |
| Registered Initiative Affiliation .....                                                     | 9                |
| Associate Membership.....                                                                   | 11               |
| Full Membership .....                                                                       | 12               |
| <b><i>WECAN Activity and Colleagueship within Regions .....</i></b>                         | <b><i>14</i></b> |
| <b><i>Collaboration with AWSNA.....</i></b>                                                 | <b><i>15</i></b> |
| <b><i>The International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education</i></b>   | <b><i>16</i></b> |
| <b><i>Appendix I: The Training of Waldorf Early Childhood Educators: WE CAN</i></b>         |                  |
| <b><i>Expectations .....</i></b>                                                            | <b><i>17</i></b> |
| For Educators Working with Children Ages Birth to Three .....                               | 17               |
| For Educators Working with Children Ages Three to Seven .....                               | 18               |
| Expectations for WE CAN Member Schools and Early Childhood Programs .....                   | 18               |
| Demonstrating a Commitment to WE CAN Expectations .....                                     | 19               |
| <b><i>Appendix II: WE CAN Curriculum and Course Content Areas.....</i></b>                  | <b><i>20</i></b> |
| Birth to Three Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs .....                             | 20               |
| Birth to Seven Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs .....                             | 22               |



## Welcome Letter

Greetings from the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America!

This Membership Handbook is a guide to our work together in association as Waldorf early childhood programs throughout North America. In it, we describe the history, goals, and activities of our Association, our Shared Principles, and details about membership.

The WECAN Membership Path is intended to foster a culture of self-study, peer review, and collaboration that will strengthen and deepen our work on behalf of the young child here in North America out of the insights of Waldorf education. This Handbook outlines the criteria and benefits of organizational affiliation and membership, and the steps required to fulfill the responsibilities of organizational affiliation and membership for Registered Initiative, Associate and Full Member programs. WECAN organizational members and affiliates – both school/center-based and home-based – are listed on the WECAN website in our [Directory](#).

Please contact Laura Mason, WECAN Membership Coordinator, or your Regional Representative(s), if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions. Contacts can be found in this handbook and on the [Contact Us Page](#) of the WECAN website. We look forward to our work together in association!

With best wishes,

Laura Mason  
WECAN Membership Coordinator

Heather Church  
WECAN Director

## Introduction to the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

The Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) was founded in 1983, originally under the name of the Waldorf Kindergarten Association of North America. 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.

WECAN is a tax-exempt not-for-profit organization with a board made up of experienced early childhood educators from throughout North America. You can find photos and bios of WECAN Board members on the [About Us Page](#) of the website. The WECAN Board has two multi-day annual meetings in the fall and spring each year, and its committees and working groups are active throughout the year. The board acts as an organ of perception for the needs of the Waldorf early childhood movement and takes initiative, with the support of the WECAN staff (listed on the [Contact Us Page](#) of the website), in making manifest WECAN's mission. The staff and board accomplish this mission in several ways, including but not limited to the following:

- Supporting the development of Waldorf early childhood centers, birth to three programs, kindergartens, pre-schools, home programs, and training centers through a path to membership involving self-study and peer review;
- Encouraging and supporting research regarding Waldorf early childhood education and the development of the young child, and publishing the results of such research;
- Supporting the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Waldorf early childhood through research, publications, workshops, conferences, and other activities;
- Offering resources to professionals working with young children based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, through conferences, webinars, publications, and other means;
- Providing resources to parents and caregivers through webinars and publications;
- Encouraging and providing opportunities for the exchange of information among colleagues who draw their inspiration for their work with young children from the work of Rudolf Steiner, through regional gatherings, an online hub, and other forms of communication;
- Protecting the name of Steiner/Waldorf on behalf of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), owner of the Steiner/Waldorf service mark, by ensuring that the marks are not misused in early childhood programs and granting use of the name to programs that have demonstrated through self-study and peer review that they can stand as representatives of Waldorf early childhood education in North America;
- Working together with other organizations that share similar goals and ideals, such as the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education (APWE), the Council of Anthroposophical Organizations (CAO), the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE), and the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science;
- Interacting with other educational organizations representing a wide spectrum of ideas about early childhood education.

## WECAN Shared Principles

The WECAN Shared Principles form the basis of our understanding of our work together in association, and are used in our membership application and self-study processes. As a living document, the Shared Principles will continue to be refined through the work of the Board, Regional Representatives, and Full Member schools and programs. The current version of the Shared Principles was adopted by the WECAN Board in February 2023.

### A. Purpose, Goals, and Educational Philosophy

- A1** In our work with children from pre-birth to age seven (in nursery-kindergartens, home care programs, childcare centers, parent-child programs, etc.) 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.
- A2** 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.
- A3** We recognize and value the race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ability, learning style, and socio-economic status of each child. We appreciate that these, along with the traditions and values of the child's family and cultural community, are the foundation upon which the child forms an identity.
- A4** We respect the dignity of childhood and strive to meet each child's unique developmental needs. We thus work to deepen our appreciation of the spiritual individuality of each child, as distinct from but working within and through the physical body.
- A5** We provide an atmosphere of loving warmth and guidance that promotes reverence, joy, and wonder in children during their first 7 years of life. We acknowledge that the future development of each individual child and of humanity as a whole is shaped and supported by this foundation.
- A6** We recognize that free creative play, imitation, exploration of the social and natural world, practical and meaningful work, artistic activities, and nourishing sensory experiences are essential in the development of the young child. Through our programs and activities, we offer children a rhythmic experience of each day, week, and season of the year.

**A7** We recognize that child development takes place best in the context of a community based upon healthy social relationships among educators, children and their families, and other community members, and we strive to create conscious, collaborative communities around our care for children.

**A8** 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.

## **B. Teacher Preparation and Professional Development**

**B1** Our faculty and staff are qualified for their positions and responsibilities by education and/or experience. We expect our early childhood educators to complete a Waldorf early childhood teacher education program and meet state or provincial licensing requirements. [Please see Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education: WECAN Expectations here: <https://waldorfeearlychildhood.org/training/expectations-for-training/>]

**B2** We recognize that Waldorf teacher education is a process of lifelong learning. Thus, our faculty and staff are committed to ongoing self and professional development as demonstrated by active participation in conferences, courses, and professional development workshops.

**B3** We support teacher development through regular mentoring, peer partnerships, review and evaluation.

**B4** We recognize that developing artistic and practical abilities and capacities for observation and perception contributes to our ability to meet the needs of the children in our care. Our caregivers, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in deepening our understanding of Waldorf early childhood education through collegial work, individual study, artistic activity, and meditative practice.

**B5** We recognize and value all identities and work to cultivate diversity within our community. Our caregivers, faculty, and staff demonstrate professionalism and respect in their interactions with children and their families, as well as with colleagues and other professionals.

## **C. Governance, Finances, and Administration**

**C1** In our administrative, financial, and leadership processes, we work collaboratively rather than hierarchically, in an effort to be socially responsible in our work with colleagues, families, the institution, and the wider community.

**C2** We have clearly-stated processes for making administrative decisions, future planning, and review and development of programs, administrative, and financial policies.

**C3** Our program has clearly defined employment, evaluation, and review procedures for faculty and staff, including agreed-upon compensation, terms of employment, and

principal duties and responsibilities. Procedures for non-renewal or termination of employment are clearly delineated.

- C4** 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, families, and colleagues in our programs do not experience discrimination in admission, retention, or participation.
- C5** We have demonstrated our ability to generate sufficient resources to maintain our educational programs and facilities, and to support our faculty and staff. We are working to cultivate socially responsible practices regarding salaries and benefits as well as tuition and tuition assistance, and strive to make our programs accessible to families from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.
- C6** Our organization engages in regular self-study/peer review processes on an organizational, institutional basis, as well as with individual educators.
- C7** Our program recognizes and complies with applicable legal and licensing requirements and meets health, fire, and safety standards.
- C8** Our program is a collaborative and cultural activity, and not a profit-oriented business.

(Note: The form most suited for such activity is usually that of an incorporated, not-for-profit organization with collaborative and non-hierarchical decision-making. We recognize that in home programs and certain cultural settings, the form of a non-profit organization may not be appropriate or possible.)

#### **D. Relations with the Wider Movement**

- D1** We see our activity as Waldorf educators as part of a worldwide cultural impulse. We recognize ourselves as colleagues in a world movement on behalf of the young child. As such we are committed to collaborating with our colleagues on local, regional, North American, and international levels as a fully-established representative of Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education.

### **WECAN Diversity Statement**

In our work with young children from pre-birth to age seven, WECAN is committed to the ideals upon which Waldorf/Steiner education was founded. These include respect for the dignity of each individual child and family in honoring diverse race, culture, religion, national origin, socio-economic situation, gender identity and sexual orientation, family composition, and individual ability which form the backgrounds of their lives. Waldorf early childhood education is committed to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion as a pathway to social justice and to rectify the explicit and implicit biases that undermine creation of healthy social life in our society.

Waldorf education was founded in 1919 upon the insights of Rudolf Steiner, whose indications provide the foundations for a truly humanized education that recognizes the individuality of each person and the universal spirit living within every human being. WECAN affirms this educational and social truth. Any statements attributed to Rudolf Steiner which imply or suggest discrimination or judgment toward any race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality, or socioeconomic group, are rejected. Such attitudes are contradictory and undermining to the goals of this education.

Working toward these goals requires committed inner work from the adults who care for our children. Teacher preparation and professional deepening call for each educator to engage in self-reflection that will ennoble inner attitudes to support diversity, inclusion, and equity. Recognizing and celebrating the differences that make us uniquely individual fosters healing and creation of new social life. We strive to create conscious, collaborative communities of parents, teachers, and children which strengthen the children in our care to meet future challenges with optimism, confidence, resilience, and tolerance and experience their lives as filled with purpose and meaning.

## **WECAN Affiliation and Membership**

The WECAN Path to Membership is open to individuals who support the work of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association, and to early childhood programs in North America that are committed to the ideals and practices of Waldorf early childhood education and anthroposophy, the philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), and who wish to support and contribute to Waldorf early childhood education in North America.

### **Individual Membership**

WECAN began as an individual membership organization—a grass-roots association of Waldorf early childhood colleagues. We aim to cultivate an opportunity for early childhood educators to associate as individuals, beyond the school or program they are affiliated with, both in service to the spirit of their vocation and their work in their unique communities. Individual memberships significantly exceed the number of organizational memberships. We see this as a sign of healthy colleagueship within our movement. We encourage individuals to join WECAN as a gesture of support for Waldorf early childhood education and our collective association, and to receive membership services. The Individual Membership year is October 1 through September 30. See details and purchase options on the [Individual Membership Page](#) of the WECAN website.

#### **Criteria:**

- Interest in and support for Waldorf early childhood education

#### **Benefits:**

- Subscription to *Gateways* newsletter
- 10% discount on WECAN Books



- WECAN e-News Updates and other informational mailings
- Discounted registration fees for WECAN conferences
- Opportunity to subscribe to the WECAN Community Hub and a WECAN e-mail list to receive research and articles of interest.

**Responsibilities:** Payment of annual membership dues at a rate of:

- \$55-75 on a sliding scale, or
- Discounted rate of \$50 dues/person/year for groups of three or more who join together and are affiliated with an Associate or Full organizational member or Register Initiative affiliate of WECAN, or
- Discounted rate of \$40/year for students currently enrolled in a WECAN-member teacher education program.

## Organizational Affiliation and Membership

The WECAN path to organizational membership is intended for schools, centers, and home programs working directly with children from birth to age 7 out of the insights of Waldorf education. WECAN invites and encourages all early childhood programs identifying themselves as inspired by the ideals of Waldorf early childhood education and working with the WECAN Shared Principles to begin the path to membership.

The organizational membership path leads from Registered Initiative Affiliate to Associate Member to Full Member. New/first-time applicants to WECAN should apply for either Registered Initiative Affiliation or Associate Membership. Current Registered Initiatives and Associate Members may apply for Associate or Full Membership (respectively) when they feel they meet the criteria for each membership level.

### Registered Initiative Affiliation

Registered Initiative status is available to home programs and other small early childhood-only programs, as well as newly established early childhood schools and centers, that meet the criteria listed below. It provides programs that face obstacles to membership with the option of affiliating with WECAN and thus connecting with the wider Waldorf early childhood movement in North America and around the globe.

#### Registered Initiative Application Steps:

1. Confirm that the program is meeting the criteria listed below.
2. Complete the [Registered Initiative Affiliation Application](#) and pay the \$250 (US) application fee.
3. Attend a remote meeting with the Membership Coordinator to discuss your program. (The Membership Coordinator will reach out to you to arrange a meeting upon receiving your application.)

**Criteria for Registered Initiative status are as follows:**

- The program has a self-identified commitment to the ideals and practices of Waldorf early childhood education.
- The program has functioned as a program inspired by Waldorf education for at least one year, with a minimum of three children and/or families in regular attendance.
- The educators and caregivers in the program engage in Waldorf or Waldorf-inspired professional development and/or training.
- The program is operating within the guidelines of its local municipality. (Legal requirements vary by location.)
- The program intends to collaborate with WECAN and Waldorf early childhood programs in North America.
- The program complies with the [AWSNA Service Mark Guidelines](#).

**Benefits of Registered Initiative Affiliation:**

- Listing as a Registered Initiative Affiliate in the WECAN online directory.
- Permission to include in the program's literature and on its website: "A Registered Initiative of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America" and to use the WECAN Registered Initiative logo.
- Communications from WECAN and the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE).
- Invitations to regional WECAN gatherings.
- An invitation for all educators and caregivers in the program to subscribe to the WECAN Community Hub.
- Group discounts on Individual Memberships for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program.
- Access to WECAN's site visitor/mentor list.
- Eligibility for AWSNA Teacher Education Loans and Grants for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program who are enrolled in WECAN-recognized early childhood trainings.
- Invitations to select AWSNA forums and webinars.

**Responsibilities of Registered Initiatives:**

- Payment of \$250 annual Registered Initiative dues (Note: the application fee will cover the dues payment for the current school year.)
- Submission of annual updates of contact and program information.
- Commitment to begin a WECAN Associate Member application within 3 years of acceptance as a Registered Initiative. (This does not apply to home programs and small early childhood-only programs without the resources to obtain membership.)

WECAN Registered Initiative programs are engaged in a process of growth and development. They are encouraged to participate in training, mentoring, evaluation, and regional WECAN activities, and to work to improve the health and vitality of the program as an organism. Registered Initiatives are also encouraged to begin to look beyond their regions to cultivate relationships with the wider Waldorf early childhood movement in North America and worldwide.

Registered Initiative programs in Mexico are encouraged to collaborate with other colleagues in Mexico through active engagement with Asociación Mexicana de Escuelas Waldorf Steiner (AMEWS).

**Required Change of Status:**

Registered Initiatives that do not fulfill their responsibilities or no longer meet the criteria will lose Registered Initiative status. The teachers or caregivers may continue as Individual Members.

**Associate Membership**

WECAN Associate Membership is available to home programs and other early childhood-only programs, as well as early childhood programs in schools, that meet the criteria listed below. The WECAN Membership Coordinator and Regional Representatives help guide the applicant through the process by offering information, advice, and referrals for site visitors.

**Associate Membership Application Steps:**

1. Request the Associate Membership Application Instructions from the WECAN Membership Coordinator at [membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org).
2. Complete an Application Form and send the \$200 application fee to WECAN.
3. Complete and submit a Self-Study within 12 months of the date of application.
4. Arrange for a site visit and pay the WECAN the site visit fee of \$380 for a one-day site visit or \$650 for a two-day visit. (Please note that once the program becomes a member, the site visit fee for future visits will be covered by membership dues.)
5. Once the visit is complete, review and approve the Site Visit Report.

**Criteria for Associate Membership are as follows:**

- The program has functioned as a program inspired by Waldorf education for at least one year, with a minimum of six children in regular attendance.
- The program is committed to the ideals and practices of Waldorf early childhood education and anthroposophy.
- The program is in the process of becoming aligned with the WECAN Shared Principles and Expectations for Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education.
- The program complies with the [AWSNA Service Mark Guidelines](#).
- The program is operating within the guidelines of its local municipality. (Legal requirements vary by location.)
- The program intends to support and contribute to Waldorf early childhood education in North America.

**Benefits of Associate Membership:**

- Listing in the WECAN online membership directory and the IASWECE World Directory of Waldorf Kindergartens and Early Childhood Programs.
- Permission to include in the program's literature and on its website: "An Associate Member of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America" and to use the WECAN Associate Member logo.

- An annual subscription to WECAN's *Gateways* newsletter.
- A 10% discount on WECAN books for members in the United States.
- A 20% discount on WECAN books for members in Mexico and Canada (in recognition of high exchange rates and shipping costs).
- Communications from WECAN and IASWECE.
- Invitations to regional WECAN gatherings.
- An invitation for all educators and caregivers in the program to subscribe to the WECAN Community Hub.
- Group discounts on Individual Memberships for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program.
- Eligibility for AWSNA Teacher Education Loans and Grants for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program who are enrolled in WECAN-recognized early childhood trainings.
- Invitations to select AWSNA forums and webinars.

#### **Responsibilities of Associate Membership:**

- Payment of WECAN dues in the amount of 0.3% of early childhood tuition income, or a minimum of \$300.00.
- Submission of annual updates of contact information, program data, and substantive change.
- Completion of a self-study and a site visit every three years.

WECAN Associate Members are engaged in a process of growth and development on their path to recognition as Full WECAN Members. They are encouraged to develop a program of training, mentoring, and evaluation for their teachers and caregivers, and to work to improve the health and vitality of the program as a whole. They are also encouraged to support their early childhood educators to participate in regional WECAN activities and to begin to look beyond their regions to cultivate relationships with the wider Waldorf early childhood movement in North America and worldwide. A portion of their dues supports the international activities of the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE).

**Required Change of Status:** Associate Members who do not fulfill their membership responsibilities or no longer meet the criteria for Associate Membership will lose their membership status. The teachers or caregivers may continue as Individual Members.

## **Full Membership**

Associate Members are encouraged to apply for Full WECAN Membership when they are sufficiently established to meet the criteria below. The WECAN Membership Coordinator and Regional Representatives help guide the applicant through the process by offering information, advice, and referrals for site visitors.

#### **Full Membership Application Steps:**

1. Request the Full Membership Application Instructions from the WECAN Membership Coordinator at [membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org).
2. Complete an Application Form and send the \$200 application fee to WECAN.

3. Review the previous Self-Study and Site Visit Report.
4. Complete a Self-Study, including comments on how the early childhood program has addressed the recommendations made by the site visitor in the previous report, and submit it within 12 months of the date of application.
5. Arrange for a WECAN site visit.
6. Once the visit is complete, review and approve the Site Visit Report.

**Criteria for Full Membership are as follows:**

- The program has functioned as a program inspired by Waldorf education for at least three years with children in regular attendance.
- The program is committed to the ideals and practices of Waldorf early childhood education and anthroposophy.
- The program can stand as a representative of Waldorf early childhood education in the world through its alignment with the Shared Principles and Expectations for Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education.
- The program complies with the [AWSNA Service Mark Guidelines](#).
- The program is operating within the guidelines of its local municipality. (Legal requirements vary by location.)
- The program has demonstrated viability in terms of finances, enrollment, personnel and administrative structure.

**Benefits of Full Membership:**

- Permission to include in its literature and on its website: “A Full Member of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America” and to use the WECAN Full Member logo.
- Listing in the WECAN online membership directory and the IASWECE World Directory of Waldorf Kindergartens and Early Childhood Programs.
- Two annual subscriptions to WECAN’s *Gateways* newsletter.
- A 20% discount on WECAN books for members in the United States.
- A 30% discount on WECAN books for members in Mexico and Canada (in recognition of high exchange rates and shipping costs).
- Communications from WECAN and IASWECE.
- Invitations to regional WECAN gatherings.
- An invitation for all educators and caregivers in the program to subscribe to the WECAN Community Hub.
- Group discounts on individual memberships for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program.
- Eligibility for AWSNA Teacher Education Loans and Grants for early childhood educators and caregivers in the program who are enrolled in WECAN-recognized early childhood trainings.
- Invitations to select AWSNA forums and webinars.
- For early childhood-only programs that do not have, or ever intend to add, grades programs: Permission to use the name “Waldorf” and other Service Mark terms in the program’s title or by-line. (See [AWSNA Service Mark Guidelines](#))

**Responsibilities of WECAN Full Members:**

- Payment of WECAN dues in the amount of 0.35% of early childhood tuition income or a minimum of \$400.00.
- Submission of annual updates of contact information, program data, and substantive change.
- Completion of a self-study and a site visit every five years. (AWSNA Full Member schools may align their WECAN renewal rhythm with their AWSNA accreditation rhythm, usually every 7-10 years, and use an abbreviated WECAN renewal process. See *AWSNA Accreditation and WECAN Membership Renewal* below.)
- For WECAN Full Members that are not members of AWSNA: Payment (via WECAN) to the AWSNA Teacher Education Loans and Grants fund in the amount of 0.065% of tuition income.

**Full WECAN Members are encouraged to:**

- Engage with their colleagues in the movement and with the wider world as fully established, healthy representatives of Waldorf early childhood education,
- Support their early childhood educators to participate in regional and association-wide WECAN activities, as well as international activities, as opportunities arise.
- Participate in mentoring and advising new initiatives in their regions,
- Host regional WECAN gatherings from time to time,
- Participate in collaborative working groups and research groups sponsored by WECAN.

**Required Review of Status:**

Full Members who do not fulfill their membership responsibilities or no longer meet the criteria for Full Membership will undergo a review by the Membership Committee and may lose their membership status.

## **WECAN Activity and Collegueship within Regions**

WECAN members have various opportunities for colleagueship within the association regionally. Many programs develop relationships with other local members and find that visiting and observing another program is beneficial for the program being visited and the visitor. We encourage this type of engagement and are happy to provide contacts and introductions as needed. Regional gatherings and conferences offer important opportunities for colleagues to meet one another, share questions, and participate in deepening their work. In some regions, colleagues meet very informally in small gatherings or remotely; in other regions, these meetings have evolved into large regional conferences or regular monthly gatherings.

The WECAN Board has invited experienced Waldorf early childhood educators and caregivers in each region to act as WECAN Regional Representatives. Regional Reps are our on-the-ground connection to each region, and their collaborative efforts strengthen the movement. While Regional Reps do not solve problems for member programs or get involved in their decision-making, they may be able to provide a listening ear for members to discuss activities and issues of concern. In some regions, there are teams of WECAN Regional Representatives. These individuals, who serve the Waldorf early childhood movement as volunteers, work to meet the following

regional responsibilities in a manner that best supports the needs of their particular region or sub-region.

- Welcome new initiatives through offers of support and collaboration within the region.
- Assist programs with their steps on the membership path, including offering information, advice, and referrals for site visitors; reviewing Self-Studies and Site Visit Reports; and making recommendations regarding membership to the WECAN Membership Committee.
- Contact members to explore activities and shared issues of concern.
- Facilitate collaboration within the region, including a regional gathering of early childhood colleagues or a regional conference.
- Share regional trends with the WECAN Board.

You can find a list of Regional Representatives on the [Contact Us Page](#) of the WECAN website. Feel free to reach out to a Regional Rep with your questions or ideas for regional collaboration.

## Collaboration with AWSNA

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) is the membership organization for independent Waldorf schools in North America. AWSNA recognizes the importance of early childhood programs as a basis for healthy school development and supports WECAN in taking an active role advising new and developing early childhood initiatives to further Waldorf education. Some WECAN Members are schools with grade-school programs that have joined or plan to join AWSNA as members. The membership processes for WECAN and AWSNA are closely linked, and the following agreements and integrated membership processes have been made.

### **AWSNA Requirements for Schools with Early Childhood Programs:**

AWSNA member schools with early childhood programs are expected to maintain an equivalent or higher membership status in WECAN than their AWSNA membership. Schools applying for AWSNA Associate Membership are expected to be Associate or Full Members of WECAN. Schools applying for AWSNA Full Membership are expected to be WECAN Full Members.

### **AWSNA Support Visits and WECAN Membership Renewal:**

AWSNA Associate Member schools receive AWSNA support visits. In some cases, the AWSNA visit may be used to fulfill the requirement for a WECAN Associate Member or Full Member renewal site visit (every three years and every five years, respectively). Schools considering this option should inquire about their eligibility with the WECAN Membership Coordinator.

### **AWSNA Accreditation and WECAN Membership Renewal:**

Full Member WECAN schools are eligible to align the WECAN renewal process with the AWSNA accreditation process, putting both membership processes on the same renewal schedule. Schools preparing a Self-Study for AWSNA accreditation will submit an Abbreviated WECAN Self-Study to WECAN. A separate WECAN site visit is also required to complete the renewal. Complete instructions for aligning WECAN Full Membership renewal with AWSNA accreditation are available by request from the WECAN Membership Coordinator.

## **The International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education**

WECAN is a Full Member Association in the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE), based in Dornach, Switzerland, and founded in 2006. Member Associations represent more than 3 dozen countries on 6 continents. Each association has representation on the IASWECE Council, which meets twice yearly. WECAN has two representatives on the council who share a picture of our work in North America with the council and report to WECAN members on the activities of IASWECE. WECAN Associate and Full Members provide a membership contribution as part of their annual WECAN dues to support the activities of IASWECE.

The activities of the International Association include the following:

- Cooperation among colleagues throughout the world through meetings, conferences, and working groups;
- Deepening and renewing the work with the young child out of the sources of Waldorf education and support for its quality;
- Fostering training and continuing development of caregivers and early childhood educators;
- Undertaking and supporting collaborative research on contemporary questions about the care and education of the young child;
- Supporting collaboration with parents, other educators, and the wider society on the needs of the young child;
- Protecting the name of Steiner/Waldorf early childhood education;
- Providing resources, information, and publications on Waldorf early childhood education and its programs worldwide;
- Offering support—pedagogical and financial—for projects in countries around the world.

To find out more about the international association, please visit the [IASWECE website](#).



## **Appendix I: The Training of Waldorf Early Childhood Educators: WECAN Expectations**

### **For Educators Working with Children Ages Birth to Three**

#### **Supervisors, Directors and Lead Practitioners**

For practitioners responsible for the development and quality of care and education of the birth to three program, completion of a Waldorf birth to three teacher education program recognized by WECAN is expected.

This is the expectation for practitioners working with children from birth to three, including childcare providers in center or home-based care, childcare supervisors/directors, and educators who facilitate parent-child classes or classes for expectant parents.

Recognized Waldorf early childhood birth to three teacher education programs offer a minimum of 300 class contact hours, plus mentored teaching and extensive practicum or internship experiences. This coursework can be in a WECAN recognized birth to three training program or can be part of a birth to seven training if it contains sufficient birth to three coursework. The Shared Principles for Early Childhood Teacher Education (found on the WECAN website in the WECAN Teacher Education Membership Handbook) describe the course content, fieldwork component, and curriculum guidelines for recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs. (Please also see the WECAN Curriculum and Course Content Areas in Appendix I.)

#### **Assistants, Support and/or Beginning Practitioners**

For practitioners working with a trained lead educator, supervisor or director in any of the above-listed classes or programs, introductory coursework of at least one week (or its equivalent) and at least one week of observation in Waldorf birth to three early childhood education is expected. This would be followed by a minimum of one year of mentoring in their place of employment. For those who intend to continue in this position, further coursework and a full WECAN-recognized birth to three training is expected.

Ongoing yearly participation for at least one week in early childhood mentoring, evaluation, conferences, deepening courses, and workshops is an essential part of the continuing professional development for all Waldorf birth to three practitioners.

*Note: Early childhood educators already trained in birth to seven who take responsibility for a Waldorf program serving children from birth to three are expected to complete a WECAN recognized birth to three training or its equivalent.*

*Early childhood educators who have completed a birth to three training who take responsibility for a program serving children from three to seven are expected to complete a WECAN recognized birth to seven training or its equivalent.*

## **For Educators Working with Children Ages Three to Seven**

### **Lead Educators and Caregivers**

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

This is the expectation for lead early childhood educators working with children from three to seven, including nursery, pre-school and kindergarten teachers and lead extended care providers in Waldorf schools, home programs and other early childhood settings.

Recognized Waldorf birth to seven early childhood teacher education programs offer a minimum of 450 class contact hours\*, plus mentored teaching or extensive practicum or internship experiences. The Shared Principles for Early Childhood Teacher Education (found on the WECAN website in the WECAN Teacher Education Membership Handbook) describe the course content, fieldwork component and curriculum guidelines for recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs. (Please also see the WECAN Curriculum and Course Content Areas in Appendix I.)

### **Assistants and Support Caregivers**

For assistant teachers, in the above programs, introductory coursework of at least one week (or its equivalent) in Waldorf birth to seven early childhood education is expected. For those who intend to continue in this position, further coursework is expected, and a full WECAN-recognized birth to seven training is recommended.

Ongoing yearly participation for at least one week in early childhood mentoring, evaluation, conferences, deepening courses, and workshops is an essential part of the continuing professional development for both lead and assistant Waldorf early childhood educators.

This expectation is consistent with the guidelines of the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (see [www.iaswece.org](http://www.iaswece.org)).

*Note: Early childhood educators already trained in birth to seven who take responsibility for a Waldorf program serving children from birth to three are expected to complete a WECAN-recognized birth to three training or its equivalent.*

*Early childhood educators who have completed a birth to three training who take responsibility for a program serving children from three to seven are expected to complete a WECAN-recognized birth to seven training or its equivalent.*

## **Expectations for WECAN Member Schools and Early Childhood Programs**

The Full Member program is expected to demonstrate a commitment to hire lead early childhood educators and caregivers (for nursery, kindergarten and pre-school positions, for childcare providers in center or home-based care, childcare supervisors/directors, and educators who

facilitate parent-child classes or classes for expectant parents) who have completed or are currently enrolled in a WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education program.

If a Full Member program is unable to hire a trained early childhood educator/caregiver for a lead position and hires someone without training, or if an assistant moves into a lead position, the program is expected to strongly encourage the educator/caregiver to enroll in a part-time training course and provide some financial support if possible. (For educators/caregivers at member programs, there may be AWSNA teacher training loan funds available for support as well).

The Full Member program is expected to demonstrate a commitment to mentoring and evaluation of the early childhood faculty, as well as supporting other professional development opportunities.

The Associate Member program is expected to demonstrate that they are working toward meeting the above expectations.

## **Demonstrating a Commitment to WECAN Expectations**

During its WECAN membership process, the program is asked to provide information about the level of training of each of its early childhood faculty members. The program should describe the training plans for lead educators/caregivers who have not yet completed a training course, and should also describe policies and plans for ongoing teacher education for all early childhood faculty, or demonstrate equivalency for non-recognized trainings.

If during the membership process it becomes apparent that a program is not demonstrating a commitment to the WECAN Shared Principles and WECAN Expectations regarding the training of teachers, then the WECAN site visitor will engage with the program around this question, to support the program in actively taking steps to work toward 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 program to encourage further work with the Expectations.

Curriculum and Course Content Areas included in WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be found in Appendix II. A list of WECAN-recognized Waldorf early childhood teacher education programs can be on the [WECAN website](#).

We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions about the situation in your program. You can contact Laura Mason, Membership Coordinator, at [membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:membership@waldorfearlychildhood.org), or Ruth Ker, Teacher Education Coordinator, at [teachered@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:teachered@waldorfearlychildhood.org).

## **Appendix II: WECAN Curriculum and Course Content Areas**

### **Birth to Three Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs**

WECAN-recognized birth to three training programs offer a minimum of 300 class contact hours. Curriculum and course content include the following areas, with the understanding that program elements may be configured in a variety of ways. Note: Although content related to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) is only listed explicitly in sections 2 and 4 (Racial and Cultural Identity Development and Literacy); IDEA content is expected to be applied throughout all curriculum and course content topics.

#### **1. Anthroposophical Studies and Human Development (20 – 25%)**

- Evolution of consciousness
- Karma, destiny and biography
- Anthroposophical view of the human being
- Spiritual foundation of the human being
- Path of inner development of the adult/educator
- Life and work of Rudolf Steiner

#### **2. Child Development and Waldorf Education (20 -25%)**

- Racial and Cultural Identity Development
- Child development pre-birth to twenty-one with a focus on embryology and the first three years in the context of the whole lifetime
- Development of movement, speech and thinking in the first three years
- Understanding the role of the will in the first three years in the context of the first seven years
- Importance of healthy attachment as a foundation for relationship, developed through daily life and in the physical care of the child
- The Pikler Institute research and practice in infant and toddler motor development and care
- Sensory development/emphasis on the foundational senses
- Supporting self-directed movement as a primary learning experience for infants, toddlers and nursery ages
- The importance of free play
- The integration of the reflexes and the seven life processes
- Imitation
- Sleep, health and nutrition
- Child observation and study

#### **3. Practical and Artistic Activities for the Birth to Three Program (20 – 25%)**

- Creating programs for infants, toddlers, nursery groups and parent and child programs.
- Rhythm of the day, week and year
- The young child's relationship to festivals and celebrations
- Indoor and outdoor environments for young children
- Meaningful, purposeful work, including daily life activities such as meal preparation and care of the physical environment

- Speech and gesture, including verses, rhythmic games, hand gesture games, simple stories and puppetry
- Singing, music and mood of the fifth
- Working with mixed-age groups
- Bodily care of the young child
- Gardening and working in nature
- Hygienic and therapeutic approaches

#### **4. Professional and Social Aspects of Waldorf Education (10 – 20 %)**

- Racial and Cultural Literacy
- Working with parents
- Working with colleagues
- Working with diversity and inclusion
- Basic knowledge of program administration, organization and social transformation
- Outreach and advocacy for children

#### **5. Artistic and Handwork Activities for the Self Development of the Educator (20 – 25%)**

- Eurythmy
- Spatial Dynamics
- Painting
- Sculpture – beeswax, clay modelling and/or woodcarving
- Instrumental music and singing
- Speech
- Handwork and crafts - working with natural materials

#### **6. Independent Research Project**

#### **7. Mentored Teaching, Practicum or Internship in an Established Waldorf Birth to Three**

**Setting.** In addition to the above course content, birth to three programs require a minimum of the following:

- **In-service students** (those working at least three 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 be in their own classroom, one week may be in another classroom in the same childcare center, and at least one week must be in a childcare center other than their own) and two additional days each year of mentoring visits in their own classroom.
- **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 (twenty days) 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.

Additional coursework, fieldwork observation or practicum experience may be required at the discretion of the training Institute.

## **Birth to Seven Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs**

WECAN-recognized birth to seven programs offer a minimum of 450 class contact hours\*.

Curriculum and course content include the following areas, with the understanding that program elements may be configured in a variety of ways. Note: Although content related to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) is only listed explicitly in sections 2 and 4 (Racial and Cultural Identity Development and Literacy); IDEA content is expected to be applied throughout all curriculum and course content topics.

### **1. Anthroposophical Studies and Human Development (20 – 25%)**

- Evolution of consciousness
- Karma, destiny and biography
- Anthroposophical view of the human being
- Spiritual foundation of the human being
- Path of inner development of the adult/educator
- Life and work of Rudolf Steiner

### **2. Child Development and Waldorf Education (20 -25%)**

- Racial and Cultural Identity Development
- Child development pre-birth to twenty-one
- First grade readiness
- Overview of Waldorf education
- Sensory development/emphasis on the foundational senses
- Role of imitation and free play
- Development of movement, language and thinking in the first seven years
- Development of the will
- Child observation and study
- Health, nutrition and sleep

### **3. Practical and Artistic Activities for the Classroom (20 – 25%)**

- Rhythm of the day, week and year
- Festivals and their celebration
- Indoor and outdoor environments for young children
- Meaningful, purposeful work and domestic arts
- Language arts – speech, verses, hand gesture games, fairy tales and stories, puppetry
- Singing, music and mood of the fifth
- Rhythmic games, movement, gesture
- Working with mixed-age groups
- Bodily care of the young child
- Gardening and working in nature
- Hygienic and therapeutic approaches

### **4. Professional and Social Aspects of Waldorf Education (10 – 20 %)**

- Racial and Cultural Literacy
- Education towards social renewal

- School organization
- Working with colleagues
- Working with parents
- Outreach and advocacy for children
- Working with diversity, inclusion and equality

#### **5. Artistic and Handwork Activities for the Educator (20 – 25%)**

- Eurythmy
- Painting
- Sculpture – beeswax, clay modeling and/or woodcarving
- Instrumental music and singing
- Speech
- Handwork and crafts- sewing, knitting, soft toy making (dolls, marionettes, etc.), plant dyeing, felting and working with natural materials
- Spatial Dynamics

#### **6. Independent Research Project**

#### **7. Mentored Teaching, Practicum or Internship in an Established Waldorf Early Childhood**

**Setting.** In addition to the above course content, programs provide a minimum of the following:

- **In-service students** (those working at least three days per week in a Waldorf early childhood classroom) must have a minimum of three weeks (fifteen days) of observation and practicum during the course of their training (of which at least two weeks must be in classrooms other than their own and one week must be away from their own school/center), and two days of mentoring per year in their own classrooms.
- **Pre-service students** (those not yet working at least three days a week in a Waldorf early childhood setting) must have a minimum of two weeks (ten days) of observation and six weeks (thirty days) of practicum with experienced Waldorf EC teachers and will be visited during a practicum by an institute-approved advisor at least once during their training.

Additional coursework, field work, observation or practicum experience may be required at the discretion of the training institute.

*\* Institutes embedding birth to three training in birth to seven training should anticipate that it will require at least an additional 50 hours.*