

**Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor**  
**Early Childhood Scope and Sequence**

2022-23

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# The Early Childhood Program

## Overview

The Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor houses one of over 2000 Waldorf Early Childhood and Kindergarten programs in 80 countries around the world. The RSSAA Early Childhood is a fully accredited Waldorf program recognized by both the Association of Waldorf Schools in North America (AWSNA), the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN), and the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

The Rudolf Steiner School Lower School campus on Newport Road houses the Early Childhood Program as well as Grades 1-8. The Lower School building is located on 12 lovely acres of fields and woods, and our grounds include a Kindergarten play area and an organic/biodynamic garden.

For the Waldorf student; language arts, math, the sciences, literature, foreign languages, the arts, music and movement become more than subjects to read about, be ingested and then tested upon. These subjects are fully experienced through a curriculum that integrates every subject into the material being presented daily and weekly. Through these experiences, Waldorf students cultivate their intellectual, emotional, social and physical capacities as individuals.

The goals and directives of the Early Childhood Program are simple but deeply foundational to the health and well-being of the growing child. Teachers support the development of the four lower senses and work with early movement patterns to support healthy and harmonious development.

## Parent Child

The Parent Child Program is designed to meet the needs of children from birth through 36 months of age. A parent, or caregiver, attends the class one morning a week for 2 hours. Each class has up to 6 families. The morning begins outside so that families can arrive at their own pace with their little ones.

In the Parent Child Program, parents build community and are introduced to Waldorf education and the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor. The teacher works to encourage connection and support between families who have similar aged children. In order to foster discussion, participants study Waldorf inspired child development and parenting books and articles on an ongoing basis.

The curriculum and activities in the Parent Child class are designed to nourish the home life. Parents and children are given a connection to the seasons through story, lap games, circle, songs, festivals and crafts. The stories and circles repeat for multiple weeks while most crafts are completed in one to two sessions.

The room is prepared with the young child in mind as it is set with developmentally appropriate toys to stimulate play and movement. Teachers work to be a model of caring for the physical space and for the families. A nourishing snack is provided, and families enter a room with a nicely set table. Teachers help with conflict between children by modeling, using respectful listening, or redirection.

### **Mixed Age Classrooms**

At the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor, we find a mixture of children in age and development helps to create a healthy environment for growth. There are many benefits to having mixed age classes, both in the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten settings. Just like a family, the mixed age model gives a sense of community and caring for one another. Older children help the younger children with challenging tasks, while boosting their own self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. At the same time, younger children feel taken care of and show such love and appreciation. During both work and play times, older children are given the opportunity to set an example for the younger students, who then call upon their higher selves and rise to the occasion. This does not happen in the same way with a class of same aged peers!

The diversity in background and experience that the mixed age classroom provides helps to foster learning through play and social interactions. While the three-year-old has such open-hearted excitement to add to play and is completely living in the present, the six-year-old is using their executive functioning and often uses most of playtime to plan. The older children are inspired by the younger children's enthusiasm and the younger by the creative thought and planning of the older children. Social challenges always arise in the classroom. In the mixed age model children must consider the other child's point of view work while working on many different levels of understanding to mediate and resolve conflict.

Instead of feeling behind or pressure from their peers, children can develop their skills at their own pace in a mixed age classroom. This allows for the child to feel inspired by what others are doing without feeling shame that they have not accomplished it yet. They can develop at their own rate. This is a gift of time in a rushed world. The children also can see what tasks will come as they get older. In our program certain tasks are saved for certain ages. This helps to build an anticipation and excitement for what is to come in the classroom.

During the Early Childhood years, children thrive from rhythm and predictability. Returning to the same classroom for multiple years allows the child to feel deeply comfortable and connected to their environment. Children can form deep bonds with their teacher, and the teacher gets to know each child intimately. This allows the teacher to offer great solace in times of distress and to be a constant in the child's life. As the child grows and matures, the teacher can see his/her development and be a strong support when the child faces challenges.

### **Pre-Kindergarten (Children ages 3-5)**

Our Pre-Kindergarten Program is created specifically for the younger child. Designed by our Early Childhood Faculty, the program's unique daily rhythm is filled with reverence for the magic of early childhood. A smaller classroom setting allows the children to comfortably feel a part of a bigger group and experience a gentle transition into the school setting. In this group the children can work on their new found love for social play and continue to build their imagination and creative thinking. Plenty of free play both indoors and out provides the child with the perfect stage for whatever their imagination can conjure.

Each day contains rich language provided through stories, puppet plays, finger games, songs and movement circles. The Pre-Kindergarten students participate in a German or Spanish immersion circle with our expert world language teachers twice per week. Through these activities the child continues to build his or her literacy and language skills.

The Pre-Kindergarten Program focuses on encouraging self-care skills in the young child. The confidence that the child gains through activities such as putting on outdoor gear or preparing snack gives him/her a sense of confidence while developing fine and gross motor skills. Each child completes many crafts throughout the year ranging from lanterns for our Festival of Light, rolling candles near the holiday seasons, felting wool balls or sewing a gift for a loved one. Every week the class enjoys the wonderful color experience of watercolor painting. The children thrive in this balanced and caring atmosphere that lays a firm foundation for academic success.

### **Kindergarten (Children ages 4-6)**

Children under the age of six learn primarily through imitation and activity. Thus, in our kindergarten the children engage in creative play with home activities and with simple, natural materials that encourage the imagination and support their early academic development. Our curriculum introduces Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Science, Mathematics, Movement and the Arts in a way that comes naturally to the children and is closely supported by the teachers.

Rhythms of the seasons and festivals are woven into the daily activities. Kindergarteners start each day with a walk through the woods surrounding the campus. Through each season, they experience the natural wonders surrounding us. Upon returning to the school, the children gather for morning circle, singing and moving together with circle games, and seasonal poems and stories. There is a time to listen and watch as the teacher tells a fairy tale, nature story or presents a puppet play.

During free time, the children enjoy the use of various handmade, natural fiber toys and costumes. Each day highlights a special artistic activity such as watercolor painting, drawing, beeswax modeling and eurythmy. A wholesome snack and outdoor recess are also part of the daily rhythm.

### **The Golden Eagles First Grade Readiness Program (Children in their last year of the Kindergarten)**

The world begins to look differently for the six-year-old child as they undergo a tremendous physical, emotional and social change. There is a transformation in consciousness happening and though children at this age have a sense that something is changing, they are not able to put words to this new sensation. There is soon to be a parting from what they are most familiar with, a being plucked from the garden, and this change can exhibit itself in many ways. There are physical changes such as the change of teeth and elongation of limbs. Social-emotional developments such as a "first adolescence" takes place at this time as well. Children play with themes such as marrying each other, being the boss, teasing and giggling. They begin to have a sense of time and can relate more to the past and the future. During this very important transition into first grade it is essential to help guide and engage these children in ways that challenge them as well as honor where they are in their development.

Our program provides the wonderful experience of mixed age classes, which gives the opportunity for the children to build their leadership skills and help to care for others. As the oldest children in the Kindergarten class, the Golden Eagles are given special and more challenging tasks than their younger peers in order to prepare them for the additional demands of the Lower School curriculum. Though some of these tasks will take place in their home classroom, at specific times throughout the year they are given the opportunity to come together as a rising First Grade class.

In the Lower School children are expected to be able to sit at their desks and need to have the stamina to attend to main lessons. To help prepare them for these expectations the Golden Eagles spend more time on gross motor movement which helps to develop and organize the body. They also work on strengthening their fine motor skills through activities such as complex handwork, origami and woodworking projects. Time for the library and

gardening is also built into the program. These activities help the Golden Eagles to become more familiar with our building and grounds making the transition from the Kindergarten into the Lower School more seamless. The emphasis on stewardship in the Golden Eagle program is an added support helping to bridge these rising First Graders into the schoolwide community.

# Areas of Focus for Early Childhood

## Overview

While the Waldorf classroom focuses on fostering certain skill-sets and academic skills, the essential pieces of a child's learning and developmental growth are innately shaped by the surrounding adults and environment. Through truly observing the children and their development, one can continue to develop oneself and the environment to best meet the needs of the developing children and the love they have for the world around them.

## Physical Space

The quality of the physical space, both indoors and outdoors, is a core tenant of the Early Childhood curriculum. It is important to provide an atmosphere both indoors and out which encourages and allows the child to properly develop their senses and gives them the opportunity to strengthen and develop their bodies.

In the classroom we work with care to provide a home-like setting for the children. The classrooms are simple and beautiful with plenty of space for movement and play. The children are met with objects that nourish their senses. This includes open ended, natural toys and materials to foster creative play. It is important for the classroom to be a comfortable temperature to meet the children's sense of warmth as they are not yet able to regulate their own body temperatures. The sense of smell is also nourished with the delicious aromas of the hot snacks that we cook in the classroom each morning. Practical tools help the children engage in the real work of the classroom, from chopping vegetables for our snack to keeping the room neat and tidy throughout the day. Early learning is profoundly connected to the child's own physical body and sensory experience. Caring for the physical environment through cleaning and providing a harmonious and simplistic space, develops the care for items and the surrounding space within the children.

In our outdoor spaces we work to give the children a variety of different areas that will challenge them, work with large motor skills, and give them an appreciation for the beauty of nature. We have plenty of wooded areas where they can climb, build with fallen branches and see the variety of animals that live in and around the school. Teachers model the feeling of reverence and respect for the world around them, so the child's natural curiosity can begin to grow. We also have age appropriate play structures that help with movement, balance, and cooperation with others, for example waiting for a turn on a swing. These are in open, safe spaces that allow for more freedom in their movements and games. Outdoor play is a big part of our day and allows the children the unstructured playtime they need to foster physical maturation, social skills and imagination.

## Care

Love and warmth create the basis for development. In our program the teachers meet the children with joy, humor and happiness each day through words and gestures. It is through care and interaction that teachers work with children through moments of difficulty, using these experiences as a place where education can happen.

In the early years of life, children learn best from imitation. The adult's ability to provide an atmosphere where they truly feel gratitude, reverence and wonder, the children will be able to foster that within themselves. These qualities are expressed in the gestures that live between the adult and the child, the children's behavior towards one another, and the social relations between the adults in our program.

## Rhythm

In the Early Childhood teachers create a rhythm for each day, week and year. This rhythm allows for the child to truly live in the moment, not having to worry about what may or may not be coming next. Rhythm helps to create security, boundaries and a sense of knowing all is well because what comes next in the days and weeks ahead is not questioned, for it is simply what is done next. The rhythm is set by the Early Childhood teachers and has a natural breathing to it, allowing room for expansion and contractions. It is comprised of time to play outdoor and inside, language arts movement circle, story, daily activities, clean up, and snack. The afternoon consists of lunch, rest, and time outside to play.

In addition to a strong daily rhythm there is a rhythm throughout the week. The children can rely on the same snack and activity to take place each day and even before they know their days of the week, they can orient themselves through what is happening within the classroom.

Yearly rhythms are also created in the Early Childhood. Tradition and festivals build anticipation and excitement as well as the security of knowing what is to come. We begin our year with family picnics in the summer for students to get to know their peers and teachers. At the end of September, we hold a Michaelmas Harvest festival where families gather to mark the changing season and share a meal together. A Halloween parade brings magic to a parade through the forest, a puppet play and a themed snack. Throughout the fall and winter months we celebrate our light shining through the darkness with a Lantern Walk and Spiral of Light. These beautiful festivals connect to the celebrations that take place in cultures throughout the world during the winter season. In December we acknowledge Advent, Hannukah and Yalda, and the light that each brings in the dark, cold months. Children enjoy celebrating Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day during winter. This time of year is a great time to show acts of kindness and love. In the spring we hold a traditional

May Day celebration complete with May crowns and dancing. We finish our Early Childhood year with a picnic at a local lake. These events serve to hold the children in the rhythm of the year.

### **Free, Imaginative Play**

Play is the work of Early Childhood and is the mode of learning for young children. In our program we give ample opportunity for free, open-ended play both in the classroom and outdoors. This fosters the development of imagination, inner picturing, creativity and social interaction. Open-ended play also provides the opportunity for children to move and develop their physical bodies in a healthy way. The role of the Early Childhood teachers is to foster healthy play through the physical and social environment. Though children are encouraged to work through conflict independently, the teachers are always standing by to step in and assist in difficult situations. We work with Social Inclusion and try to assist in conflict through acting as observers rather than placing judgement.

Children can use play to work on things they are developing or to work through social, emotional or even media images that they are processing. For this reason, the teacher strives to not interrupt or stop play unless it is something that is negatively affecting the classroom or the other children.

### **English and Language Arts**

In the Early Childhood Language Arts is experienced every day in our Language Arts Circle time where we bring movement and speech together.

Language arts are brought through the speaking and singing of the teacher. The young child learns by imitation, so the Early Childhood teachers give attention to the example of their own enunciation and articulation. Through talking, singing, reading, storytelling, playing, and writing or drawing, the basis of children's language and literacy skills are being developed daily.

- Language arts circle, story and finger games allow the child to experience lateral dominance, directionality and build capacities in the brain that are essential for the skills needed to read and write. All of these are brought through movement, verse and melodies.
- Oral language skills are cultivated through storytelling and rich conversation. Children build their listening and attentive capacities as they learn new language and how to communicate with others. Play is paramount in being able to listen to one another and communicate. Teachers play listening games, use a variety of words (adjectives,

verbs, nouns, etc.). Vocabulary is also built through teachers encouraging children to describe things when there is confusion or a misunderstanding.

- Narrative skills are built through the repetition of our stories, pretend play, open-ended or “I wonder” questions, and the stories children make up at snack or free play.
- Print Awareness and motivation is fostered through having age appropriate books in the classroom and regular story times in which teacher’s read from books. Teachers write down and read recipes, as well as other things in the classroom so that children see the importance in writing. The Early Childhood faculty have created a recommended [book list](#).
- Phonological awareness is brought through rhyming, alliteration, syllable awareness, and identifying beginning and ending sounds. Teachers make sure that their speech is clear and correct. Many finger games and stories play with the above-mentioned awareness skills.
- Children develop comprehension skills, build vocabulary and practice following a sequential story line by listening to stories. Story also introduces grammar and syntax to the children which they can imitate
- The regular repetition of story, song and verse helps the children take the words and images in and make them their own through inner picturing and imagination. Repetition is important for neurological development and strengthens the developing memory capacities of the child.
- The recitation of poems, verses, songs and nursery rhymes helps the children develop speech articulation and a feeling for rhyme and alliteration. Finger games develop [fine motor skills](#) in the fingers which are connected to speech articulation.
- The teacher is an example of courtesy and fine manners (*please* and *thank you* are examples) and guides the children to the use of ‘kind words’ with each other.
- The children participate in [Eurythmy](#) each year. This focuses on rich language and sounds accompanied by [gross and fine motor movements](#).
- The children experience world languages through songs and poems, which are spoken and sung at circle time, rest time and blessings before meals. Our program serves as an introduction to the world language teachers and the sounds of the languages. Hearing another language helps the young child listen for sounds, which aids in the development of their primary language and listening skills.
- The foundation for writing is created through attention to developing [fine and gross motor skills](#). Children draw in class and show their teacher their picture, often describing it or communicating a wish to be written by the teacher to the birthday child.

## Mathematics

The children work with the mathematical functions throughout the school day. In the Early Childhood Program, the children experience counting, sorting, adding, subtracting, sequencing, and dividing through hands-on manipulation of objects during free play and the domestic activities the children participate in. In many ways the children have experiences that, while not intellectual in presentation, are building a natural foundation for the study of mathematics.

- As they collect toys, take things out of baskets, build houses, set up chairs for story time or set the table the children are working with the different mathematical functions and laws of physics.
- Simple finger plays and counting rhymes are sometimes done at circle time and feed the child's natural interest in the world of numbers. Games include counting up and counting down through addition or subtraction. There are also many jump rope songs and poems that bring math to the children in an experiential manner.
- The patterns, rhythm, and tempo of songs in the classroom help to support concepts such as counting, patterns and sequencing. Rhythm clapping can be found during songs and circle.
- Children gain an experience of the concept of measurement through baking bread and cakes, snack preparation and water play. Children pour their water at snack, working with volume.
- The folding of cloths and laundry gives a bodily experience of division. Cutting vegetables for snack give this experience as well.
- Setting the table for snack allows the children to focus on counting out the correct number of bowls, spoons, cups and place settings. They do subtraction when children are absent and they need fewer materials and addition when they need to add some for guests.
- During clean up time, children work with ordering as they put things back where they belong. They work with classifying sets as they sort through different types of blocks or play food and dishes.
- The sandbox provides a space in which children work with volume, sorting and stacking.
- Free play allows children to use various open-ended toys as representations of an item in their imagination. This is a beginning foundation for the abstract symbol of numbers.

- Many stories told in the classroom have aspects of mathematics. Some stories focus on sequencing, while others may include concepts of the four basic processes. Other stories have aspects of comparing such as “Three Billy Goats Gruff”.
- Cooking allows the child the experience of volume and division of parts of a whole through chopping and slicing.

## **Science**

In early childhood, the task is to keep the children's natural sense of wonder and reverence alive. The children's interest in the world around them is the foundation for later scientific study.

- Several hours are spent outside each day where children can explore the natural world freely. They discover insects, animals, birds and plants through their curiosity and play. This develops their observation skills and phenomenological experience of the natural world. The children take walks through our campus every morning and are able to observe the changes to the environment with each season.
- During indoor and outdoor free play, the children are given ample opportunity to explore, manipulate and observe their environment directly. They experience such things as the elements of nature, weather, growth, gravity, biology and mechanics in a natural way.
- The children’s questions are often met with answers from their teacher such as, “I wonder” or “what do you think it could be?”. These open-ended answers help the children to live into their imagination and develop creativity, critical thinking and a curiosity for the world around them.
- The children’s experiences are reinforced through stories and circle activities brought by the teacher. Circles, stories, nature tables and craft often have a seasonal theme that focuses on the changes happening in the world around them.
- Our school has a thriving gardening program that is brought to the children in a formal way during their Golden Eagle year.

## **Social Studies**

Social Studies examines the abstract and concrete aspects of the child’s environment and the world. Leading up to the first school or daycare experience, the child’s main exposure to society and culture is through their family and neighborhood. School offers a new aspect to their learning, looking at concepts such as history and time, economics, local and world environment, cultural diversity and geography. The children learn basic foundations of how to work together civically. Through engaging with peers and interacting with the democratic process of the classroom, the child builds their social learning.

- Spending time outdoors, gardening and having green practices in the classroom allow the children to connect to their immediate environment, forming a basis for the concept of ecological diversity. Through developing a love for nature, children are building their connection which they will use abstractly as they become its protectors.
- Pretend play allows the child to experience the democratic process of the world through their imagination. They take on different roles and make decisions, which they then must engage and interact with the other children in their play scenarios and in the classroom.
- The norms and values of our social system are built into the classroom through manners at snack, forming lines to go inside, or asking politely for a toy.
- Social concepts such as economics arise during free play. Children can open ice cream shops or stores, pretend selling or trading their goods.
- The concept of history comes from their recollection of their own life and others', figuring out the sequencing of events. Teachers make sure to use words such as *before, after, yesterday or tomorrow*.
- Geography is brought through direction, their relation to each other or to their location on the campus. Children learn landmarks through the play spaces and classrooms. They get to know the locations in the building through visiting the office, taking the laundry to the washer or visiting other classrooms. Children also build their own geographical structures in play using blocks and items in the classroom.
- Diversity is valued in the classroom. Teachers model how to listen and accept children's viewpoints, and how to treat and speak to one another. Teachers are cognizant of the stories and images that they choose, making sure that every gender and cultural group can feel represented. Through introductions to stories, new foods, or experiences, teachers show that they value diversity.
- Different community roles and are represented through the daily work in the classroom, free play and through stories. Archetypal roles such as a tailor, baker or carpenter are brought through story or circle. Play materials allow the child to become different members of the community to experience what that role does. The teacher makes sure that gender stereotypes are not surrounding roles.
- Rules in the classroom are brought from things such as children having to wash their hands after coming inside to not knocking over someone's block tower without asking. Some rules are set by the teacher or program, while others are created by the children during play. The teacher often gets the final say, showing that the democratic process allows the children's viewpoints to be heard, which may not result in their desired outcome.
- Teachers encourage children to help problem solve solutions to social problems.

- Teachers share stories from around the world via puppetry and storytelling.
- Festival life allows a window into different cultures and their practices.
- Making food for festivals or snack shares a cultural experience.
- Families are encouraged to share traditions from their culture, bringing stories, food, costumes or decorations.
- Community is fostered within the school and brought into the curriculum. The classroom community is created through the set of practices, rhythm and rules. Children share stories from their families, neighborhoods or communities.
- Spanish and German are taught at the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor with two goals – to develop a positive interest and attitude towards other cultures, and to develop a command of the individual language. Through experiencing another language, a student learns to see the world from another viewpoint, and gains access to another perspective on the world. In our Early Childhood, the languages are shared in individual blocks for several weeks at a time. Our language teachers join the class for a language arts experience outdoors that is imaginative and joyful.

### **Fine Arts and Handwork**

The teacher thinks of each room as an artistic experience from the wall paint to the toys and in the care that is put into nature tables. It is in this space that they will be creating art, whether it is in play or in a more formal experience.

In the Early Childhood the fine arts are integrated into the daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms of the group. Through music, movement and gesture and speech and language, art lives in the classroom throughout each day. During the week the children also take part in more structured artistic activities with a different activity taking place each day. The emphasis of these activities is the experience and process involved rather than the product resulting.

- The children engage in wet-on-wet watercolor painting every week. They are supplied with the three primary colors of paint and the other colors arise out of the blending of the primaries. Through their own experimentation the children take in experiences of colors and movement and they also learn to care for the materials properly.
- The children have regular opportunities to color with crayons, model with beeswax, and work with wood.
- Handwork is brought in a variety of ways in the Early Childhood. Simple sewing, wet felting, finger knitting, and weaving are some examples of projects that are brought to the children throughout the year.

- Seasonal crafts come at regular intervals to help celebrate the many festivals throughout the year. The children hand-dye silk for Michaelmas in the fall, make lanterns for the Festival of Light in the winter and make gifts for family members throughout the year. These crafts help to mark the seasons for the children in a tangible way.
- One can also think of domestic arts as an art form and the children participate in these as well. Bread baking and snack preparation are a part of the weekly rhythm as well as working to keep the classroom neat, tidy and beautiful.

## **Music**

In the Early Childhood, the musical experience for the children consists primarily of singing. Most songs are pentatonic, ideally mood of the fifth, to align with the dream-like nature of the young child. Songs are sung in unison, not harmony nor rounds. Children learn the songs by imitation of the teacher at circle time and various transition times. Rather than instructing the children to switch activities, a song is often used. Young children are open to the embracing quality of music and song helps to lead them into the desired activity. The teacher sometimes plays the lyre during rest time. Various percussion and pentatonic instruments are available for use by the children in their play. Pentatonic lyre and interval flutes are also in use and demonstrated by a music teacher that works with the oldest children in the kindergarten.

## **Movement**

Movement is an essential part of a fully balanced, healthy Early Childhood curriculum. At each stage of development, the children need to fully explore the strengths and capacities of their physical bodies -- learning new skills, developing physical confidence and honing their senses of balance, rhythm and self-control. Movement in early childhood also prepares the children for later academics. Crossing midlines and doing speech work with movements helps connect both hemispheres of the brain and lays the groundwork for later learning. Crawling trains the eyes to track from one side to another, a valuable exercise for blossoming readers.

- Activities built into the daily Language Arts Movement Circle give the children the opportunity to practice both fine and gross motor skills, motor planning, crossing the midline and working together as a class.
- Cooperative movement games and dances allow the children to practice and develop their evolving social skills such as how to wait for a turn, how to listen to each other and how to work together to organize and plan.

- Obstacle courses are often used to give children the opportunity to crawl, jump and balance.
- The children have ample amounts of time for free play which encourages movement all throughout the day.
- The vestibular system is built in a variety of ways throughout the Early Childhood day. Jumping, climbing, spinning, rocking and swinging are all movements that support the development of the vestibular system and are experienced each day during time both inside and outside.
- The proprioceptive system, or the system that regulates self-movement, is also developed in many ways in our program. Practical work such as gardening, woodwork and carrying heavy objects like groceries or laundry all work to build proprioception.

### **Self-Care**

Building independent self-care skills is an integral part of our Early Childhood program. Through daily tasks the children learn motor planning and sequencing as well as the practical skills needed to care for themselves and their environment.

- The children practice hand and eye control and fine motor skills through manipulating buttons and zippers and using utensils at the table.
- When getting ready to go outside the children practice gross and fine motor skills, crossing the midline as well as planning and sequencing. Dressing for cold weather is a multi-step activity that takes forethought and practice to accomplish independently.
- Through play and communicating their wants and needs to their teachers the children are perfecting their expressive language skills all throughout the day.
- The children all take part in care of the classroom. Gross and fine motor skills as well as planning and sequencing are very important in cleaning up toys, setting the table, washing dishes and other classroom tasks. Children show respect in their care for items. Items are hung with care on hooks with shoes and boots placed nicely underneath. They wash their dishes after snack, fold their aprons after painting and put items away where they belong.
- Preschoolers especially work on developing care for themselves during toileting and handwashing.
- Patience, focus and stamina are all important skills that are being developed when practicing selfcare skills.

### **Family Engagement**

To support a thriving school community, we offer a variety of ways for parents to engage with our Early Childhood Program.

- Each teacher offers a home visit for new students joining their class over the summer. This gives the child an opportunity to interact with their new teacher in their home environment where they feel most comfortable. Parents have the chance to ask questions and engage with the teacher as well. In addition, each class offers a summer picnic for classmates and parents to get to know each other before the school year begins.
- The Early Childhood Program hosts annual festivals to celebrate the joys of each season. All families are encouraged to attend and participate as we join as a group.
- In addition to our larger school festivals, we encourage families to share special celebrations or traditions with the class. We love to celebrate the diverse cultures that we house within our Early Childhood community.
- The Early Childhood compiles a Calendar of Events that includes all festivals, school activities, parent meetings and breaks so that parents are informed about upcoming events and opportunities to participate.
- Each year we encourage grandparents, relatives and other special people in the children's lives, to visit the classroom and take part in the Early Childhood experience. Teachers work to coordinate visits that work for each family throughout the year.
- The Early Childhood teachers acknowledge each child's birthday with a special celebration. The teacher and children make a cake and birthday cards in class. Parents, siblings and other family members are welcome to attend for a special story about the child's birth and to share in the birthday festivities.
- Visits for birthday celebrations are very special to the children and families, but often don't give a picture of the typical Early Childhood morning. For this reason, teachers offer opportunities for parents to visit and experience the rhythm of the Early Childhood day. Parents can take part in circle, snack and a classroom activity to further understand their child's school experience.
- Teachers send out regular emails that detail what each class has been doing during the week. In this way, parents stay informed about classroom activities and upcoming events.
- The Early Childhood Program publishes a monthly newsletter with seasonal happenings, activities, crafts, pictures and teacher notes.
- The Early Childhood and the greater school community offer a variety of educational events throughout the year. Guest speakers, lectures and films on a variety of topics,

from Waldorf pedagogy and child development to parenting in these fast-paced times are some of the offerings presented.

- Each Early Childhood teacher offers regular parent meetings throughout the year. The teachers share joys and challenges as well as answering questions and helping parents to gain a greater understanding of what is happening in the classroom. Teachers often lead biography exercises to strengthen the classroom community, do simple crafts with the parents and review articles on a variety of topics.
- The Rudolf Steiner School has a Parent Council, made up of teachers, administrators and parents. This group meets monthly to help organize school activities and to support the school community. All parents are encouraged to attend and participate.
- Every two weeks a different class provides refreshments and hosts Coffee Hour for all school families. This gives parents an informal time to relax and get to know each other while discussing topics that vital to school community.

## Glossary of Terms

Breathing – Also ‘expansion’ and ‘contraction’; the way in which the day is structured in the Early Childhood classroom to have time for structured activities (contraction) and unstructured play (expansion).

‘Crossing the Midlines’ – Reaching across an imaginary vertical line down the center of one’s body that divides into left and right sides of the body with both arms and legs ([Kidsense](#)).

Eurythmy – A performance art to make music and speech visible in an artistic format developed by Rudolf Steiner. In Waldorf schools, the Eurythmy teacher teaches through exercises, patterns and games with increasing complexity as the children grow. ([Waldorf Publications](#))

Executive Functioning – mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks successfully ([Harvard University Center for the Developing Child](#))

Fine Motor Skills/Movements – Fine motor skills are the ability to make movements using the small muscles in our hands and wrists. Activities that require fine motor skills include writing, picking up small objects and buttoning a shirt. ([The Understood Team](#))

‘First Adolescence’ – When a child mirrors many of the behaviors that one typically observes during the stage of adolescence.

Four Lower Senses – also known as the ‘four foundational senses’; the senses of touch (tactile), life, self-movement (proprioception), and balance (vestibular) ([Clark and Blanning, 2012](#)).

Gross Motor Skills/Movements – Gross motor skills involve movements of the large muscles of the arms, legs and torso. Activities that require gross motor skills include throwing a ball, climbing and running. ([The Understood Team](#)).

Inner Picturing – The ability to think of, or picture, an image or scene based on a story or song.

Mood of the Fifth – Refers to an indication of Rudolf Steiner that before age 9, children live musically in a five note range.

Motor Planning/Planning – the ability to conceive, plan and carry out a skilled, non-habitual motor act in the correct sequence from beginning to end ([North Shore Pediatric Therapy](#))

Pentatonic – A music scale consisting of five notes per octave.

Proprioceptive System – A system that includes receptors in the muscles that helps inform where one's body is in space and helps regulate movement.

Sequencing – the ability to order the activities/movements needed to complete an activity.

Social Inclusion – Supporting the rights of all children regardless of abilities, to participate actively in the school setting.

Vestibular System – A sensory system that is responsible for providing our brain with that allow us to keep our balance, stabilize our head and body during movement, and maintain posture, information about motion, head position, and spatial orientation; it also is involved with motor functions ([Khan S, Chang R, 2013](#)).

Wet on Wet Watercolor Painting – Watercolor painting on wet paper.