

NEWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STEINER/WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IASWECE)

Susan Howard, Board Member and IASWECE Representative for North America

We continue to celebrate the 100th anniversary year of Waldorf Early Childhood Education with recent celebrations in various countries around the world. The focus of our work this year, as expressed in the April World Conference in Dornach, is on cultivating qualities of kindness, strength, and love, as foundations for a healthy social future. Philipp Reubke, co-leader of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum, expressed it this way:

People today think that problems can be solved with power and violence, but real strength lives in gentleness and kindness: the ability to empathize with others, find solutions together, tolerate differences and view one's own actions in connection with other people.

Participants at the conference received many seeds to take home with them—actual seeds from the gardeners at the Goetheanum to plant at home, and inner seeds of inspiration, a sense of belonging, enthusiasm, and hope for the future.

And now, after a pause during our Northern Hemisphere summer, we begin a new year with the children, parents, colleagues, and communities. What new imaginations, impulses, and capacities are we cultivating in our gardens for children?

The IASWECE Council members—now from more than 40 countries on five continents—will meet in early October at Emerson College in Forest Row, England to ponder next steps in our world movement. We will be sharing our impressions from the conference and 100th anniversary celebrations around the world and reviewing the results of an international survey of Waldorf early childhood educators and trainers about what they see as the most essential issues and needs—and also possibilities—in our work with young children today.

We are also celebrating the 21st birthday of IASWECE, founded in October 2025 in Chatou, France, out of the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens. The earlier association was founded in 1969 by Dr. Helmut von Kuegelgen, Freya Jaffke, and Klara Hattermann in Germany, with a focus on supporting and advocating for the needs of the young child in a world where early childhood education was becoming increasingly academic, the view of the child increasingly materialistic, and the child's need for free, self-directed, creative play was increasingly under siege. We can see that the situation today continues to call for the protection and nurture of children and of childhood itself.

Many transitions are happening at this turning point, and the circle of colleagues who have carried this international work for many years is also changing. The IASWECE Council will say farewell to several beloved Council members who are now stepping back, including Louise deForest, who has represented North America on the Council for 20 years. The Council looks forward to welcoming new members, including Heather Church, who will join Susan Howard in representing North America. The three-person Coordinating Group responsible for carrying out IASWECE's activities will also change: Susan is retiring after 24 years and is welcoming and supporting Tina Iwersen, a kindergarten teacher from Helsinki, Finland, as she steps onto the Coordinating Group to work together with Lourdes Tormes in Madrid and Mary-G Häuptle in Cape Town, South Africa.

In these challenging, turbulent times, the IASWECE Council has expressed what its members consider to be the [Guiding Star](#) of our work together, as well as a statement of the [Spirit and Aims of Waldorf Early Childhood Education](#). We hope you will take a moment to read them, perhaps together with your colleagues.

We hope what these documents express resonates with you, and that you feel a sense of belonging to a world movement of colleagues working together to contribute, in the broadest sense, to peace education and the further development of the founding impulses of Waldorf education.

Please contact Susan Howard or Heather Church if you have questions about IASWECE, or would like to become more actively involved in supporting its worldwide activity. Please visit the website at www.iaswece.org.