

WECAN BOARD REPORT

Louise deForest, WECAN Board Chair

The WECAN Board is busily preparing for our first Board meeting in Mexico at the end of October. We will meet in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, and will have the opportunity to visit the five Waldorf Schools in the area and meet with the local teachers. While our Board meetings are always full, we will have time to visit local Mayan ruins and cenotes hidden away in the jungle. Many thanks to Gabriela Nunez and her local colleagues for preparing this special meeting.



As mentioned in our June Update, Magdalena Toran left the WECAN Board after 10 years of service. Over the years, Magdalena has led the Board in many new initiatives, including the Birth to Three Working Group, the WECAN Board Envisioning process, and opening the pathway for WECAN to grow and develop through the work with DEIJ in collaboration with several partnerships. Magdalena has the courage to ask the hard questions and has always been future-minded in her thinking. At the center of her work is love and deep respect - for the children and their parents, for Waldorf education, and for the process of becoming that we are all engaged in. We wish her well with her next steps in working with the earth at Natural Roots Farm.

The Board Committee has been busy putting into place our succession planning and preparing for Susan Howard's retirement in 2025. This has been moving along well and we feel confident that the transition will be a healthy and strengthening step for WECAN.

The last IASWECE (International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education) Council meeting took place in April in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Several Council members reported on the present situations in their countries:

In So. Korea, the State Department of Education has identified four core principles and two of those principles are, 'the child is always at the center of our work' and the 'importance of play'. This makes it easier for the 15 Waldorf Schools and the three teacher training Institutes there.

In France, Waldorf Schools are being attacked on a weekly basis. Schools undergo aggressive inspections on every level – financial, social and pedagogical - and the inspectors are generally very disrespectful. Recently, four Waldorf schools were given 8 days to close. However, there is now a law in France that three-year-olds must attend school, which may be a good thing for the Waldorf Schools. In France, the primary schools are under the Ministry of Education, while the EC programs are under the Ministry of Health, and the teaching certificates are different for each. This means that the EC only programs are a bit more protected than the schools.

In Thailand, there are 7-8 schools that are established Waldorf schools and another 5 are in the process of becoming Waldorf. They are now training their 5th generation of teachers (in a three-year training) and there is one Curative Education Course.

In Israel, there have been large demonstrations against the war. 20% of Israeli citizens are Arabs and serve in the Israeli military. Jews and Arabs from Gaza are joining forces against this war. Schools near conflict areas are closed, as is true in Ukraine.

2026 will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first Waldorf kindergarten. Many conversations are taking place about celebrating this event, and we hope you will share ideas for this event in your schools and with us. While there is still no complete plan for this anniversary year, we do want to honor the great teachers who came before us – the school founders of the early childhood movement and those educators who have made a lasting difference in Waldorf early childhood education. We encourage you to look into the biography of your school and acknowledge those courageous, future-oriented people who made Waldorf early childhood education their life's task.

Those of us on the WECAN Board send you our best wishes for another fruitful school year, full of challenges and delights.