

WECAN BOARD SHARED AGREEMENTS

Laura Mason on behalf of the DEI Committee and the Board

WECAN Shared Principle 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.”

Though we’re not actively working with children, the WECAN Board strives to function in a way that is consistent with our Shared Principles for early childhood programs. We believe that the work we do as a board is intricately woven together with that which happens in our member communities, among administrators, educators, and families. Together we form a strong and beautiful tapestry, woven of many different threads.

As the board has expanded and diversified over the last several years, it has been important to remain conscious in our collaborative work. How can we ensure that everyone in the circle is fully engaged, has a voice that is heard, and feels a sense of belonging? Can we create a space in which we can all participate on behalf of the whole without having to surrender our individuality?

In response to these questions, the DEI committee has spent the last two years leading the board through a process of forming shared agreements for our work in board meetings. We didn’t simply want a list of guidelines to follow. (In that case, we could have simply referred to pre-existing lists, easily found online.) We wanted agreements that reflect our diverse viewpoints and our collective culture as a board. To create this, we needed to work together.

Our work began during a multi-day in-person board meeting. In the first of three sessions, we broke into small groups and we brainstormed and listed what conditions might be necessary for each of us to bring our truest self to our work. We then shared our lists with the full group and identified redundancies. In the next session, we worked in small groups again to refine our lists and determine what felt most essential. In the third session, we combined our lists, reviewed them as one, and reflected on our process. It was agreed at that time that the agreements should live in our consciousness and be regularly reviewed and reflected upon.

The fall meeting that followed was online, which we proved to be more challenging in terms of keeping the agreements alive and present. Each board member was asked to read through the agreements on their own time and take them into their sleep. The following day, we reflected on them and further honed them in small groups, followed by large group sharing. We agreed at this time that the agreements would be a fixed part of each board meeting.

In our next spring meeting, which was also remote, we were better prepared to work with the agreements daily. Each day’s meeting opened with the full group reading the agreements aloud and with time for each person to inwardly consider which point they would focus on. In reflections at the end of each day, we had an opportunity to share which agreement we had worked with, what we found challenging, and where we experienced success. We found this daily check-in to be consciousness-raising and enlightening, and we look forward to keeping our agreements alive in a similar way in future meetings.

Our [WECAN Board Shared Meeting Agreements](#) are not a fixed list of meeting rules; they are a reflection of our ideal to fully meet one another as individuals in our work together. They are a living document to be revisited each time we meet, and to be renewed as needed. They support us in our social practices as a board, and we hope that the spiritual activity generated by our work strengthens the fabric of Waldorf early childhood education as a whole.

The Shared Meeting Agreements are just one example of the way our board culture has changed as a result of our deeper understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. The WECAN DEI committee was born in 2018. Although the name and membership of that group has changed significantly over these eight years, our commitment has only grown. We understand that this is an undertaking that is never done and that it's not simply an agenda item to be addressed independent of other topics. It's woven into everything we do, including our communications, conferences, publications, membership activity, and collegial work. We make mistakes and fall short, but we are always working toward a Waldorf early childhood movement that recognizes and respects the dignity of every individual.

We thank you all for joining us!

"A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living."

Rudolf Steiner