Highlights of the Year 2022-2023

The Work of the WECAN Board

The Board’s focus in 2022-23 was on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion as a pathway to a healthy social life. We engaged Alma Partners to support us in a yearlong DEIJ Self-Audit process. In the summer of 2022, we surveyed members and thoroughly reviewed our policies, procedures, publications, website, and other materials to identify areas that need improvement. In November, we held a two-day retreat with Alma Partners representatives to review the results and identify priorities, including the following: creating a space to be in right relationship with our communities; renewal of our mission and values statements; changes to Board policy, process and composition; revision of documents and membership processes; increasing access; and implementing anti-bias/DEIJ training for leadership.

With input from our Member Schools and Institutes and our I.D.E.A. Committee, we then revised our Shared Principles in keeping with our intentions to make the D.E.I.J. work a priority. The Board also continued to engage in succession planning and made commitments to a new Leadership structure to better meet the needs around us and the growth of our association. One of our most important decisions was to change the leadership structure of WECAN, moving from one Coordinator to two Co-Directors. The Board elected Heather Church, Board member, Board Committee member, Birth to Three Co-Coordinator, and Board Treasurer, to accompany Susan Howard as a Co-Director of WECAN, starting in July 2023.

Our Spring 2023 board meeting was the first time since the pandemic that every member of the Board was able to be present. Board members also had the pleasure of meeting with the WECAN staff members and were filled with gratitude to experience the extent of their work. In May, the board said goodbye to Board member Adrienne Doucette, who served as the Chair of the Board Committee and facilitated many of our meetings.

Membership

WECAN welcomed 2 new Associate Members in 2022-23: Golden Bridges in San Francisco, and the Juniper School in Columbus, Ohio, and one Associate Member, the Sunfield Biodynamic Farm and Waldorf School in Port Hadlock, WA, attained Full Member status.

WECAN membership in 2022-23 included 169 Full and Associate Member early childhood programs, and 15 teacher education institutes. The number of Registered Initiatives in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and on tribal lands grew to 22. The total number of organizational members and affiliates this year was 206, up slightly from the year before. WECAN also had 456 individual Members throughout North America this year.
Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA)

Our WECAN IDEA Coordinators, Lynn Turner and Leslie Wettonis-Woolverton, were actively involved in the DEIJ Self-Audit and continued to chair our IDEA Committee. They were also presenters at our February conference and offered a series of online community events on themes such as Weaving Threads of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Into Daily Classroom Rhythms.

Covid Research

We have all been deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, both personally and professionally. WECAN participated in an international research study by Neil Boland of the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand to explore how Waldorf early childhood educators in 40 IASWECE Member countries experienced the pandemic and its effects on the children, the families, and themselves.

WECAN published the full 126-page study findings in *Covid-19 Pandemic: Responses and Consequences in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Settings*. This is the first time such a large study has been undertaken on Waldorf early childhood educators worldwide, and the responses are varied and stimulating, offering opportunities to consider new ways of working.

Teacher Education

This year, WECAN Member institutes returned to in-person training and some made decisions to carry a small percentage of their courses online. Monthly North American Teacher Education and International Teacher Education Network online meetings focused on working with the students today and the relationship of anthroposophy to our work. We continued to carry the question, “Post covid, what is the new normal?” How do we need to make changes in our work to adapt to changing times.

In 2022-23, we celebrated the achievement of Full membership for Sound Circle Center, and the first joint membership processes with AWSNA, including site visits to Full Member institutes and virtual site visits with Associate Member Institutes.

Birth to Three

The WECAN Birth to Three Coordinators offered several Zoom Gatherings for colleagues working in Parent-Child, Child Care, and Home Care programs, who often work alone, through meeting and working on subjects together. It was heartwarming to have the opportunity to connect with these caregivers in a time when connections to each other were so needed.

WECAN also launched a new Parent Evenings Series focusing on supporting both parents and caregivers to deepen their understanding of the young child, support new teachers in their work with parents, and build bridges between parents and teachers. Dr. Blanning, M.D., presented three talks covering two important topics of childhood: anxiety, warmth, and sleep. These events were very well received by both parents and educators.

New WECAN Website

Through grant funding and the support of consultants, we redesigned our WECAN website with a new look and expanded resources for educators and parents, as well as a more user-friendly online bookstore. We are very pleased with the new website!
WECAN Conferences

Toward a Kinder More Compassionate Society - Finding Our Ways
300 Waldorf early childhood educators attended the February in-person WECAN Conference in Spring Valley, New York, and another 150 attended the online conference that followed. Pairs of presenters shared insights from their inner and outer work, and conversation groups took up questions on the conference theme. Presenters included Nancy Blanning and Anjum Mir, Lynn Turner, and Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton, and Laurie Clark and Stephanie Hoelscher. There was also a marionette performance of Harriet and the Stars, written by Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton and preformed by Leslie and friends, based on the life of Harriet Tubman.

Our colleagues in Mexico gathered to view the conference recordings in Spanish and participate in Spanish language discussion groups, thanks to the work of Gabriela Nuñez-Plata and her colleagues.

We would like to offer special thanks to our VIP Sponsors Mercurius, Sophia’s Hearth, Sunbridge Institute, and Waldorf Publications, for their generous support of the conference!

Support for Waldorf Early Childhood Around the World

WECAN supported the International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education and its worldwide projects through membership contributions that come from WECAN organizational membership dues. In 2022-23, WECAN was able to offer $29,000 in support of this international activity.

Conference participants also donated $6880 in support of the children, families, and educators in Ukrainian Waldorf early childhood communities.
WECAN Books

In addition to the twice-yearly Gateways newsletter, WECAN published the following books in 2022-23:

_Birth to Three in Education and Care: Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler, and the Very Young Child_
Edited by Heather Church
This book shares its title with the theme of the first conference of its kind hosted at Sophia’s Hearth Family Center in Keene, New Hampshire in 2020. The keynote speakers explored how Emmi Pikler and Rudolf Steiner inform educators’ work with very young children.

_Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society: Working Together Toward Change_
Edited by Susan Howard
This collection of keynote presentations by Meggan Gill, Keelah Helwig, and Joaquin Muñoz, as well as a wide variety of workshop summaries from the February 2022 online WECAN conference, is a timely and stimulating resource for working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in Waldorf early childhood programs and schools.

_COVID-19 Pandemic: Responses & Consequences in Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Settings_
by Dr. Neil Boland
This report on a study commissioned by the International Association of Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWEC) summarizes the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who work in Waldorf early childhood education around the world. It raises questions about well-being, resilience, relationships, and modified practice.
A few notes of explanation: WECAN members pay a portion of their membership dues to support IASWECE and this is shown as membership income and also as a dues/donation expense. Susan Howard, who is employed full-time by WECAN, works half-time for WECAN and halftime for IASWECE, and IASWECE donates funds to WECAN to support the personnel and other related costs for this activity. This accounts for the expense for international collaboration with IASWECE and the roughly equivalent amount of international support in donations from IASWECE.
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We are extremely grateful to our many friends and supporters, including individuals, kindergartens, foundations, businesses and other organizations, many of whom are listed below.

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2022-2023 Annual Report
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I.D.E.A. Coordinator, Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton, Silver Spring, MD

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