WECAN

2023–2024 ANNUAL REPORT FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS



The mission of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America is to foster a new cultural impulse for the work with the young child from pre-birth to age seven.

WECAN is committed to nurturing childhood as a foundation for renewing human culture.



WECAN Board

Highlights of the Year 2023-2024

The Work of the WECAN Board

WECAN had a productive year in many areas of activity. Inwardly, we focused on reviewing and revising our Mission Statement, Values Statement and Vision Statement to ensure these documents reflect our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. We also reviewed our new leadership structure, now with two Co-Directors, and experience that this enables us to offer more support where it is needed in North America.

The Birth to Three Committee and the I.D.E.A Advisory Circle worked closely together to host several webinars, which were much appreciated by a wide and diverse group of teachers and parents. Our online bookstore has been redesigned, and we have been able to move our publications activity forward. The WECAN website also offers an ever-growing number of resources for parents and eductors.

At the end of this school year, WECAN celebrated the accomplishments of I.D.E.A. activity by Lynn Turner and Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton, our I.D.E.A. Coordinators. While the three-year grant-funded project has come to completion, WECAN remains dedicated to continuing this essential work.

The Board also gave thanks to a long-time Board member, Magdalena Toran, who moved on to other pursuits, though she remains on our Birth to Three Committee.

The 100th anniversary of Waldorf early childhood education will be in 2026, with a World Conference in Dornach. The Board spent time sharing ideas and thoughts about how to celebrate this important moment in North America. Despite all the difficulties facing Waldorf schools around the world, thousands of young children each year are receiving healing impulses and laying a solid foundation for their futures through our early childhood programs. This is something to celebrate indeed.

Digital Media Working Group

The impact of digital media on the lives of children, families, and teachers is growing. How do we as educators talk with parents about this? How can we support children's well-being in the digital age?

In 2023-24, WECAN formed a Digital Media Group - Lisa Pitillo Bechmann, Tammy Caldwell, Janene Ping, and Susan Howard – to explore how WECAN can raise consciousness and offer resources and support to educators and parents around issues of screen time, big tech, and artificial intelligence. Group members are participating in the Early Childhood Work Group of the Children's Screen Time Action Network, gathering research on the effects of media on young children and Waldorf school media policies, and exploring a possible WECAN Statement on Media.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA)

The WECAN board continued to work consciously to advance IDEA in 2023-24. After completing our 3-year grant-funded project (as mentioned above), we agreed to form a new DEI committee of board members responsible for holding the DEI work of the board into the future. We also continued to host meetings throughout the year for parents, caregivers, and educators on IDEA themes.

To ensure that all WECAN site visits are objective, equitable, and supportive of the DEIJ work our programs are being asked to take up, we committed to hiring Alma Partners to design a course for WECAN site visitors. We began working with Alma Partners in designing the course in the spring of 2024. All site visitors will be expected to complete the course by the end of the 2025-26 school year, and others in the movement, including teacher trainers, regional reps, and the WECAN staff and board, have also been invited to participate.

Membership

The WECAN Path to Membership fosters a culture of self-study, peer review, and collaboration that strengthens and deepens our work on behalf of the young child. This year, the total number of organizational members and affiliates was 207, up slightly from the previous year. WECAN membership in 2023-24 included 172 Full and Associate Member early childhood programs, 15 teacher education institutes, and 20 Registered Initiatives in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and on tribal lands.

We're happy to share that we welcomed 2 new Associate Members in 2023-24: Del Mar Waldorf Initiative in Benito Juárez, Quintana Roo; and Polaris School and Centre in Ottawa, Ontario.

WECAN also offers an opportunity for early childhood educators to associate as individuals, beyond the school or program they are affiliated with, through individual membership. WECAN had 440 individual Members throughout North America this year.

Teacher Education

Updates to the Teacher Education Handbook were completed and WECAN's Teacher Education Committee worked to align our documents with our new Teacher Education Shared Principles.

Relations among our Member Institute colleagues are characterized by growing consultation and mutual assistance. They are all facing the question being entertained worldwide, "How do we educate the students of our time?" Monthly international Zoom conversations with IASWECE Early Childhood Training colleagues and the International Teacher Education Project (ITEP) group have been very fruitful and North American institute leaders met regularly to share presentations on how their classes are changing. They have risen to the challenge of many obstacles over the past year to give their students the best possible training alternatives they can provide.



Birth to Three and Support for Parents and Caregivers

The Birth to Three working group aims to support caregivers, educators, and families who care for our youngest children. Meeting weekly, the group explores ways to connect and unite caregivers across diverse program types, recognizing their unique challenges, such as working outside school settings, differing pay scales, and limited inclusion in broader early childhood initiatives. The group aims to create a sense of belonging and provide meaningful resources that meet the distinct nature of caring for children in the first three years of life. This year's Birth to Three Conference at Sophia's Hearth focused on the power of play and some professional development events focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ).

In addition to conferences, the working group has continued to develop the Parent and Caregiver Events with Dr. Adam Blanning and others, offering insights on play, media use, and childhood illnesses. These events have supported families and educators—ongoing projects, including developing new publications and a DEIJ picture book list.











Early Childhood Educators Conference
Creating Spaces for the Children Coming Toward Us - Awakening our Fire

Our February conference this year was the first of three to work with New Adult Learning processes to help us transform, reimagine, and individualize Waldorf early childhood education in support of the children coming towards us. In the 2024 conference, we explored the transformative power of the 7-fold New Adult Learning Process to awaken, inspire, and empower our inner fire and the will to create new forms within our schools and communities.

Our keynote presenters were Wahsonti:io Hill and Otsistohkwi:yo from the Everlasting Tree, a Mohawk/ Haudenosaunee language Waldorf School in Ohsweken, Ontario, and Heather Church from New Adult Learning (NAL).

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

Support for Waldorf Early Childhood Education around the World

In 2023-24, WECAN was able to offer $29,000 in support of the International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education and its worldwide projects through WECAN organizational membership dues.

Conference participants also donated $3600 to support a new, groundbreaking project bringing the healing elements of Waldorf early childhood education, teacher training, and emergency pedagogy to children and families in the slums of Santiago, Chile.

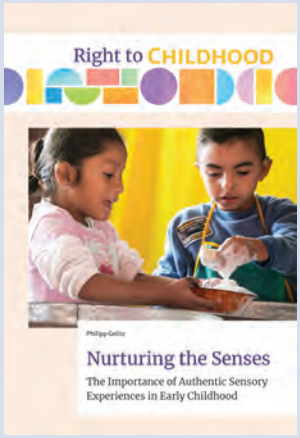
WECAN also offered the entire proceeds of our spring fundraising appeal to support our colleagues in reGeneration who are working to bring healing to children and families suffering from trauma and toxic stress in the conflict zone of the Middle East.

WECAN Books

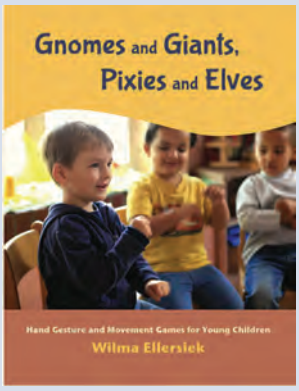
In addition to the twice-yearly *Gateways* newsletter, WECAN published the following books in 2023-24:



Speech Development in the Digital Age: Hidden Treasures of the Spoken Word
by Rainer Patzlaff et al
This new, expanded edition reports on the decline of speech and language development and the escalation of speech disorders over the last several decades. Patzlaff presents data and a thoughtful perspective on how parents and caregivers can downplay the influences of digital devices and awaken children to the treasures of the spoken word.



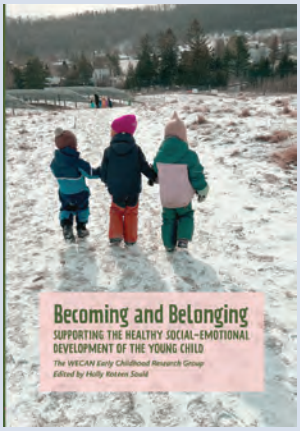
Nurturing the Senses – The Importance of Authentic Sensory Experiences in Early Childhood
by Philipp Gelitz
The second in the Right to Childhood series, Nurturing the Senses looks at how children achieve sensorimotor integration as they grow into today's world and human community. How does the young child grow into and take hold of the body? How does the caregiver guide wholesome development? The author answers by describing Steiner's approach to the twelve senses alongside current sensorimotor development and embodiment research. Wholesome sensory experiences can only be achieved in real life, not on a screen; joy in life and a positive attitude to



Gnomes and Giants, Pixies and Elves - Hand Gesture and Movement Games for Children
by Wilma Ellersiek
These delightful games invite children into a world inhabited by beings large and small, where the elements of air, water, earth, and fire interweave. As we share in their lively movements we are refreshed and enlivened ourselves. This is the English translation of Wilma Ellersiek's final gesture games book.



Dancing Stories – For Movement and Circle Time with Young Children
by Wendalyn Meyenfeldt
As the stories in this book "dance" through the seasons, each one offers ample opportunity to add movement and gestures that bring rhythm and flow to the telling. Movement activity makes a story visible to young children, bringing them to experience the joy of creation. The vivid, colorful images and lively rhythmic language can inspire anyone who works with young children.



Becoming and Belonging - Supporting the Healthy Social and Emotional Development of the Young Child
edited by Holly Koteen-Soulé
In this collection of articles, the WECAN Early Childhood Research Group explores essential aspects of Waldorf early childhood education in light of contemporary influences. *Becoming and Belonging* discusses creating space for emotional well-being and social healing, establishing the foundations for healthy relationships, nourishing sensory development, and more.



Walking with Our Children, 2nd edition
by Nancy Blanning
In tone and focus, and perhaps in adopting a certain sense of urgency, this revised and expanded collection of essays with advice for parents and caregivers acknowledges that the pace of life has accelerated dramatically, that the use of screens and personal digital technology has exploded, that we have endured a pandemic and its aftermaths, and that nations and ideologies are at war. We are now at a new beginning place, where we can make it our goal to face the future with optimism, to manage each moment as it comes, to affirm the goodness of life, and to deeply love and appreciate one another, no matter what comes to surprise us.

Finances 2023-24

Table 1

WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

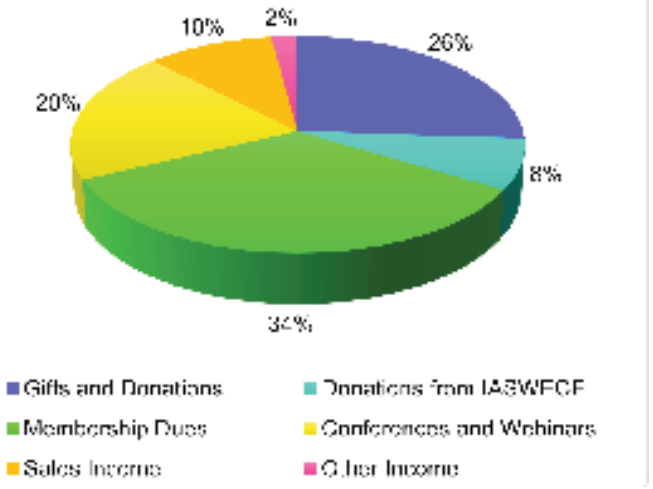
Profit / Loss Statement June 30, 2024 (Accrual Basis)

INCOME	
Gifts and Donations	191,892
Donations from IASWECE	55,876
Membership Dues	251,976
Conferences and Webinars	145,815
Sales Income	74,938
Other Income	15,566
Total INCOME	**736,063**
EXPENSES	
Membership Services	332,818
Collaboration with IASWECE	55,877
Conferences	118,398
International Dues and Donations	35,930
Other Donations	4,845
Other Programs and Meetings	47,638
Publications	97,359
General Operating	33,686
Total Expense	**726,552**
Net Ordinary Income	**9,511**

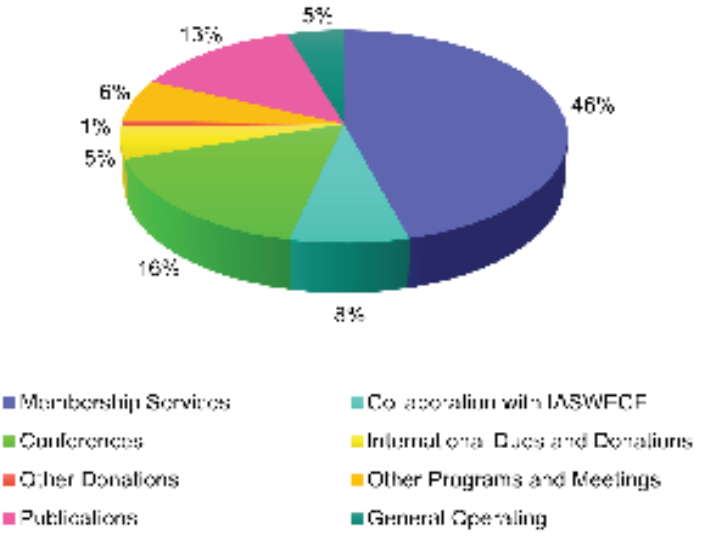
A few notes of explanation: WECAN members pay a portion of their membership dues to support IASWECE and this is shown as membership income and also as a dues/donation expense.

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.

Income



Expenses





Donors and Supporters 2023 - 2024

We are extremely grateful to our many friends and supporters, including individuals, kindergartens, foundations, businesses and other organizations, many of whom are listed below.

Individuals & Organizations

Adrienne Doucette
Aimee de Ney
Amaniel Mrutu
Andrea Gambardella
Angelica Hangartner-Perry
Anna Rainville
Anna Ruth Myers
Arlene Kamo
Ayako Yanagi
Beth Daly
Bozena Ciepielewski
Catherine Falknor
Catherine Foote
Charlotte Landgraf
Chenfei Li
Chloe Dowley
Claire Redgrave
Colleen St. John
Cory Eichman
Diane David
Dianne Brooks
Eleonora Maugere
Elia Gilbert
Elizabeth Stubbs
Erica Milone
Erin Barry
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Fiber Craft Studio
Fiona Stewart
Heather Anne Church
Iggy Keuchenius
Jahlia Osha
Jane Danner
Jane Swain
Janet Kane
Janine Harrison
Jay Tamboli
Jo Valens
Joe Robertson
Kate Yeomans
Kimberly Raymond
Kristi Hartman
Kristine Boshell
Kurt Stofko
Leslie Burchell-Fox
Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton
Linda Marooney
Linda Stearns
Linda Williams
Lisa Miccio
Lisa Stoessel
Liz Hagerman
Louise deForest
Lynn St. Pierre
Madeline Kolenich
Magdalena Toran
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Marianne Perchlik
Marieke Duijneveld
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Melanie Reiser
Motria Shuhan
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Nancy Disbrow
Nancy Foster
Patricia Rubano
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Reema Zahr
Renee Gielewski
Robin O'Brien
Sandra Zeese
Sara Khan
Sarah Arnold
Sarah Foy
Saundra Clements
Sonya Tracy
Stephanie Hoelscher
Su Rubinoff
Sunbridge Institute
Susan Eddy
Susan Howard
Tamar Grimm Feeser
Tammy Hughes
The Cottage Garden
Tony Burton
Wendy Weinrich
Yvonne de Maat

Foundations

Humphrey's Family Foundation
RSF Social Finance
Susan Starr Legacy
Waldorf Curriculum Fund
Waldorf Educational Foundation
Waldorf Schools Fund

Conference Sponsors

Alkion Center
Alma Partners
Anthoposophic Health Association
Association for a Healing Education
A Supple Voice
AWSNA
Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training
Eurythmy Spring Valley
LifeWays North America
Lyre Association of North America
Mercurius
New Adult Learning
Rudolf Steiner College Canada
Sophia's Hearth Family Center
Sunbridge Institute
Threefold Educational Foundation
Waldorf Publications
Warmth and Weather
West Coast Institute
W.S. Badger Company

Other Conference Support

Green Meadow Waldorf School
Threefold Educational Foundation

Friends and Volunteers

Charlton Hughes Campbell
Green Meadow Waldorf School
Ray Manaças
Threefold Educational Foundation

Regional Representatives

Heike Adamsberger-Kosta
Allyson Anthony
Nancy Blanning
Laurie Clark
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Jane Danner-Sustar
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Louise deForest
Aimee de Ney
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Betty Jane Enno
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Laurie Harper-Burgess
Mary Maschal
Jesse Moore
Gabriela Nuñez-Plata
Lisa Pitillo
Su Rubinoff
Somer Serpe
Peggy Tan



WECAN
WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

2023-2024 Board Members
Heather Church, Treasurer, Toronto, ONT
Louise deForest, Chair/Secretary, Mill River, MA
Keelah Helwig, Garden City, NY
Susan Howard, Amherst, MA
Ruth Ker, Duncan, BC
Laura Mason, Issaquah, WA
Anjum Mir, Pacific Palisades, CA
Gabriela Nuñez-Plata, Playa del Carmen, Mexico
Magdalena Toran, Conway, MA

2023-2024 Project Coordinators
Birth to Three, Magdalena Toran, Conway, MA
I.D.E.A. Coordinator, Lynn Turner, Silver Spring, MD
I.D.E.A. Coordinator, Leslie Wetzonis-Woolverton, Silver Spring, MD

Staff
WECAN Co-Director, Susan Howard, Amherst, MA
WECAN Co-Director, Heather Church, Gores Landing, ON
Administrator, Melissa Lyons, Spring Valley, NY
Communications, Lara Radysh, Shelburne Falls, MA
Conference and Admin Support, Mia Radysh, Shelburne Falls, MA
Membership, Laura Mason, Issaquah, WA
Publications, Donna Miele, Spring Valley, NY
Shipping, Kate Barhydt, Spring Valley, NY
Teacher Education, Ruth Ker, Duncan, BC

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