

Update on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Activity

Lynn Turner & Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton, WECAN IDEA Coordinators

Warm Fall Greetings, WECAN Community.

We hope you enjoyed a restorative outbreath of summer and are now leaning into the season of autumn with its blaze of color and robust activity. Now is the time for celebrating the harvest of summer's rich and rewarding bounties. As we settle into the work of a new school year, may we move with purposeful intention filled with courage, joy, and love, stepping forward to greet new experiences and meet challenges with strength of will during this season of Michaelmas.

Over the summer, Leslie and I spent many cherished moments with our families and friends. While filling our cups, we also continued our I.D.E.A. planning and visioning as WECAN Coordinators again this 2023-2024 school year. We are delighted to be working actively with Susan Howard again for ongoing insights and wisdom. This year we will also begin to work closely with Heather Church, Keelah Helwig, and other WECAN Board members.

What is new this year is our IDEA Advisory Circle which includes Hellene Brodsky, Amber Chavez, Andrea Daney, Chinyelu Kunz, Laura Mason, Melissa McPartland, Aimee de Ney, Otstistokwi:yo, and Kate May Price.

A focus for our continued inner striving and deepening within inclusion, diversity, equity, and access will center the ongoing questions regarding relationships. How do we create *space* for a more kind and just society that nurtures a sense of communal belonging, kinship and individual respect and dignity? How are we working in "right" relationships with ourselves, each other, the lands, and all children and their families? What exactly does "right relationship" mean? How can we sense and know when our relationships are unbalanced and/or causing harm and pain? *We know we must cultivate mindful attention, curiosity, and warmth of heart to penetrate our words, thoughts, and deeds.*

A quote from Rudolf Steiner speaks directly to the call of our times.

*To resolve our past
Requires knowledge.
To forge our future
We need courage.
We need dedication.
Our thinking needs
Riddles to wake up.
Our feeling needs
Pain to mature.
Our will needs
Resistance to become strong.*

-Rudolf Steiner

Through our many seasons together in taking up this work collectively, it often comes to our attention the difficulties individuals, colleagues, and school communities are facing in working with I.D.E.A. in Waldorf early childhood settings. This work can often be fraught with confusion, discord, and sometimes rage. Much like a pendulum, feelings and opinions go both ways, we hear "Why haven't we

pushed this work even further? and why are we even spending time carrying this work, it is not essential!" We appreciate the honesty, trust, and openness of so many colleagues who reach out to us. With our Advisory Circle participants and all of you, we are actively engaging with approaches and actions that support belonging and space for all. With hope, strength of will, and continued conversations that require looking inward deeply, we will weave together the threads that heal our social life. May we meet the challenges with warmth of heart.

This upcoming school year, we will facilitate four IDEA web events. In late August, we held our first of the series which was a two-evening event, ***Making Spaces with Heart***. This was held on Tuesday and Wednesday on Zoom with over 40 participants each evening. Insights and contributions were shared by all. We discussed topics and personal experiences centering equitable assistant/lead work, power and relationship dynamics, and varied approaches toward building inclusive and joyful educational communities for families and children. As these events were not recorded, there will be an article highlighting the key points from our IDEA Advisory Circle panelists. Please look for this through WECAN members' communication channels by early October in the HUB.

Looking ahead, we invite you all to our next web event, ***Weaving Communities Centering the Heart for Families***. *This evening will be for all families, parents, caregivers as well as educators and school organizations.* The upcoming event will be held on October 18th, from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm EST and will be announced soon. Please share the invitation announcement with your families, parents, and caregivers in your communities. This event will not be recorded due to the conversational format we will utilize again.

As this work continues, conflict and pushbacks are to be expected. This topic is blossoming and remains a top focus for WECAN in meeting our full world today. As the WECAN IDEA Coordinators, please reach out to Leslie and me if you need space for further support. We are here to help! Together we are committed to supporting and guiding your efforts and growth in inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. Thank you always and stay hopeful each and every day. We can be reached by email at: lwetzoniswoolverton@waldorfearlychildhood.org and lturner@waldorfearlychildhood.org. Please continue to visit the WECAN website for new and updated resources throughout the upcoming months.

With love and gratitude,
Lynn Turner and Leslie Wetzonis Woolverton
WECAN IDEA Coordinators