

Lo Hermida: Training for Life

Anita Isla and Javiera Cucurella



Dear Friends,

We are writing to you on behalf of Fundación Arché to tell you about the project we are asking you to help us support.

It all began at the end of the year 2019 when due to the social outbreak happening in the country, particularly in Santiago de Chile, the national representatives in Chile of Emergency Pedagogy went to a kindergarten that was in a very poor area of the city to work with the educational community that was heavily affected by the violence during those weeks. The kindergartens of Cristo Joven Foundation are in peripheral areas of the city, where we find not only extreme poverty but also high rates of domestic violence, child malnutrition, drug trafficking, high immigration rates, little or no access to social services or state aid. Many of the principals, teachers, or assistants are women who have grown up in these environments and therefore are well acquainted with their needs; quite a few among the teachers and those in leading positions have a thorough and extensive academic background within mainstream education and yet they often find themselves that the pedagogical and internal tools they have, to face the reality of the children and families who come to their schools, are not enough, which among other things, produces a lot of stress and mental health problems within the teaching staff.

Although some teachers who worked there knew about Waldorf pedagogy, and individually had attended some workshops and talks in the past, it was this event that sparked a flame that eventually turned into this partnership between the educational community Cristo Joven and Arché Foundation.

First, a group of teachers started the three-year seminar at Arché for Waldorf kindergarten, which was able to help cover the tuition with partial scholarships. As they were finishing, the question arose: what can we do to help teachers from the Cristo Joven Foundation to join the seminar but are unable to do so due to the severe financial needs they have? But also: how can the program learn from their experience and complex environment so what is taught meets their actual needs? Is it not possible to bring the training to where they are?

So after a few meetings between the two foundation boards, the idea became a real possibility of a beginning, that is how we developed a program that although it doesn't have all the hours and courses of the teacher training seminar given by Arché, it is thought in a way that can give these teachers a thorough first approach to Waldorf pedagogy as well as healing tools for them as teachers working in very adverse material and social conditions.

After those conversations we realized that there were so many other needs that needed to be addressed too, to really bring along the social healing quality of Waldorf education. That's how two other initiatives were invited to be part of this collaboration, Fundación Cultiva and the Waldorf School Gabriela Mistral.

The seminar began in April 2023. Although it is intended as an introductory seminar to Waldorf education, it has a longer duration because, given the circumstances, we wanted to extend it with elements of emergency pedagogy and art, to meet the individual needs of the teachers, that is, to introduce a healing element. So, there is a special focus on the individual work of the teachers and the difficulties they encounter in their work because of where they are, i.e., tools that enable them to deal with the day-to-day and with themselves, and at the same time the basics of the image of the human being from anthroposophy and the stages of the child in the first seven years. There is also a team that will look after aspects related to the mental health of the pedagogical teams within the kindergartens: counselling and psychological support for teachers.

The teacher training is funded by one percentage that comes from Fundación Arché, the other one from Fundación Cristo Joven and the third and smallest percentage comes from the teachers. For the 2023 academic year, the part that Fundación Arché must provide came from a generous private donor that covered the expenses, but we still need to get the funds for next year.



Anita Isla and Javiera Cuculella are experienced Waldorf/Steiner kindergarten teachers. They are currently teaching in the teacher training of the Arché Foundation and are members of the Board of Directors.