

## Seeds for the future – Waldorf kindergarten conference in China

Li Zhang & Yujie Yang

The Chinese Kindergarten Conference organized by the CECEF (China Waldorf Early Childhood Education Forum) took place right after the Waldorf 100 festival. "Receive the children in reverence, let gratitude become the seed for the future" was the theme of the event, attended by 450 participants, from mainland China and also from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and other regions and countries.



In addition to various Chinese lecturers, Louise de Forest, Geseke Lundgren und Kathy MacFarlane presented at this conference. Li Zhang and Hao Bing gave a wonderful keynote speech on the theme of "Why We Are Together." In their presentations, they reviewed the history of Waldorf education in China initiated by pioneers and their original visions. In the coming century, we will continue our mission of "seeking strength from the inside and connecting symbiosis from the outside." The two keynote speeches resonated with many of us and inspired deep reflection.

At noon, experienced early childhood educators from various areas organized educational activities including morning circle, puppet play, finger plays, seasonal tables, and festival celebration preparation. We exchanged experiences together, making the late autumn day warm and beautiful.



The content of workshops and forums in the afternoon ranged from Anthroposophy to Chinese culture, child study to integrated education, 12 senses to free play, storytelling to puppet play, human biography to kindergarten management, early childhood education to high school education, craftwork to woodwork, raising more than one child to sex education, writing an early childhood education outline for China to the interpretation of national education policy, speech to the father's role and educational responsibility. Each discussion, each workshop, made the three-day- journey a rewarding learning experience for everyone.

In the evening, there were beautiful art and culture events, a music night organized by the parent committee, the eurythmy performance of "Nine-Headed Birds", and Shakespeare's "Tempest," a drama performed by the Waldorf high school students.



At the end of the conference, the mentors emphasized four important tasks:

- the deepening of child studies;
- the continual study of "the Study of Man"
- the growth and cooperation of individual teachers and teacher groups
- the importance of the localization of the practice of Waldorf education.

Li Zhang then introduced the goal, structure and members of the working group of China Waldorf Early Childhood Education Forum (CECEF). She emphasized that China Waldorf Early Childhood Education Forum encourages and supports every kindergarten working on the four important areas as mentioned above. Quality management and trademark are two additional tasks that CECEF will take on more and more.

In blessings, we said farewell to each other. On the stage, the mentors shook hands with each participant and gave each a bag of seeds, so that everyone could set foot on the journey home with warm wishes, valuable experiences and seeds of gratitude.







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*Yu Jie is from Chengdu and learned about Waldorf education in 2010. She had her kindergarten teacher training in the Chengdu WECC course and taught in kindergarten from 2011 to 2017. Currently, she is a member of China Waldorf Early Childhood Education Forum (CECEF) working group and is responsible for publicity and the public WeChat platform. She also is a member of the Chengdu WECC Training Course Working Group.*

*Li Zhang was introduced to Waldorf Education in 1994 and later completed her Waldorf early childhood master's degree at Sunridge College in Spring Valley NY. In 2004, she and her husband Huang Xiaoxing (Harry) and children returned to Chengdu. As pioneers, they co-founded the first Waldorf School in mainland China and she became the first Waldorf kindergarten teacher in mainland China. Currently, she is responsible for the training center at the Chengdu Waldorf School and is the chairperson of the college of teachers for the whole school, as well as the chairperson of the China Waldorf Early Childhood Education Forum (CECEF).*