

## “Act locally, be effective globally: Waldorf Schools change the world”<sup>1</sup> Plans for the celebration of 100 years of Waldorf Education

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In 1919, the first Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart (the first Waldorf kindergarten in 1925). In 2019, the "Waldorf School" will be 100 years young! Today there are over 1,100 Waldorf (or Waldorf-inspired) schools and more than 2,000 Waldorf kindergartens in 80 countries. The upcoming 100th anniversary offers a wonderful opportunity to develop this momentum for our century in a global exchange.

The International Forum of the Waldorf educational movement, in collaboration with IASWECE<sup>2</sup> and with responsible Waldorf teachers from the various countries, has launched an initiative to plan and coordinate various projects and events in 2019 (as well as before and after). The idea is that some projects will be planned or proposed centrally, but in addition, every school, kindergarten, and country association is invited to contribute and carry out projects that are part of the joint venture and that can be announced on the joint website.

So that everything can be practically organized, an association has been founded and a [website](#) is now set up. <sup>3</sup>A [flyer](#) is intended to present the initiative to all institutions. A wide range of proposals and initiatives are there for consideration, and new projects can also be announced there quickly and uncomplicatedly.



From the welcome text of the website:

*"We are taking this anniversary as an opportunity to further develop the Waldorf School in a contemporary manner and to raise awareness of its global dimension. With many projects on all continents. Be curious and be part of it: 100 years are only the beginning."*

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<sup>1</sup> Title of the [Website](#) of "Waldorf 100"

<sup>2</sup> Clara Aerts is a member of the IASWECE Coordinating Group and is also a board member of the Waldorf 100 Association.

<sup>3</sup> For the moment only in German; English and Spanish versions are coming soon.

Many of the ideas presented there fit very well into the surroundings of schools. One project, however, is particularly suitable for early childhood. It is a suggestion to plant a tree and perhaps create a particularly beautiful little garden around it, with especially fragrant flowers, a place suitable for the bees that are so endangered today, and a pleasant place to linger - a peace tree, a peaceful garden for those who love the sun.

The International Forum and the Council of IASWECE would also like to encourage teachers and parents responsible for Waldorf institutions to work intensively with the question: What is Waldorf pedagogy? Those who ask for and expect to get a few pages of recipes and methods as well as a suitcase full of "Waldorf materials" is always disappointed. Henning Kullak-Ublick, Waldorf 100's coordinator, writes: "Waldorf education is much less bound to traditional forms than to the shared pedagogical ethos that always arises anew from working with the evolving human being."

From the very beginning Rudolf Steiner encouraged the teachers he trained to invent Waldorf pedagogy each time in an entirely new way for themselves: *"Individuals can do what they want in detail - each one will set up what he himself as an educator has learned in life"*.<sup>4</sup>

But whoever thinks that Waldorf education is a purely a subjective matter is also wrong:

*"What must I do to obliterate as far as possible my personal self, to leave those entrusted in my care free from being burdened by my own subjective nature...so that we do not interfere with the child's destiny, but educate the child towards human freedom?"*<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand Rudolf Steiner demanded that Waldorf teachers be engaged freely and independently, but on the other hand, they should influence the child as little as possible through their personality and even "obliterate their personal self as far as possible" – a very challenging paradox! What does it mean for our daily educational practice?

Precisely because we adults are fully present in our feelings, thoughts and actions, the child can become particularly well connected to us and with everything we want to convey to the child. Therefore, the child needs the full commitment of the educator! Proscribed educational approaches would only hinder this commitment.

And if the child does not feel seen and understood, he or she is not inclined to pay attention and listen to the teacher. The child wants to be perceived!

To meet this need of the child, Rudolf Steiner also called on the educators and teachers

- ... to study the development of the child and the human being, to engage with the ideas of general human development as presented in a preparatory course before the opening of the first Waldorf school.<sup>6</sup>
- To repeatedly work together to describe a single child, to try to understand the child's special

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<sup>4</sup> Steiner, Rudolf. "The healthy development of the human being" in: *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, GA 303, Dornach, 29 December 1921

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

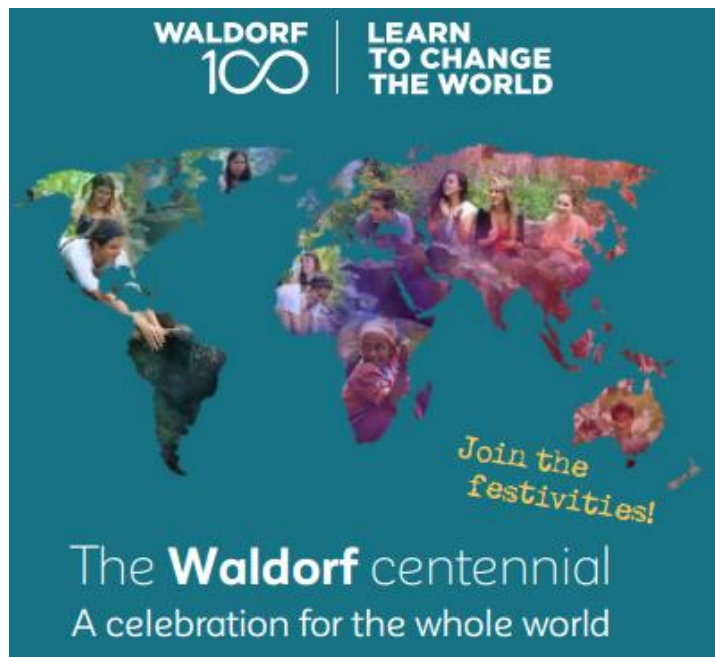
<sup>6</sup> Steiner, Rudolf. *The Foundations of Human Experience*, GA 293.

characteristics and difficulties and to develop ideas on how to help the child.

The concrete steps every educator takes in day-to-day education are left to the educator's free creativity. But what the educator thinks about the child, and the ideas the educator has about the child's development, should as far as possible not be subjectively colored, but must be entirely oriented to reality by observing each unique child and by studying the general laws of development which are effective in the biography. This shared practice in faculty meetings, according to Rudolf Steiner, "is the heart of the Waldorf School."<sup>7</sup>

To allow this "heart" to beat as strongly as possible, the coordinators of the Waldorf 100th anniversary propose that in the faculty meetings in kindergartens and schools, colleagues consider how these two indications could be realized in an especially lively and intensive way: the study of the human being and child study.

By the year 2019, when the next World Conference for Waldorf kindergarten and early childhood educators takes place in the week before Easter<sup>8</sup>, we would like to keep you informed through this Newsletter about how ideas on these themes are being developed in various places, and which of these are particularly appropriate for kindergartens, in addition to the ideas of the Peace Tree and the Peace Garden. Please write to us at [info@iaswece.org](mailto:info@iaswece.org)!



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<sup>7</sup> Steiner, Rudolf. *The Spiritual Ground of Education*. GA 305. Oxford, England, August 23, 1922.

<sup>8</sup> April 15 – 19, 2019 at the Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland. Sponsored by IASWECE in collaboration with the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum.

*Group.*