

May 2022



The Homeschool Journey Newsletter

Christopherus Homeschool Resources
Waldorf-inspired Parenting and Education

Dear friends,

So sorry to have skipped the April newsletter—staff vacation plans got in the way and I spaced out needing to do a newsletter....anyway, here we are.

The announced theme for this issue of The Homeschool Journey newsletter is 'Planning and Schedules'—fairly innocuous though of course of great importance to homeschoolers. But certainly not particularly contentious.

Before we get to that, though, I would like to turn to an issue I cannot, in conscience, ignore. Here is the potentially contentious part of the newsletter!



In Waldorf pedagogy, we strive to surround the children with what is Good, True and Beautiful. These are human archetypes—obviously, there is no end to cultural and individual permutations of these three cardinal qualities. Yet they are also, at heart, at essence, *universal* in that there are spiritual pictures or beings that embody these qualities and which are available and meaningful to all human beings. We all come from the spiritual world: there is only one spiritual world. Although each of us walks a different path in each incarnation on this earth and although the spiritual journey we take might seem, on one level, to be anathema to other spiritual traditions, at heart, there is no contradiction. On one level, these differences are hugely important. On another level they are simply manifestations of the One.

Starting with the understanding of the human being as a spiritual being, we know that children are only recently arrived here from the spiritual world. The younger they are, the newer they are. Their consciousness is entirely of that world, not of the materialistic world they have incarnated into. Waldorf pedagogy (at least how it used to be practiced in schools) is a long process which honors that slow journey each child takes.

Let's put aside the universal qualities of Goodness and Beauty for now and turn to Truth, also a universal quality which can be known, understood and communicated. Children live unconsciously within Truth, as with the other two--only as they enter their teens might they be encouraged to consciously consider these archetypes.

If these qualities are indeed *spiritual* qualities and if little ones do indeed live in a spiritual consciousness then they can perceive, albeit unconsciously, Goodness, Beauty and Truth. This is the birthright of all children, of all backgrounds. Only due to the intervention of adults, whether purposefully or unintentionally, do children leave this realm too soon. As soon as little ones are brought into precocious self awareness by asking questions (which can range from the innocuous to the life-changing) are they ripped from that totally necessary stage of consciousness. Adults with ideological agendas which are focused wrongly on the child as a self conscious being are especially toxic to the natural development of children. Whereas it is certainly important that older teens and of course adults develop self awareness so that they do not remain as children, that previous stage of childhood needs to be honored and protected.

A member of my old yahoo group shared a wonderful experience with us. She described herself as short, round and pink. Her son went to a kindergarten and she had not yet met the staff. Every day he came home and said in great happiness to his mother 'I love my teacher---she looks just like you.' At some point mom went to an open morning and her son dragged the beloved teacher over to meet his mother: she was a six foot tall, rail-thin Nigerian woman with black skin. To this little fellow, still immersed in the spiritual quality of Truth, what he saw with his (totally unconscious) spiritual eyes was the love from his teacher which 'looked just like' the love from his mother. The child was coming from his spiritual consciousness, seeing the reality of the spiritual substance of love from his mother and his teacher---he was not seeing the material manifestations of the differences between those two women.

I know a family where a child was in a Waldorf (sic) kindergarten and asked the assistant if they were 'a boy or a girl.' This trans person was deeply offended and a big fuss was made. The family sensibly removed their little one from this school.

So here we have a situation where someone is working in a kindergarten who has no idea what a child is. How on earth can an adult be offended by a child????!! And how can something called a Waldorf kindergarten allow this to happen (thus my snotty remarks about 'so-called Waldorf' and so on). If any place is meant to be truly safe for children, that should be a Waldorf kindergarten. Having staff who do not understand children is not safe and could be abusive.

For some time I have pondered the question of trans folks in kindergartens. I have a trans friend who worked in a Waldorf kindergarten (not someone who would ever be offended by a child's question). I have yet to ask this question of them: how does a tiny child fresh from the spiritual worlds, with a consciousness that must be allowed to remain in those worlds, understand a trans person? Their sense of spiritual Truth will know and 'read' the truth of that person's biological gender---what happens to the children when adults override the child's spiritual sense perception and tells them 'no, I am not that'?

Another example: one of my mother's favorite stories about me when I was 4 or 5 was how I went up to a Hasidic man in a store or on the street (can't quite remember how that went). There he was, complete with beard and side-locks. I said to him 'Are you Jesus Christ?' My mother, who did not understand children, was mortified and shooed me away. The man, who clearly did understand children, smiled and patted me on the head. He was in no way offended. Perhaps he knew that on some level, I was seeing something of the Truth of who he was.

These are important things for us all to think about. I don't care if people call me a right-wing this-phobe, that-phobe, hater—I can only feel sorry for people who have no idea what children are or need. And if I feel sorry for them, what do I feel for the damaged children, often surrounded by people who may indeed come from love but with dangerous ignorance born out of ideological desperation?

Here's a contribution from a Christopherus homeschooler speaking to the theme of planning and schedules:



First of all, I want to thank everyone at Christopherus because I probably could not even think about organizing my schedule without their help. I am blessed to have two Christopherus homeschooling curriculums each year, as I teach my two daughters of different ages.

I am a person who acknowledges the need for rhythm and repetition. I also feel that any consistency we provide will strengthen the trust that our children have for their school journey and furthermore a feeling for stability in the world. The spirit of the week can be held by more form in the schedule, bringing order and flow to the life of learning. My family does the same subject each particular day of the week, no matter their grade. For example, Monday is **Language Arts** or **read aloud**, Tuesday is **Form Drawing** and **Spelling/ Handwriting**, Wednesday for extra **Math** practice, and Thursday for **Music** theory and **Social Studies**. I used my elder daughter's Christopherus schedule from 4th grade (as that is when I began homeschooling her myself) to create this schedule.

In our family, the age gap between children is 3 years. So, I would start the older child with her subject and then teach the main lesson and morning subject of the day to the younger child. I would teach the older child her main lesson while her sister finished her drawing, writing from the main lesson, or some other subject lesson she could do independently. If the younger child was finished early she had a task awaiting her--lunch making, some chore, and then could go to play outside early. This did stretch our day, but that was how I managed to allow a full hour or more to attend to one child without much interruption.

Here is what our day looked like:

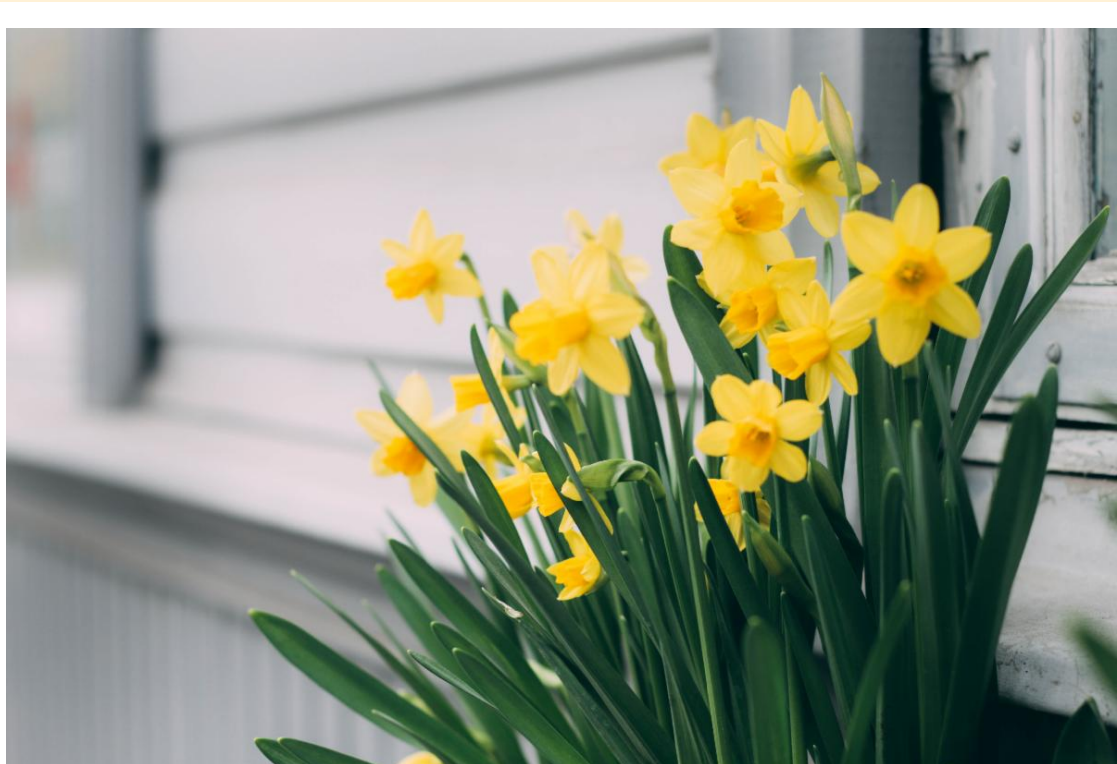
- Walk 8-8:30
- Circle 8:30- 9:15
- Main lesson 2nd grade 9:15-10:45
- Subjects for 5th grade 9:15-10:45
- Snack/ recess 10:45-11:30
- Subjects for 2nd grade 11:30-1
- Main lesson for 5th grade 11:30 -1
- Lunch/ rest 1:15-2
- Handwork (most often)/ craft/ Class play 2- 3:30
- Alternative Nature hike 2-4:30

I decided music, poetry, and bodily rhythm are asking for renewal in our modern world so why not make them an everyday thing? We would begin with recorders, open with verses, then singing, bean bags, math facts, tongue twisters, poetry. We always had a new poem every 4-8 weeks and if one child wanted to learn the other's poem she was welcome. If she did not want to learn it then she was the practice audience. The same followed for recorders- if she was able to play the song her older sister played then she was welcome and sometimes the younger sister began all her finger warm ups while her sister undressed from the morning walk. I also found it important to perform the circle time for an audience at least once a year. I have an eleven year old who did this without complaint so I was blessed. The poetry we would recite at our neighbor's doorstep (even during the pandemic)! I think with that rich of a circle we live the festivals together, as one can base the bean bag rhymes and songs on the season. It helped to have one circle because there are elements for each grade and it saves on planning. In first grade, my younger daughter loved hearing her sister recite Hiawatha. She would have interrupted if we had not done it together anyway. And consequently the 5th grader loved watching her sister learn times tables. It built her confidence even if she would not have repeated as many in the older grades.

As for planning for two children: I made sure that each grade had a new block at different times. It is very difficult to plan a new block for two grades at once. I would plan this in the summer on a large sheet of paper so I wouldn't be overwhelmed during the school year. I mostly followed the Christopherus schedule, but sometimes I swapped a block to manage the difference in timing. I would also advise against teaching two Language Arts blocks that are full of reading. I did Egypt and the King of Ireland's Son this year at the same time and I was nearly hoarse from all that reading! It did take me around 3-5 hours each week to prepare. Somehow having those subjects ordered made for an easy checklist and I still managed to fit in my own social time at the end of the week.

I enjoy how Christopherus guides the scheduling in an open way. It is a gift to be able to listen to the needs of the teacher and the child. Looking at the temperaments is very helpful when seeking a form. Donna gives lectures on the temperaments in the 2nd grade curriculum but I am sure there is more on the Christopherus website. [Note from Donna---there is an in-depth section devoted to the temperaments [in our Self Study Course](#).]

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How about a bit of politics to end with as well? I do always try to keep abreast of developments regarding the dangers of 5G....
<https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2022-04-29/5g-radiation-studied-south-carolina>

Not sure what the theme of next month's issue will be....as always, people are invited to share their thoughts about what I have written—maybe the June issue will be full of your contributions!

Til then,
Blessings on your homeschool journey,
Donna