



***EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PARENT HANDBOOK  
2015-2016***

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**A fine art is that in which the hand,  
the head, and the heart of man go  
together.**

John Ruskin 1819-1900

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## INTRODUCTION

The young child has a curiosity for life and a sense of adventure, which few of us can match as adults. The joy that the young child feels in meeting the world, the happiness in exploration and in doing, these are the heart of childhood. Watching an infant grow into a toddler and a toddler grow into a young child is a miraculous opportunity to observe and learn about life. The energy, the life forces which we see at this time, the capacity for learning, and the persistence in the world are unmatched.

The Waldorf early childhood is truly a "children's garden." Here the young child, like the plant, grows gracefully strong in a time frame which cannot be hurried, cannot be force-fed if the mature being is to remain strong, vibrant, and balanced. The early childhood creates a warm, loving atmosphere which nurtures each child's own initiative through creative play and also brings the children together as a group so that they can experience the happiness of the early childhood "family" joining together as one. The day, week, and year are a tapestry brought together from the artistic activity of the classroom and through the practical activity of each day. The children are encouraged to discover the world all-around and gradually to find their places within it.

The following pages describe the environment of our early childhood, the activities which form its life, and the more practical aspects related to meeting the children's needs within the home and school settings. The topics addressed here are the beginnings of a conversation to be developed and shared by parents and teachers throughout the child's years in the early childhood. We hope that you will read and re-read it over time, knowing in writing this handbook that there is a great deal of material here, more than can be absorbed at once! So find a cozy chair, brew a cup of tea, and begin. We hope that your reading will stimulate questions and reflections, and perhaps arouse thoughts about your own childhood and memories of those years.

### **The Early Childhood Day**

Each morning the children experience a rhythm which becomes familiar and nurturing. Our day includes well-guided free play, during which the children create a busy, imaginative world that fills the classroom with singing, building, discussion and laughter. By surrounding the child with the raw materials for play, the children's world can become whatever their imaginations suggest. Each morning the classroom becomes an ever changing, ever challenging "laboratory," offering new problems in the realms of physics, construction, human relationships, and artistry. Through experiences which arise, each child has the opportunity to develop courage of action, of thought, and of feeling. It is our belief that qualities we value in adulthood will be fostered here: creative and flexible thinking, inner conviction, self-discipline, personal freedom, and self-knowledge.

During cleanup time, all the play materials return to their "homes" on shelves and in baskets, as the children sing and help alongside the teacher; the atmosphere is one of cooperation and lightheartedness.

At circle time, we come together as a group to act out stories through verse and song and to play universal children's games like London Bridge or Ring around the Rosy. This is a time to experience the rhythms of the seasons through the content of our circle activities.

We gather together around the snack table to share conversation and a healthy snack of fruits or vegetables, whole grains, and a vegetarian protein prepared by the teacher and children together each morning. We journey outdoors together every day to tend our garden, walk in the woods, to run and play.

A story is told each day. The children listen as the teacher tells a fairy tale, folk story, or story from nature. Our nature stories form a basis for science education through their vivid, penetrating images of the natural world in all of its cycles. Often the stories weave into circle time, the children's play, and our work with fleece and silk puppets. The tradition of listening to the spoken word has, for centuries, deepened our imaginative life and enriched our language; it is this tradition which we aspire to continue.

### **Extended Care**

The afternoon program is offered as a service to children who attend our morning program. We hope that the following gives you a picture of this program. After a busy morning of work and play in the early childhood, the afternoon structure and room are designed to be restful, relaxed, and home-like. We look forward to flexible afternoons of free outdoor play, walks in the woods, and special cozy indoor projects and play.

Our afternoon program begins at noon when the afternoon teachers receive the children from the morning teachers. Parents may pick children up at 3:30 or 5:30 p.m.

When space is available, we welcome drop-ins! Please sign up in available spaces on the posted sign-up sheet.

Children in the afternoon program bring their lunches from home. We request that lunches be carried in baskets or plain lunch boxes without graphics. Please label your child's lunchbox and containers! Good nutrition is an important part of your child's health. We request balanced, wholesome lunches with minimal sugar; we ask that candy, soda and juice not come to school. We will provide each child with water to drink.

All afternoon children rest for about an hour each day. However, in order to best meet the needs of parents and children, we offer two different rest options. For those children who still benefit from an afternoon nap, we will provide a cozy rest house in a room with other nappers. For those children who have outgrown napping, we offer a quiet rest experience without the expectation that the child will sleep.

### **The Teacher**

The teachers in the early childhood create a bridge between home and school. As some of the first major adult figures beyond the family, the teachers become the children's "school parents,"

and it is their engagement with the early childhood that draws the children into this world. The teacher creates a naturally rich environment worthy of imitation - an environment in which the children can construct and transform, in which they do not wait and watch but engage directly with the world in an atmosphere of purposeful activity. The teachers' hands are always busy, whether cooking our snack, repairing a toy, sewing a puppet, painting a picture or tidying the room. Their hands are always available for helping and comforting.

### **Rhythms of Home and School**

When we observe the natural world, we see its rhythmic nature. The sun rises and sets, the seasons come and go through the year. It is our experience that many aspects of health and discipline can be addressed in no better or more productive way than through the establishment of regular, loving family rhythms. We can't overemphasize the benefits this will accrue for the well-being of young children.

Rhythmic constancy allows children the security to devote their energies to the tasks of growing and exploring the world. The early childhood has a regular rhythm to the day, the week, and the year. There are activities that happen every day in a predictable sequence, including creative play, circle, rest, story, and outdoor play. Each day is designed with moments of activity and moments of quiet . . . spaces for expanding and spaces for drawing in. There are also weekly activities including painting and baking. There are also longer stretches where a craft project - sewing or woodworking, for example - can be taken up and carried to completion. These projects are often related to the season or a festival.

We hope that families will join us in this effort to build a rhythmic life for the children by providing consistent times and familiar rituals for meals and bed.

### **Birthdays**

For the young child, birthdays are among the most special days of all. Your child's birthday will be joyfully observed in the early childhood with a special snack and story. Your child's teacher will contact you prior to this day to share with you the details of how you can help and what you can expect.

If you would like assistance planning an age-appropriate home birthday celebration for your child, please speak to your child's teacher. We ask that invitations to home celebrations be made by mail or telephone and **NOT** distributed at school.

### **Seasons and Festivals**

The year is an ever-repeating circle, and the seasons provide the familiar and much-loved background to the kindergarten year. In wave-like motion we build up to and ebb away from our recurring seasonal highlights, the festivals. The celebration of the festivals deepens our connection to the earth, to diverse peoples modern and ancient, to ourselves, and to each other. Throughout the year the children, teachers, and parents prepare for these special days with food,

songs and stories, crafts, and the beautifying of our classrooms. Families join us for some of the festivals and others are celebrated more simply within the classroom.

While not a seasonal festival, our first coming together is Welcoming Day, when all children and families come together in the classroom for the first time.

Near the end of September we experience our first seasonal festival, Michaelmas. We have traditionally invited families to join us for this morning of pressing cider, harvesting the garden, and enjoying the glorious New England autumn. As the fall advances, we are very involved with the children in bringing in the harvest and putting our gardens to sleep. In mid-November, as the blustery winds beset us, families come together at sunset for a walk through the darkening woods with only the tiny light from our homemade paper lanterns to guide us on our way. As winter reaches its darkest point, we invite families to join us for a midwinter festival.

Winter in New England is long and cold. We burrow in with the children for the delightful calm of January and February that kindergarten teachers so love. We often have days of sledding and exploring frozen streams while our stories and circle work reflect the wonders of the Earth at this time.

In March the sap begins to rise and we, too, tap our trees and haul sap for many days. At long last Lady Spring returns. Parents begin to linger in the gardens after dropping the children or bring picnics at noon pick-up. May Day - in mid-May - is a joyous celebration of families who have now woven together, like the ribbons of the May Pole, to create a rich school community. In the last glorious days of the school year, we explore the stream, search for wild strawberries, make flower garlands, and enjoy water from the hose. Thus, another school year draws to a close.

Throughout the year the children make special festival crafts which become treasures to them and become closely linked with the memories of those most special days. They love to relive the festivals in their play at home, and often it is these crowns, lanterns, or garlands they have carefully saved which enrich their activity. Parents may wish to create a special place for them, as they are often somewhat fragile!

Understanding the festivals in all their richness would surely be a life study. We will, however, provide reading materials and opportunities for discussion prior to the festivals. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have questions! We are always seeking new ways to understand the festivals ourselves and bring our understanding to the children through artistic and practical activities, stories, and songs. We consider the festivals living entities and hope you will share with us the joy of discovery, as well as the wonderful security of returning to old friends as we move through the year together.

The festivals celebrated in the early childhood embrace universal understanding and values and we encourage every family to seek out ways to weave the experiences of home and school together

## **The Spiritual Nature of the Waldorf Early childhood**

At the foundation of the Waldorf early childhood is the hope that each child will experience here an atmosphere of loving-kindness and care. Through the experiences which the children gather, it is our hope that seeds will be planted for the lifelong cultivation of attitudes of gratitude and reverence towards life. We strive as teachers to know and understand each child as an individual, and to receive him or her daily in acceptance, reverence, and love.

Our work draws its inspiration from philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner. The body of ideas which Steiner developed is known as Anthroposophy and it is a continuous source of study, reflection, and inspiration to us as Waldorf teachers. His insights into human development enabled him to indicate ways in which Waldorf Schools can work to develop children who will be best able to meet the demands which the future will make upon them.

## **Outdoor Activities in the Natural World**

For young children, the natural world is a temple where everything vibrates with life, and it is critical that they have the opportunity to revere this world before being asked to care for it. Time spent outdoors nourishes the children's joy, physical development, and sense of belonging to the universe. Here, as indoors, distinctions between work and play vanish as the children play in leaves just raked, industriously build a bridge over "quicksand," or collect fruit from our orchard. They engage directly in the world which they will later observe scientifically, storing up unconscious impressions and explorations.

The children's relationship with the natural world and its yearly cycle is enhanced by the curriculum. Our early childhood is closely tied with the experience of the natural world through its emphasis on planting, tending, and harvesting the garden's fruits for use within the classroom, year-long visits to the meadow and woods, the celebration of the year's festivals, and the content of story and circle time.

## **The Early Weeks**

The early weeks of school signal a change for the family and can be challenging for the young child. Time spent in camps, on family vacations, in the neighborhood, or being at home gives way to a new schedule, new experiences, new relationships, and new rhythms. Some children will thrive from returning to the familiarity of Old Walpole Road. For others, this may take a toll on their energy. Again, we cannot over-emphasize how beneficial we believe predictable, consistent times and rituals for evening meals and bedtimes are for the whole family. We do understand that this requires considerable discipline and effort on the part of the adults. We are here to encourage you, support you with practical suggestions, and celebrate your successes! Please feel free to speak with your child's teacher about any aspects of this transition where we might be helpful.

## **Arrival and Departure - Beginning and Ending Each Day**

The regular school day begins at 8:00 a.m. We also have an early morning drop-in option beginning at 7:30 a.m. There is a charge for this service, and we do request that if you plan to use it regularly that you sign up. Drop-ins are welcome with 24 hours advance notice.

As you will observe, our parking area is a bit away from the school itself and there is not an area for cars near the building. We have consciously developed our physical space this way so that you can approach the school by walking together up our wonderful path. Although unavoidable, long car rides are an unnatural way for the children to begin their day. We hope that this walk will help to mitigate this in at least a small way. We ask that the upper parking spaces by the barn be only used for the handicapped or those with sleeping babies. Please always use our lower lot both at the beginning and ending of each day.

Please take time to put your child's things away and to "hand your child over" to the teacher.

We suggest that you share any early morning communications with your child's teacher via a written note. As pleasant as early morning conversations are, it is difficult for the children and teachers to begin their morning together if the teacher cannot be fully present for the children as they arrive. It can also be difficult for the teachers to remember important information without a written reminder! Please try to have the children arrive by 8:30, as it can be uncomfortable for children to make a late entry on a regular basis and can set the stage for an unhappy beginning if morning activities are already underway.

Similarly, picking up the morning children promptly at 12:00 pm is important. Waiting after the other children have left can create stress for a child whose school day has ended and is anticipating lunch and time at home.

Children who stay for afternoon care can be picked up at either 3:30 or 5:30 p.m. We request that you arrive early enough to gather belongings and leave without feeling rushed.

## **Illness**

If your child is going to miss school, or is going to be late, it is very important that you notify his or her teacher through the appropriate office before 8:00 a.m. unless previous notification has been given. A child missing from class is a matter of serious concern and is cause for immediate attention by staff and teachers. Please help us to avoid unnecessary alarms by your attention to this request.

You may leave a message regarding absence 24 hours a day by calling 357-8663 for Early Childhood absences.

Each day at Monadnock Waldorf School includes many different kinds of activities for all students. A child who is ill, or even over-tired, simply cannot be present in a strong enough way to benefit from all these opportunities. The faculty suggests that you ask yourself whether or not your child will be able to participate fully in the school day. If you are unsure, it probably means

he or she isn't well enough and needs to rest at home. The school has no adequate facilities to care for a sick child. Children with contagious or infectious illnesses may not attend school unless given a doctor's written permission.

### **Fever Policy**

If, during the school day, a child is experiencing a fever (99.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) or signs of a fever (chills, flushed skin, sweating), we will call parents/guardians to come to pick up the students, allowing him or her to be cared for at home.

A student experiencing any of the fever symptoms mentioned above should stay at home until fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine.

### **Clothing**

What young children wear often determines the quality of their experience. Clothes that are warm and easy to play in, that fit well and feel nice help children feel comfortable and at home with them - and with the world around them. Children of early childhood age are growing quickly and busily developing their physical bodies. As the adults who care for the child, we have a large responsibility in dressing the children appropriately - for the weather and the activities in which they are engaged, as well as for their age and size.

The most important aspect of the clothing for the early childhood child is *warmth* throughout the year. Children of this age, despite so many signs of independence, have not yet developed the temperature controlling ability which can enable them to make decisions about the appropriate clothing for the day. Our classrooms are kept at a healthy indoor temperature which keeps active bodies from becoming overheated. This means that the children need long sleeves in nearly all weather and should keep a sweatshirt or sweater with their extra clothing at school. Long underwear and undershirts creating layers of warmth are best in the colder months. Natural fibers, like wool, are preferred by many for their wicking properties and warmth.

We ask also that each child bring a pair of shoes to school which can be for indoor use only, along with an extra change of clothing (socks, underwear, pants, and shirt) for changes during the school day. We find that shoes which are not firmly attached to the feet and close to the ground (flip-flops, jellies, crocs, clogs, and platform shoes or high heels, e.g.) make play difficult. We encourage sturdier shoes.

Sturdy clothes for work and play are the order of the day. The children are often painting, baking, and playing in the garden's dirt and mud outside. Party dresses and dress-up shoes are not appropriate for early childhood activities except on those few special days! We also ask that the children not wear clothing with neon colors, writing or strong graphic designs. Our observations have shown us that this can be distracting and over-stimulating.

We go out of doors nearly every day all year long. We like to go out on rainy days. In the winter we bundle up for a good play in the ice and snow. Each child needs a pair of "puddle boots" and

a raincoat and rain pants for wet weather in spring and autumn, as well as snowsuits with snow pants (or a one-piece suit), hats, insulated winter boots, mittens, and scarves for chilly days.

We believe that it is healthy for children to be allowed to engage with the "elements." Children joyfully play in mud. When the weather is warm, we give them water for their sand play. In the winter, sliding on ice can quickly lead to a very wet snowsuit! *We cannot overemphasize the need for adequate outdoor clothing and a full set of dry, clean clothing for changing into when the children come in from outdoor play.* Children who stay for the afternoon will require even more clothing! Please help us with this.

We have become increasingly concerned about the children's exposure to the sun, and hope that you will keep your eyes open for hats to be worn during warm weather for sun protection. Straw hats, baseball style caps, and sunbonnets all offer this protection.

So, in short . . .

- Extra clothing to be left at school - underwear, pants, shirt, socks, and sweater.
- Indoor shoes or fitted slippers
- Puddle boots
- Raincoat, with a hood or rain hat
- Rain pants
- Snowsuit (one or two piece)
- Mittens, extra ones are a must!
- Winter boots
- Scarf on very cold days
- Hats - sun hats and/or warm hats.
- PLEASE MARK ALL CLOTHING WITH YOUR FAMILY NAME TO HELP US KEEP YOUR CHILD'S CLOTHING WITH YOUR CHILD.

### **Snacks and Food**

Each morning the children assist in preparing our snack - complete with fresh fruit or raw vegetables, a variety of cooked whole grains or breads baked in the classroom, homemade soups, a non-meat protein, and water, milk or tea to drink. The table is carefully set each day with mats, napkins, bowls, and glasses, and perhaps seasonal center pieces.

For those children remaining for lunch, we ask that the parents provide a filling, healthful lunch without sweets. Some possible lunch items include: sandwiches, soup or pasta in a mug, leftover main dish from last night's supper, raw or cooked vegetables, fresh or dried fruits, nuts, cheese, bread, muffins, crackers, or yogurt. We will provide water for the children to drink. Please include enough food in your child's lunch so that your child can have a snack after rest. Lunches need to be brought in a plain cloth or canvas lunch bag or a basket. We have found that lunchboxes, thermoses, and food packaging covered with graphic designs and images distract the children from healthy conversation and play. Please help us!

### **Toys in the Kindergarten**

Each of our early childhood classrooms is developed carefully and consciously to support the work and play life of the children. Emphasis is on natural materials which lend themselves to easy transformation in the children's play. For instance, a log might be a train at one moment, a telephone the next, or the wall to an animal pen the next. A cloth might be a head covering, wings, a cape, a bag, or water or grass for a puppet show. Our toys are selected with an eye toward the possibility of becoming whatever the child's imagination makes them in any given moment. Highly formed toys with one use or role are generally not included among the classroom furnishings as children either become stuck in repetitive, noncreative play scenarios or quickly lose interest in such toys. Objects are selected to reflect the real materials of which they are composed: rocks are heavy and dense, a piece of silk is light, airy, and diaphanous. Our dolls are warm and cuddly, ready for a journey or a rest!

Each classroom contains a variety of materials for all the children who come there, not an overabundance which would appear chaotic to the young child nor a scarcity which would not offer generous possibilities for the work and play of each child. Through the days, weeks, and years the children discover many possibilities for each object and work together sharing or trading as the occasion necessitates.

It is natural that children will wish to carry familiar toys with them and to show friends things which are precious to them. It has been our experience, however, that bringing toys, books or other possessions from home often creates difficult situations in the school setting. Therefore, we request that the children not bring such items to school, but rather wait for the opportunity for sharing their own things during times when friends visit at home. Some children may wish to bring a friendly security blanket, stuffed animal or doll to help build the bridge between home and school, and such "friends" can wait in the child's cubby during the morning.

### **Media and the Young Child**

Franklin Kane, in his book Parents as People, describes the effect of television and other media sources within the home as a Trojan horse - the gift which looked so wonderful and full of promise at first, but turned out to be so destructive in the end. He includes radios, CD players, videos, and video games in his concern. We would add computers and computer games to this list. He suggests that these electronic guests are eroding the heart out of our family life, making so difficult the personal human interaction upon which a warm, rich family life is dependent. He experiences the heart of the family as its invisible balancing and weaving energy, nourishing each member and joining together the individual parts into one whole.

As teachers, we sadly observe this influence upon the children in the classroom in their difficulty in entering into play, in their static roles chosen in play, in their choice of areas in which their imaginations may be activated, and in listening. The nature of the plots, characters, and settings in media and television does not provide children with the rich life experience which is the content of healthy play. The research regarding the effects of media upon the young child

demonstrates many aspects of its inappropriateness. We hope that you will work to limit, censor, or even eliminate “screen time” from your child's experience.

We are well aware of what a challenging and daunting issue this is and hope that these thoughts may stimulate an opportunity to observe and evaluate the role of media within your family life.

### **Readiness for First Grade**

Each spring there arises within each group of kindergarten children the signs of readiness to move on from the early childhood environment which has supported and nurtured their growth up until this point. Each child will manifest this readiness in a different manner, some with clarity and directness, others in a less obvious way or perhaps even with reluctance to leave behind the years of early childhood. It is the task of parent and kindergarten teacher together to explore the development of each child in a sensitive and comprehensive manner so as to determine that child's readiness for beginning elementary school. The first grade teacher, if available, or another elementary school teacher, will also help in this decision when questions regarding placement arise.

To enter first grade, Monadnock Waldorf School expects a child's sixth birthday will occur prior to May 31. Many children entering our first grade are significantly older than six when they begin. The social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of each child are all carefully weighed in coming to this major decision. A consultation with an anthroposophical physician is recommended in some situations to provide an additional perspective.

We are aware that there are many outside pressures suggesting that “more sooner = better” and some parents may really want a young six year old to go to first grade. It has been our experience, widely shared now by many parents and young adults who were once children here, that the six year old year in kindergarten is a tremendous, delicious gift to the child.

### **Parent Meetings**

It is our hope and anticipation that parents will want to learn more about their children's experiences in the early childhood. We plan parent meetings throughout the year as an opportunity for parents and teachers to share the many aspects of the life of the early childhood with each other. These may take a variety of forms: a sharing from the teachers about aspects of child development, exploration of the whys and hows of early childhood experience, study and discussion about the festivals throughout the year, and artistic and craft activities for the entire group. These are important times during which a deeper understanding of the child's experience in the school is developed. These meetings are also an opportunity to support each other as parents of young children. It is important that parents commit themselves to these meetings for their richness is dependent upon the participation of all the parents in a class in many ways.

### **Parent-Teacher Communications**

Your child's teacher will contact you during the summer before your child's first year in the early childhood to arrange for a home visit. This is an informal time for the teacher to come and visit your child in your home. During this time we like to see some of your child's important home experiences - i.e., meeting siblings or other people who live in the house; seeing pets, playrooms, bedrooms, and outdoor play spaces, etc. This is meant to be a relaxed, fun time for your child to share his or her world with the teacher.

Parent-teacher conversations are offered throughout the year. These are an on-going opportunity for parents and teachers to build a picture of each child and her experiences in life. We offer an initial home visit in the summer and an opportunity for families new to the class to meet with the teacher during the summer or early fall. Conferences are encouraged for all parents in the winter, with an optional spring parent-teacher conversation as well.

Teachers are available, of course, throughout the year whenever questions arise. We want to give you and the concerns of, and for, your children the attention they deserve. Please do not hesitate to call. If we are unavailable when you call, please leave a message so that we can get back to you. We *do* want to know about anything of importance that may affect your child's day. A note is an excellent way to get this information to us when children are present. Eliza, Sondra and Thia all have a confidential voice mail box at 357-8663 or you may send us an email.

- Eliza: [emurphy@monadnockwaldorfschool.org](mailto:emurphy@monadnockwaldorfschool.org)
- Sondra: [snelson@monadnockwaldorfschool.org](mailto:snelson@monadnockwaldorfschool.org)
- Thia: [tzakrzewski@monadnockwaldorfschool.org](mailto:tzakrzewski@monadnockwaldorfschool.org)

A descriptive report for parents is written by the teacher about each child at the conclusion of the school year.

### **Admissions Process**

The admissions process includes a conversation between the parents and early childhood teacher at which time an in-depth description of the program is shared, questions about the school and the child's experience there can be discussed, and teacher and parents can begin to build a picture together of how the child's needs will best be met in the early childhood setting.

### **Reading About Young Children and Waldorf Education**

There are many wonderful resources which will enrich your understanding of the young child, the Waldorf kindergarten, and Waldorf education. Many of these books are available in the parents' section of the school library.

- Children at play, Preparation for Life, Heidi Britz-Crecelius, Inner Traditions International, New York, 1972
- Toymaking With Children, Freya Jaffke, Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1987
- You Are Your Child's First Teacher, Rahima Baldwin, Celestial Arts, 1989
- Home Remedies, Otto Wolff, Floris Books, 1991
- Seven Times the Sun, Shea Darian, Gilead Press, Brookfield, WI, 1994

- Waldorf Education – A Family Guide, Pamela Johnson Fenner, Karen L. Rivers, Michaelmas Press, Amesburg, MA
- Storytelling with Children, Nancy Mellon, Hawthorn Press, Gloucestershire, 2000
- Beyond the Rainbow Bridge, Barbara Patterson and Pamela Bradley, Michaelmas Press, Amesbury, MA, 2000
- Our Children from Birth to Seven, Barbara J. Patterson and Pamela Bradley, Michaelmas Press, Amesbury, MA
- The Seven O’Clock Bed Time, Inda Schaenen, Harper Collins Publisher, 2001
- The Children’s Year, Stephanie Cooper, et al, Hawthorn Press, Gloucestershire, UK, 2005
- In a Nutshell, Nancy Foster, Acorn Hill, Silver Springs, MD, 2005
- Heaven on Earth, Sharifa Oppenheimer,
- All Year Round, Ann Druitt, Christine Fynes-Clinton, Marije Rowling, Hawthorne Press, Gloucestershire, UK.

### **Head Lice Policy, Information, Recommendations, Resources**

In the charming children’s tale *Little Louse and Little Flea*, overly quick judgment leads to an hysterical reaction that results in the mixing bowl jerking itself off the shelf, the door lifting itself off its hinges, and the tree pulling its roots right out of the ground to totter along behind this whole unhappy parade before the objective facts reassert themselves and allow all to come back to order. Many of us who have received the call informing us that lice or nits have taken up residence in our lives have experienced a bit of this same disorienting need to react without clear direction or accurate knowledge.

Lice are a common nuisance and can be upsetting and frustrating for families. Head lice do not carry diseases and they are not related to poor hygiene; they are fragile creatures that require a human host to survive, and they will eventually die of inbreeding and are thus self-limiting.

#### **Lice Policy at Monadnock Waldorf School**

#### **If your child is found to have lice or nits at school:**

1. You will be called immediately. Early dismissal to begin treatment is a requirement for an active case of head lice. Early dismissal is an option—although not a requirement—if nits are seen but no live lice are detected. In either case, parents are expected to begin treatment that day.
2. Children who are found to have lice or nits may return to school only after they have begun treatment, including daily head checks, nit-combing, and manual removal of all lice and nits.
3. Parents and care-givers must commit to a full course of treatment.
4. You teacher will follow up with children and parents for three weeks after lice/nits are found to ensure that treatment is on-going and effective and to offer support and education.

5. If a child is not clear of lice/nits after three weeks of treatment and combing, the school will require that the child be seen by a professional and certified free of nits before returning to school.

### **Treatment and Preventative Advice for Head Lice and Nits**

As members of a community, we all share responsibility for controlling the spread of communicable conditions such as head lice. What follows are tested and recommended treatment and prevention measures.

#### Treatment Measures

Toxic treatment for lice, including any sort of fumigation of your home, is not recommended. Lice are becoming increasingly resistant to chemical pediculicides; systematically smothering them with oil may be a far more effective treatment.

The website [headlicetodeadlice.com](http://headlicetodeadlice.com) is excellent resource. It is comprehensive and calming, and provides a “5-Step Battle Plan” calendar developed with the help of entomologists, which will give form and direction for treatment steps to take without overreacting to the situation. Although the site is presented in a cartoonish way and does offer certain products for sale, it also provides succinct and thorough information.

The Centers for Disease Control website also has a lot of information, some of which you may find useful: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

Hylands Quit Nits is a non-toxic complete treatment and offers a preventative spray, also.

Cover the hair with coconut or olive oil for several days. Cover with a scarf during the day and a conditioning cap at night. For best results, consider following a treatment calendar such as the one outlined in [headlicetodeadlice.com](http://headlicetodeadlice.com). (For easy application of olive oil to the head, consider purchasing an inexpensive applicator bottle, available for under \$3 at a beauty supply store. Also, consider having on hand conditioning caps, which are thinner and more comfortable to wear than shower caps, and are available in inexpensive multi-packs at drugstore.)

Check all family members and treat any affected members at the same time.

It is very important to become nit-picky! Check for nits and lice. This is a wonderful opportunity to develop the habit of spending time each day—or, at minimum, as a weekly routine when lice/nit-free—touching and grooming your child. If you need help in knowing how to check for nits, view this video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deqxz6G1RnE>. You may notice that many of the viewer comments about the clip attest to how relaxing and therapeutic undergoing a nit-check can be. It is a wonderful time to nurture the human connection, converse calmly, have your child look at or read a book, or add a neck massage to the head-check ritual.

If you are conducting head checks because you have discovered nits or lice, remember that nits can continue to appear after successful treatment; regular nit-checks are paramount to

successfully overcoming a lice problem. Ten days after the initial treatment is a common time for recurrence. Nits can also hatch from a hair that has fallen or been pulled out of the head, and the hatched louse will seek a host.

A bright light, magnifying craft glasses (which can be worn over eyeglasses), a wooden knitting needle for parting hair, and clips to hold back hair are helpful tools when nit checking. Remove each nit by snipping or tweezing out its host hair shaft, or by pulling the nit down and off the hair shaft. Place any nit you find in a Ziploc baggie and place the baggie in your freezer for two days, then dispose of the sealed baggie.

Wash bedding and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Soft toys and other items that you cannot or choose not to wash can be sealed in a plastic bag. Advice on the timing of this varies from two days to two weeks, but very cold porches are believed to speed this process. Head lice require a live host and frequent feedings to survive.

Vacuum frequently and store/dispose of used vacuum bags in a sealed plastic bag. Pay special attention to sleeping and sitting areas. Vacuum your car, especially the seats and head rests. You may also use a lint roller for frequent preventive nit nabbing.

Head lice need a human host. There is no need to check or treat family pets.

#### Preventative Measures

Regular, thorough head checks of children and other family members!

Tec Labs Licefree Spray – reported to be non-toxic, easy, and effective.

Fairy Tales Rosemary Repel Conditioning Spray

Babo Botanicals Lice Repel Conditioning Spray

Hylands Quit Nits products

Please remember that essential oils, while natural, can be very strong for a young child, so it is best not to make your own remedies unless you have expertise in this area. Use common sense.

Avoid huddling together; do not share hats, hair ties, pillows, combs/brushes, neck scarves, etc.

If your child has long hair, pull it back and cover it with a scarf or hat. Tidy hair and adult bodily care of children can have positive effects beyond the management of lice!

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This handbook is the result of many years of thoughts, hopes, and conversations between parents and teachers and among the early childhood teachers themselves. It is our goal to create a written introduction to the experience of the Waldorf Early Childhood and Monadnock Waldorf School's Early Childhood in particular.

