



River Valley Current

October 14, 2014 No. 390

"To be nobody but myself -- in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else -- means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting". - E.E. Cummings

School Calendar

This Week

Tuesday, Oct 14

4th grade trip to PEEC
EC Parent Evening 7-8:30 pm

Saturday, Oct 18

EC Open House
7th grade workday

Looking Ahead

Thursday, Oct 23

School Tour 9:00 am

Friday, Oct 24

AWSNA Regional Conference at RVWS

Thursday, Oct 30

2nd grade Parent Meeting

Friday, Oct 31

Ancestor's Day – In-school celebration
Morning Glory Pumpkin Festival (EC-G2) 4-6 pm

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

Early Childhood Open House

Saturday, October 18th 10 am to 11:30 am

Please invite anyone you may know who is thinking about nursery, preschool or kindergarten for their child. Children 5 and younger are welcome to attend, together with their parent/s. Our guests will experience a lovely morning with bread baking, a puppet show, play time and conversation with our wonderful EC teachers: Ms. Kathy, Ms. Rebecca, Ms. Amanda and Ms. Shana. What an excellent way to introduce your friends & family to River Valley!

Registration is requested - call the office or email info@rivervalleyschool.org. Please contact Cindy Schretlen with any questions about the event:
610-982-5606 x203,
admissions@rivervalleyschool.org.

Adult Education with Guus Antonie

Workshop: "Stages of Child Development: Parenting and the Waldorf Curriculum"

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, October 28th, 29th and 30th from 8:45 to 10:30 am

Cost: \$30

This workshop is designed to provide parents with a greater understanding of child development and how to effectively work with children during each phase. This series will also offer glimpses into the Waldorf classroom and illustrate how the Waldorf curriculum supports each stage of a child's growth, physically, intellectually and emotionally.

Tuesday - The Wondrous Years of Early Childhood

Wednesday - The Heart of Childhood/ Crossing the Rubicon

Thursday - The Summit of Childhood and pre-puberty

Evening Talk: "Adolescence and Beyond: The Birth and Nurturing of the Astral Body"

Thursday, October 30th, 7 pm

Cost: \$10

We can recognize several landmarks in our biography, one of which occurs during adolescence when the Astral body is born. What does this mean? What do we mean by Astral body? What is happening in the life of a child at this age and how can we support this? How does it develop further as we grow into adulthood? This evening talk will introduce the biography work that will be done on Saturday.

Workshop: The Rhythms of a Biography

Saturday, November 1st, 9 am - 4 pm

Cost: \$45 (This price includes the Thursday evening lecture.)

Biography work can help us find answers to the questions we have concerning our life. By exploring our past experiences our life story gradually will unfold: Rhythms and patterns will become visible and we will recognize the themes, challenges and opportunities in our life. This may give us the insights, confidence, courage and new perspectives for future developments on our journey through life. This workshop will explore biographical threads, cycles and rhythms and how they manifest in our own life and in other people's biographies.

Guus Antonie has been a Waldorf teacher for many years. He began his career in Holland and has taught in England and Belgium in addition to Upper Black Eddy. He has also mentored teachers all over the world. One of the areas he enjoys most is Adult Education and he has led many inspiring workshops at our school over the years. We are fortunate to have him back again.

There is a flyer attached to this week's Current with a registration form.

Please fill out the form and place it, with payment, in the folder on the office door. Hope to see you there!

Parent Council Meets Tomorrow

Parent Council will meet tomorrow, Wednesday 10/15 from 2:00-3:00 pm at Homestead General Store.

Agenda items are: Food for Parent-Teacher Conferences and Winter Fair and more.

Lunches Are Back in November!!

See inside for more details.

From Administration

November Lunch Menu!

Grandy is pleased to announce that, with the help of her daughter, Joanna, she will be able to begin serving lunches in November. She will begin with two days per week, Tuesday and Wednesday. An order form is attached to this week's Current. Forms are due by Friday, October 23rd.

Crafters Welcome

The 2014 Bridgeton Hill Holiday Bazaar will take place on Saturday, November 22nd and there are booths available for craftspeople. Please see forms attached to this week's Current for more information.

Come Ski Blue Mountain with your River Valley Friends

RIVER VALLEY SKI CLUB

We will ski on 6 Fridays evenings, from 4 pm to 10 pm starting Jan 9th through February 13th
Rates are on the forms attached to this week's Current.
PLEASE MAKE OUT CHECKS TO Christine Aherne, RVWS 7th and 5th grade parent a long-time Ski Club member! She will be the main ski club manager this year.
Stephanie Smith will be helping collect forms and answer any questions!!!! Fun Times, Friends!
Please fill out the Liability Release/Group Membership Form for every skier and One Sign-up Form per family.

Forms and Payment due back by Wednesday, October 28th!

Hilary Murphey is Joining the RVWS Staff

We are pleased to announce that Hilary Murphy is our new Enrollment Outreach Coordinator. Hilary is a RVWS parent with two children, Aiden and Anna, in the Moon Room, mixed-age kindergarten class. She and her family live on a farm with 200 goats!

Hilary has a Master's of Science Degree in Organizational Change Management with experience working in marketing, customer service and customer retention. More recently she has turned her passion for photography into a small business. Hilary is starting this week, just in time to transition with Stephanie Smith who is leaving to start her own business in Frenchtown.

We extend a warm welcome to Hilary and bid a fond farewell to Stephanie.

Congratulations!!

Warm congratulations and love to Diana Stoycheva and Justin Bost on the birth of their daughter, Phoebe Magnolia Bost. Phoebe was born naturally at home on Sunday, October 12th, weighing 9 lb, 11 oz, 21 inches long. Everyone is delighted and doing well.

Interesting Events Coming Up at Waldorf School of Princeton

Waldorf 101: Meeting the Adolescent

Tuesday, October 21, 7 p.m. at The Waldorf School of Princeton

Signe Motter, WSP 7th grade teacher and instructor at Antioch Waldorf Teacher Training Program in New Hampshire, discusses the 12-year-old change. The two evenings will include both a lecture and an experiential component.

These adult enrichment evenings continue to be open to the wider community and are free of charge. Please invite any friends, colleagues, or family members that you think would be interested in our series. For info, contact pshafer@princetonwaldorf.org

"Waldorf Education: An Uncommon Core," a Talk with Patrice Maynard

Friday, October 24, 7-9 p.m.

Hagens Hall – at the Waldorf School of Princeton, 1062 Cherry Hill Road, Princeton, NJ 08540

In this talk, veteran Waldorf educator, parent, and advocate Patrice Maynard will address common core standards, and what Waldorf Education offers in response: a low-stress, non-testing environment for early elementary students that takes a different approach to academics, based on a different picture of child development. She will also discuss what is core in Waldorf standards: meeting a variety of individual learning styles with respect for each child's gifts, and encouraging a lifelong love of learning without labeling.

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/writing-by-hand-benefits-brain-ainissa-ramirez>

<http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop>

PA CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (CHIP)

With the 2014-15 school year under way, it's important for students to have access to the health care they need. The Pennsylvania Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) can help.

For many Pennsylvania families, CHIP is free or offered at a low cost. Coverage is provided by private health insurance carriers with a generous benefits package and robust medical provider networks. Last year, Governor Corbett eliminated the waiting period so that no uninsured child would need to wait to apply. Parents, teachers, families and school nurses can access CHIP information via the links below. CHIP's Main Website: <http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/>

Downloadable Materials and Handouts for Schools and Parents: <http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/chip-resources/resources-for-organizations-community-partners-and-school-districts/e-toolkit/downloads/>

What is CHIP: <http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/about-chip/what-is-chip/>

Eligibility and Benefits: <http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/eligibility-and-requirements/>

Apply for and/or Renew CHIP Coverage: <http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/apply-and-renew/>

Thank you

Thank you, Stephanie Smith, for all of your years of service to RVWS. Your hard work and dedication helped our school grow and we are forever grateful. Best of luck with Pulp, your vegetarian juice bar and café in Frenchtown!

Thank you, Lisa George, for the great lasagna! From the Bernhardt family

From the Faculty

WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

First Grade: Math

Second Grade: Arithmetic

Third Grade: Language Arts/Hebrew Stories

Fourth Grade: Math

Fifth Grade: Ancient Civilizations

Sixth Grade: Mineralogy

Seventh Grade: Geography

Eighth Grade: Geometry

Circus Club is back

The RVWS Circus Club meets every Saturday at 10:30 am. All skill levels are welcome. Fee: by donation. Call Mr. Friedman (610-847-8749) with questions or to let him know you will be there.

From the Leadership Council

What are we working on?

Strategic Planning and Site Planning with Board and Faculty

Foreign Language Program with Faculty and TDC

Early Childhood programs with EC faculty

Ideas for the coming year with Parent Council

Guus Antonie's Visit

From the Board

Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda

October 16, 2014

Meeting Starts Promptly at 6:30

6:30 – Opening: Verse and Candle lighting - Will

6:35 – Capital Campaign Update – Louanne
(10 minutes)

6:45 – LC Report- (10 minutes)

Proposals, Decisions, and Discussions

6:55 – Anti-Harassment Policy – David (5 minutes)

7:00 – By-Law Review – Will (20 minutes)

To be discussed:

Article IV

4. Approval Procedure. The Board shall appoint a nominating committee whose charge it is to provide a slate of candidates for vacant Trustee positions to the membership in May. Any member of the Community may suggest nominees by addressing his or her suggestions directly to the Nominating Committee prior to April 30. Approval of the slate shall be achieved through the positive vote of a majority of the membership that cast a vote, with the votes to be submitted via on-line response and/or written ballots, provided, however, that at least 25% of the Membership cast a vote.

5. Filling an Unexpired Term. If, for any reason, a Trustee is unable to complete his or her term, the President of the Board shall appoint a replacement to serve to the end of the unexpired term. In the case of the resignation of the President from the Board, the Board vacancy (but not necessarily the office of President) may be filled by majority action of the remaining Trustees.

Standing Committee Reports

7:20 – Administrative – Brian (10 minutes)

7:30 – Finance – Nick (10 minutes)

7:40 – Faculty – Ken/Christina (5 minutes)

7:45 – Break

Committee Reports

7:55 – Anniversary – Ron (5 minutes)

8:00 – Auction – DeeDee (5 minutes)

8:05 – Development – Kristyn (5 minutes)

8:10 – IT – Andy (5 minutes)

Board Study

8:15 – Steiner's Letter to Prospect Parents – Brian
(30 minutes)

8:45 – Items from the Board Vice President – Will
(10 minutes)

8:55 – Closing and Meeting Feedback

From the Community

An Abundance of Eggs

Hilary Murphy's chickens are laying lots of eggs and she would like to make them available to RVWS families. The cost is \$3/dozen. Let Hilary know if you are interested and she will bring them to school. Email:

hilarymurphyphotography@gmail.com or talk to her in the hallway.

Free Kitten!

Our adorable, lovable kitten needs a new home. She is approximately 5 months old - is easy, cuddly and house trained. Please see Mrs. Atkinson or call (609) 851-6539

Family Yoga Class

Please join Felicia Holtz for a special Family Yoga Class at Dig Yoga, Lambertville, NJ on Sunday, October 26 from 12 PM - 1 PM. \$20 per family.

For sale

Solid wood (walnut) dining room set - trestle base table (74" x 40") with 2 leaves (12" each), 2 arm chairs, 4 side chairs, and china cabinet (60" w x 74" h x 19" d; top comes off for easier moving). A few small blemishes, but in great condition for being 35+ years old. I'm the second owner; it's been in a smoke-free home for the last 23 years. Pick up in Clinton Twp. \$500 OBO – email Pat at pwarneproctor@starcastproduction.com if you'd like to see pictures!

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

Cello Lessons at OTAC

While Daniel Hawkins is ensconced in an academic Masters program in St. John's, New Foundland, he has secured the cello program by collaborating with another amazing cellist. Daniel will continue his vision of OTAC through continued virtual interaction of the lessons, jams, events, dances, workshops and personal appearances!

Wednesdays

Mirjam Ingolfsson... was hailed as "a young poet of the cello". Born in Reykjavik, Iceland to a family of musicians and artists. Mirjam Ingolfsson started the cello at the age of four and began touring Europe and the United States at age seven. She is an artist with her own distinct musical voice who has established herself as an important performer and pedagogue in the Philadelphia region. As a dedicated teacher, Mirjam Ingolfsson co-founded The Leopold Mozart Academy in 2001, where she teaches cello, Music Theory and Solfeggio.

For lesson information contact mirjam.ingolfsson@gmail.com,

Mondays

Afternoon Lessons with Jane Rothfield

Fiddle, Guitar, Banjo beginners and advanced students welcome. For lesson information contact janerothfield@gmail.com

Wednesday Jams / Song swaps 6:00-8:00

Please join the Jam! All levels welcome. Bring strings, pipes, squeezebox whatever you got! Tunes and songs \$5 suggested donation . ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com for song and tunes selections.

OTAC AUTUMN EVENTS!!!

Wednesday October 22

House Concert with Ari and Mia

Friday October 24th

House Concert & Family CHEILIDH Dance
with Party of Three!

Saturday November 1st

Contradance with Perpetual e-Motion

2nd Annual Gypsy Dance

RVWS Class trip FUNDRAISER

Check out our Ottsville Tradarts Calendar of events for more Information.

ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com, danielhhawkins.com

250 Durham Road Ottsville (across from Kimberton Whole Foods)

Join us at Sunbridge for this year's

Waldorf Weekend!

October 17-18, Friday evening - Saturday afternoon

Sunbridge's Waldorf Weekend is an experiential workshop on the foundations and fundamentals of Waldorf Education designed especially for: Current or prospective Waldorf parents, new or prospective Waldorf teachers, Waldorf school staffers and board members, students of anthroposophy, anyone interested in education and exploration.

If you're new to Waldorf Education, are considering a career as a Waldorf educator, or are already a Waldorf parent or community member and would like to learn more, our Waldorf Weekend is the perfect way for you to gain a greater understanding of the Waldorf pedagogy and classroom experience. Through discussions, presentations, and artistic activities, you'll be thoroughly immersed in everything Waldorf, from its underpinnings in anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner's insights into human development, to highlights of the Early Childhood, Lower and High School curricula, with a special emphasis on the elementary school years.

Begins Friday, October 17, 7-9pm and runs through Saturday, October 18, 9am-6pm. Cost - \$175

Questions? Contact Ayla Dunn, Admissions and Summer Series Coordinator, info@sunbridge.edu, 845-425-0055 x20

Still seeking . . .

After school care for the Lederer children (Zane -G4, Annika - G1, and Ridge - EC). Mom, Kristyn, works in Doylestown at Delaware Valley College and we live in Quakertown. I'm hoping to find someone who can pick up the children from school and take them to your home or ours. I finish work at 5 p.m. and can pick up shortly thereafter. My preference is to find someone in/near/between Doylestown & Quakertown. If you know someone who might be interested please email 1134zar@gmail.com or text 267-471-2751. Thanks!

Help Needed

RVWS family of 5 is looking for a helper during the after school/dinner hours with our three children, ages 5 and 16 months (twins). Right now the days/ hours most needed are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 3:30-7 p.m., but we can possibly shift the days if necessary. Prior experience with children and babies is desirable...love of children a must! Must be able to provide own transportation. Contact Sara for more information: 609-566-3144 sarajoyfishkin@gmail.com

Desperately Seeking Affordable Childcare

Wednesday and Thursday mornings for my easygoing 2 ½ year old daughter while I assist in the kindergarten. Please call Molly MacDonald at 610-349-3536

Sabine Rahman aka Saharra White Wolf would love to invite you to her upcoming events:

Shamanic Journeying - Mondays for adults and teens Oct. 27th, Nov. 17th and Dec. 8th, 7 to 9 pm

Children/Family Fire Full Moon Ceremony - October 10th 4.15pm – for children of all ages

Adult Level II Reiki Class - October 12th: 10am – 6.30 pm. Only 2 spots left (children Reiki classes will start in spring 2015)

Find her business AWAKYA on www.meetup.com – it will give you more information about all this events and many more dates for her ongoing Reiki Healing Circles for all different Reiki Degrees. All Events happen at 5 Cynthia Court, Annandale, NJ 08801. Contact info: saharrawhitewolf@gmail.com

We live in a time of big changes. It is up to you if you want to choose easy or if you want to resist and struggle. Change will happen if you want it or not – it is up to you how. Choose easy, with peace and grace. YOU are the creator of your life and you chose to be here at this exciting time! Enjoy!

Roxey Ballet Nutcracker Production

Gunna Christensen (7th grade) and Sven Christensen (3rd grade) are very excited to be in this year's performance of The Nutcracker by the Roxey Ballet. Gunna and Sven will be in the 1st act party scene and Gunna will be a Chinese dancer and Sven a Russian paige in the 2nd act in Saturday performances. Ainsley Mulligan will be in the party scene on Saturdays and a Sugar Plum paige on Sundays. Former student Gabe Blaikie will be Fritz and Gabe's dad Tim will be Drosselmeyer (not sure which performance).

Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased on www.roxeyballet.org or discount tickets at: www.spinsaver.com.

Hope to see some of our RV friends, Leah Christensen

Boost your family's immunity this winter with delicious Elderberry syrup!

Children LOVE this simple, yet potent homemade tonic made from certified organic elderberries and local raw honey. Elderberries are traditionally renowned for preventing and speeding recovery from common cold and flu symptoms. My son Isaiah (Moon Room) always asks for his "special syrup"! Contact Sara for prices and orders. sarajoyfishkin@gmail.com 609-566-3144

Painting the Still Life in Oil with George Thompson

October 20 and 27 6:00pm – 9:00pm

All levels welcome. Open to ages 16 – adult

Painting the still life is a wonderful way to learn how to paint, to be creative and expressive. We will discuss all the academic skills you need to create a life-like painting and explore how to paint using your own personal style. We will discuss drawing, color, composition, value, handling the materials, and will also challenge you about what a still life should be--from the academic to the more modern approach. Oils or acrylics suggested. Please bring your own materials; if you not have any, please let us know prior to the workshop so they can be provided.

George Thompson is a nationally recognized, award-winning artist specializing in figure/portrait, landscape, and still life. He has been teaching workshops and conducting life-drawing and painting sessions for the last 25 years. Thompson has a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Pratt Institute, and has studied figure drawing and painting at The Art Students League, and The Brooklyn Museum. www.georgethompsongallery.com

The workshops are held in the Community Room at Riegelsville Borough Hall, 615 Easton Road. To sign up, please contact the Riegelsville Library 610-749-2357 or 610-749-2158 or riegelsvillelibrary.info

3rd Graders Building their Sukkah



A Child's Journey in Movement

by Valerie Baadh Garrett

Posted on movementacademyproject.com

We see the young child in nature, or at the playground, fully in motion. He is exploring, running, climbing, swinging or sitting in the sand. He is rarely still, but if so, he is inwardly active in his sensing and imagination. All around him is space to interact with the world, to go in and out, over and under, around and through, here and there, and in his play he explores it all. His movement is not random. It is purposeful. In the first years of life, he gradually moves from unorganized movements that reflexively move towards the body to more intentional movements outward, drawn into the world to reach this, to go under that, to act out a story, move in free play, and imitate the movement gestures of others in the family and school community.

In these years of three to five, the young child is still connected by a shared but invisible organ of living forces to his mother or mother figures. These living forces, sometime called "etheric" forces or the etheric body, enables the child to grow and thrive. Gradually, by the age of six or seven, the child's own life forces enable him to stand in his own individuality. Joyful interactions, play and games together help foster the vitality of this bond and enable the normal progression of growing to unfold.

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The early, or primitive, reflexes that we see in the first days and months are common to all newborn babies, and normally are “integrated” or allowed to go to sleep when more mature movement patterns are formed. Jane Swain explains, “The primitive reflexes are etheric pathways. They are akin to riverbeds in the space around the body. Initially the pathways are one-way streets, in towards the body. When the primitive reflexes are integrated, the pathways become two-way streets, coming in and going out.” These two-way streets allow for healthy development of the child’s capacities for learning.

Through his daily activities, free play and imaginative games, the developmental movement journey that each child takes in these early years creates numerous pathways for learning for his whole life, not only in the body but in the brain and social and learning community, too. The Alliance for Childhood, an advocacy organization for a child’s right to play, reminds us that: There was a time when children played from morning till night. They ran, jumped, played dress-up, and created endless stories out of their active imaginations. Now, many scarcely play this way at all. What happened?

- Over four and a half hours per day watching TV, video game, and computer screens.
- Academic pressure and testing, beginning with three-year-olds.
- Over-scheduled lives full of adult-organized activities.
- Loss of school recess and safe green space for outdoor play.

Decades of research clearly demonstrate that play— active and full of imagination—is more than just fun and games. It boosts healthy development across a broad spectrum of critical areas: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. The benefits are so impressive that every day of childhood should be a day for play. According to a research report for the U. S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) released August, 2011, the rates of ADHD diagnosis in children have increased from 6.9% to over 9% over the previous decade.

Why is this happening more and more? One answer is clear: children aren’t moving enough. With children as young as 2 watching an average of four hours a day of “screen time”, those lost four hours would have helped provide lots of nourishing movements in the home and the yard or playground that will never come back again! When Jane Healy was asked in an interview, “What about the decline of physical exercise? Isn’t that also part of [the increase in ADHD]?” “Yes, any occupational therapist could tell you that not getting exercise and body movement contributes to attention problems.”

Children of all ages need lots of healthy, meaningful movement. By preschool age of 3 to 5, the U.S. National Association for Sport and Physical Education suggests the following guidelines:

- At least 60 minutes a day, cumulative, on structured physical activities
- At least 60 minutes a day (and up to several hours) on unstructured physical activities
- No more than 60 minutes at a time engaged in sedentary activities, unless they are sleeping

If all children had the benefit of these recommended hours of free and structured play activities, just imagine what would happen to our obesity rates, our ADHD rates, and the healthy future of our children.

In her excellent book, “The Well Balanced Child,” Sally Goddard Blythe offers that, in the first months and years, the child trains the primitive reflexes (0-6 months) and the postural reflexes (0-3.5 years) through actively engaging the senses in a variety of activities from feeding, listening, reaching, and gaining mastery of the body in different “planes of gravity” (horizontal, vertical, this side and the “other” side.

Once standing and walking, the child practices motor skills, postural control and balance by romping, exploring, climbing, running, rough-housing, playing with objects and play equipment (swings, slides, balls.) Both sides of the brain are engaged for the older child (ages 4 +) in games that provide opportunities for spatial orientation (rolling, climbing, jumping, reaching up and down), sequencing (remembering verses and activities in order), and in listening (right brain) and repeating stories or songs (left brain.) Practical activities of the child’s home life also provide a rich environment for healthy and meaningful movement that can involve the entire family, even pets. These might include:

Stirring the soup, mixing the pancake batter, squeezing out the washcloth, washing dirty dishes, putting away the groceries, pouring bulk grains into storage bins or jars, hand-grinding wheat, drying the salad greens in a salad spinner, emptying the garbage or compost, sweeping the floor or steps, wiping the counters and floor, raking leaves, digging in the garden, panting in the garden, watering plants with a watering can, folding small cloths, napkins, setting the table.

Most children progress naturally and uneventfully through this normal developmental phase of growth with their orderly home-life, lively play and normal household activities. More and more often, however, we see many children struggling in school and in life with developmental delays that are unrecognized. Behaviors that are problematic in the classroom such as calling out, falling down, laying head on desks, sitting on one folded leg, constant motion or talking, fussiness about food or clothing, or ADHD each may have their basis in hindered movement development.

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The basic human senses of touch, vitality, proprioception, and balance (sometimes called the “lower” or early senses within a concept of the twelve senses) are nurtured, exercised and integrated through healthy, meaningful, and natural movements in the months and years of early childhood.

Carol Stock Kranowitz explains that, “Most people can name five senses: vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Actually, we have several other vital senses.” According to the research of A. Jean Ayres, O.T.R., Ph.D., who formulated the theory of SI [sensory integration], the fundamental sensory systems include:

The tactile sense, which provides information primarily through the surface of the skin, from head to toe, about the texture, shape, and size of objects in the environment. It tells us whether we are actively touching something or are being passively touched. It helps us distinguish between threatening and non-threatening touch sensation.

The vestibular sense, which provides information through the inner ear about gravity and space, about balance and movement, and about our head and body position in relation to the surface of the earth.

The proprioceptive sense, which provides information through our joints, muscles, and ligaments about where our body parts are and what they are doing. These sensory systems, which are sometimes called the “hidden senses,” develop very early in the womb. They interact with vision and hearing, smelling and tasting, which develop slightly later. As a result of typical sensory integration, self-control, self-esteem, motor skills, and high level cognitive functions can develop as Mother Nature planned.”

In addition, there is the “life sense”, which provides information that life is good (or not) through qualities of warmth, rhythm, safety and loving relationships. It is only when the sympathetic nervous system is relaxed do the full sense impressions deeply enter the body. Now called “sensory integration” or sensory-motor integration, this process is essential for brain, body, and social development.

Pediatric occupational therapist Shari Carr works with young children in the public school in Connecticut. In her experience, singing movement games help children organize their senses for life and learning in many ways.

Throughout the day we use all

of our senses to gather information about our environment and our interactions within that environment. However, some activities can help stimulate certain senses more strongly. Below are examples:

- Games that rock, roll, change speed and direction offer vestibular input (sense of balance) that stimulate all attention centers in the brain, essential for learning in the classroom;
- Games that involve a vertical change in head position such as jumping, hopping, or inverting the head to touch the toes or the floor help to stimulate the visual as well as the vestibular system and help ready the body for coordinating both large and fine motor movements with vision;
- Games that roll, crawl on tummy offer tactile stimulation (sense of touch) that help to build body awareness and awareness of movement in space (sense of self-movement or proprioception) by supplying deeper muscle and joint input;
- Games that play with the movements of the hands and fingers (sense of touch, self-movement) offer fine motor skill development that prepares for manipulative skills such as handwriting, drawing, sewing, and moving small items around in the hands;
- Games that invite full-body movements (senses of self-movement, balance, spatial orientation) helps develop awareness of the physical body, the space it occupies, and prepares for larger spatial awareness to develop;
- Games that include doing and listening to rhythm (senses of touch, self-movement, hearing, sequencing) help to calm and organize the senses and help prepare for the sense of time and timing;
- Games that include movements that go up, down, around, and circle left and right (senses of balance, self-movement, spatial orientation) stimulate directionality and knowing where one is in the world.

Creating An Imaginative Space

The children imitate not only our physical movements in work and play, but our habit gestures, mood and attitude, and the way we move in space as well. When we lead the young child in movement, we want to be sure that our own gestures are as clear and clean as possible, without personally coloring them with our own habit gestures such as clenched hands, raised shoulders, or awkward sitting. The child is imitating us not by following our physical gesture, but by sharing the same moving spaces between us. These etheric pathways in and out, flowing between the adult and child, are powerful avenues for learning to learn. Just how the adult creates the imaginative space is key. Heather Chappellet Lanier, noted parenting and early childhood educator and Spacial Dynamics trainer, gives us some tips on creating the spacial substance the child will follow and imitate:

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““What I think makes all the difference is how the adult is able to live through their gestures and not have the gesture be physically, bodily oriented. For example, [in Little Chicks Come Out To Play], there's an imagination of being in this sunny day as the little chicks come out to play. We have that feeling of coming out of a dark chicken coop into the expansiveness, of feeling drawn by the sun. If that's in the gestures, then the children are receiving the whole of what's there rather than just the words and the physicality of the movement.”

“What's most important is that the adult creates the space of the imagination around themselves: that they're in that space, and they're able to create that around the one child, two children, ten children, twenty children as well. Even if you're in a rainy, foggy day in London, the little chicks come out to play in the sunshine. The motions of the Caterpillar Crawls Along are being drawn up from the earth and back down with a real feeling of moist earth that would be nice and squishy to squish into, with grasses that would tickle the back as you go up.”

“Even those things obviously don't really exist, the adult can create an imagination and the space around their gestures as they do them. Then the children both feel that and imitate it to the best of their ability.”

“It's like when we tell a story in early childhood, we see the story as a living picture around us, more like a movie than words on a page or a picture in a book. In order to remember a story, it's very helpful to “see” those images unfolding in front of you like they were more like a movie that you are in, rather than words on a page. So, these are short stories, very short stories, a moment in time for a caterpillar or a rabbit or whatever that image is. You can still create the image of, “Where am I?”, and really hear the sounds that baby chicks make so that [the story] lives in the space around you and isn't just taken by rote.”

As a new singing movement game is introduced, the child first listens and inwardly engages her imagination in the unfolding story. Not only does she hear the tale, but she joins the story: she is the little bug rolling along, or the moon that is round.

Creating the Social Space

Movement games are powerful experiences learning to get along with each other. After a session of singing movement games with her 3 to 5 year olds at Neighborhood PlayGarden in San Francisco, preschool teacher Julie Fellom notices that “they have more respect for each other, of each other's space. They're better at being together. By repeating the gestures that include having boundaries with each other, waiting for a turn, and joining at the right time, all this fosters social health.”

They also learn from each other, and “this is a powerful force for good in the group,” says Fellom. “There is a great community feel to doing the movement games together. They have time to learn, repeat, and practice new movements they might not know how to do. About one-third of the children are kinaesthetic learners, and they often become the leaders in the game, and by their own movements they are teaching the others who imitate them and then look up to them.”

The benefits of learning and practicing singing movement games transfer into self-initiated movement later in free play. For example, after the children learned rolling gymnastics on a flat mat while singing “Rolling Down the River.” Fellom found her students building an incline out of boards and pillows and rolling literally down the river on their own! The movements are no longer just imitated, but become part of a child's movement repertoire, for life.

Games for Growing, for Learning and for Life

Whether in the lap of a parent, in free, self-directed play, or in a circle of preschool classmates, the games in this collection are games for growing. For the three-year old child singing and playing with a beloved adult, story games will help provide a shared space of a warm and safe nest from which to explore the world. For the four or five-year old in a small circle of a playgroup or preschool, these singing movement games offer nourishing story spaces for exploring all dynamics of movement, with physical, emotional, imaginative, and social skills important to growing, for learning and for life.

(This article is an extract from Games Children Sing and Play, by Valerie Baadh Garrett)