

## School Calendar

### This Week

**Mon., June 8-Wed., June 10**

4<sup>th</sup> grade class trip

**Wednesday, June 10**

Last Day of Early Childhood

**Friday, June 12**

Last Day of Grade School  
Rose Ceremony followed by picnic/games 11:00 am

**Saturday, June 13**

Graduation 10:30 am -12:30 pm  
All are Welcome.

### Looking Ahead

Have a Wonderful Summer!!

#### How to Contact Us

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

### Pizza Day Reminder

Pizza will be served this Thursday,  
June 11<sup>th</sup> as a make up  
for a missed snow day.

### 2015-2016 School Calendar

A copy of next year's school calendar is  
attached to this week's Current. Please  
be sure to save it and print one out so you  
can refer to it over the summer.

### RVWS Summer Camp Sign up Deadline Tomorrow, June 10<sup>th</sup>

**If we do not meet our minimum per week  
to run the camps, we will have to cancel  
them.**

To reserve a spot please send an email to  
info@rivervalleyschool.org and fill out the  
registration form attached to the Current.

Parent/Child Camp: July 20-22, July 27-29 or  
Aug. 3-5

EC Camp at RVWS: July 20, July 27 & August 3  
Morning Glory Summer Camp: July 27 &  
August 3

Old Fashioned Camp: July 20 & July 27  
Circus Camp: August 3



**Please join us at Graduation on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>  
to celebrate the RVWS Class of 2015!**

Graduation begins at 10:30 am and will last until 12:30 pm  
Everyone is welcome; this is a wonderful opportunity to  
experience what makes River Valley so special.

## The Last Day of School!

**Early Childhood** will be celebrating their last day on Wednesday,  
June 10<sup>th</sup> with a picnic at 11:30 for all of the EC classes including  
Morning Glory families  
who will be coming up from Doylestown.

The last day of school in the **Grades** is Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be a  
**Rose Ceremony at 11 am** where all of the classes will say goodbye to  
our beloved 8<sup>th</sup> graders. First graders will present each graduate with  
a rose in a ceremony similar to the one that took place on the first  
day of school when they received a rose from the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. **Grade  
School students are expected to wear Festive Attire for the Rose  
Ceremony and have a change of clothes for the picnic.**

Following the Rose Ceremony there will be a picnic for all of the  
grades students and any parents who would like to come. Please  
bring a picnic lunch for your family or send a lunch to school with  
your child if you cannot attend. Games will be played; fun will be  
had and the festivities will end around 1:30.

Parents may take their children home at that time or  
the children may stay for packing and  
classroom moving activities in the afternoon until 3:15.  
Please join us if you can for any or all of the activities.

## From Administration

### **Congratulations to our 2015 Graduates!**

Below is a list of the high schools our 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be attending next year. We wish them all a wonderful new adventure.

Astrid Heinz and Laneia Castelblanco - **Palisades High School**

Isabel Dieterly-Malone, Bianca Sessegolo, and Kathryn Warner - **Solebury School**

Noa Robinson - **Quakertown Community High School**

Lili Smith - **Easton Area High School – gifted program**

Marcella Harvi - **Moravian Academy**

Julian Kendter - **Lenape Middle School, Doylestown**

Sophia Carpenter - **Liberty High School, Bethlehem**

Hazel Ferguson - **Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, Bethlehem**

### **Something you Might Not Know about Charlene Chapman**

Charlene Chapman, whom most of you know as our bookkeeper, is also a documentary filmmaker along with her husband, Jeffrey. One of their documentaries has been accepted and will screen at the New Hope Film Festival on July 25 @ 4:30. A synopsis of the film is below. For more information, contact Charlene, [ginnymacjack@comcast.net](mailto:ginnymacjack@comcast.net), 267.994.1125

### **I Once Was Blind Synopsis for Program Guide – New Hope Film Festival 2015**

I Once Was Blind documents the transformation of a young woman as she battles for her life and independence. With humor and faith, she wrestles blindness, kidney failure, and the discovery of her new husband's addiction. After surgeries to save her kidneys fail, her brother, YouTube sensation Ed Bassmaster, is tested as a possible donor.

### **From Outreach**

Have you checked out our Facebook and Instagram pages? If you are on Facebook or Instagram, please consider "Liking" our pages! We are actively posting updates on events, a weekly "Featured Teacher" series, LOTS of fantastic pictures (thanks Tiffany for being partner on that) and MORE! If you have pictures from field trips, moments in the classroom or anything else that you want our community and others to know, please email me!! If you would like pictures taken of something don't hesitate to ask!! We are always looking for good articles too! We will be keeping active on social media over the summer so please share any fun summer activities, trips or pictures that you want! You can contact me at [hmurphy@rivervalleysschool.org](mailto:hmurphy@rivervalleysschool.org) with questions or to submit a post!

**Mark your calendars** for the Tinicum Arts Festival on July 11 & 12! River Valley will be there making jump ropes and our Schuhplattler group will be performing! Our Schuhplattler group will perform on July 11 at 2:15 pm in the Discovery Tent and on July 12 at 12 pm and 4:15 pm on the Main Stage.

I am looking for parent, student or alumni volunteers to help manage the tent with me! I would like to find volunteers to take two-hour shifts with me throughout the day. Ideally, I will need three volunteers per two-hour shift. Please email me at [hmurphy@rivervalleysschool.org](mailto:hmurphy@rivervalleysschool.org) to let me know if you are interested and what time you would be available. Here are the times I am looking for help:

Saturday, July 11: 10:00 am-12:00 pm, 12:00 pm- 2:00 pm, 2:00 pm- 4:00 pm, 4:00 pm- 6:00 pm

Sunday, July 12: 11:00 am-1:00 pm, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm, 3:00 pm-5:00 pm.

I greatly appreciate any time you are willing to give!  
Hilary

### **WOW!**

RVWS just received a check for \$410 from Giant Food Stores thanks to our families that participate in their A+ Schools program. Thank you to everyone who registered their Bonus Card in the program. The A+ Schools program has ended for this school year. Check the website: <http://giantfoodstores.com/savings-and-rewards/rewards-program/aplus/> in August for details on how to register your Bonus Card for the upcoming school year.

### **Thank you**

Thank you to Tory Baran, from NOVA, who came to River Valley last week to meet with our middle school students about the safe use of social media and the internet. And thank you to the teachers who set this up. The talk made quite an impression on our adolescent students.

Thank you, Rebecca DiCandia, for your tireless efforts on behalf of the Current. We are so very grateful for your time and talent.

## Job Postings

We are looking for two part-time teachers for next year. If you or anyone you know is interested, please let Robbie or Brian know.

### Seeking Part-Time Movement Teacher

River Valley Waldorf School is seeking a part-time Movement/ Games Teacher for the 2015-16 school year. The position begins in September 2015 and teaches games and developmental movement specific to the Waldorf curriculum. The position is for teaching ten periods per week and is flexible as to lower or upper grade school classes. The ideal candidate will have enthusiasm for the importance of movement in education, have teaching experience in the field, and have begun or completed a training program in Spatial Dynamics and/or Waldorf Education.

### Part-time Gardener, Starting August 2015

Duties include, but are not limited to, maintenance and upkeep of garden, annual vegetable growing, caring for perennial edibles, and managing the gardening program with River Valley Waldorf School faculty. An understanding of Waldorf Education and curriculum required, teaching experience needed, knowledge of Biodynamic gardening and permaculture a plus.

Interested applicants should submit resume and references by email: [info@rivervalleysschool.org](mailto:info@rivervalleysschool.org)

## From the Leadership Council

### What we are working on:

Faculty Hiring for next year along with the Hiring Committee, TDC, and Faculty.  
EC programs for next year with TDC and EC faculty.  
Planning and review of the Community Board meeting with the BOT.  
LC Self-evaluation.

## From the Development Coordinator

### Final Push for Annual Appeal

Dear River Valley Community,

The school-year has come to an end but our Annual Appeal will continue through the rest of the month. Did you know that this fund supports an enhanced music program and an expanded eurhythmy block for next year? Please make your donation today to support these and other exciting programs. Donations may be dropped off in the office or mailed to the school. Please indicate that the gift is for the Annual Appeal. As always, your generosity is appreciated!

Stephanie Spencer, Development Coordinator

## From the Community

### Parent's mornings out!

Bring your children to Miss Molly for the morning and take the opportunity to go to a yoga class, have coffee with a friend, nap, do errands, or whatever else you need to do! From 9am until 1pm we'll spend our time working and playing together. I will provide a nutritious organic snack and you send a yummy lunch.

We will gather most Tuesday's and Thursday's through the summer on a first come-first served basis. \$25 per day, located in Ottsville. Please email or call for availability. Molly MacDonald, 610-349-3536, [mollyandollie@gmail.com](mailto:mollyandollie@gmail.com)

### Pennsylvania House for Sale!

Fifteen minutes from school, 4 Bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, center hall Colonial on 3+ acres. Field, woods and fairies! Taxes \$5000, price mid \$400,000's. Will be sold through realtor but not listed yet. Please contact Amy Clemons or Chuck Yax for more information. [Afclemons@icloud.com](mailto:Afclemons@icloud.com)

### Elecampane Looking for a Good Home

I just dug out a large, mature elecampane from my garden. If you are interested in planting it, contact me, Lois Dribin-Flood (grandmother of Isaiah in the Moon Room) [lois.dribin@gmail.com](mailto:lois.dribin@gmail.com).

## Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

gal·li·mau·fry

galə' mōfrē/noun

- a jumble or medley of things;
- a dish made from diced or minced meat, especially a hash or ragout;
- a high-energy, 5-piece contra dance band playing this month in Ottsville.

### Friday, June 12th at 8pm

In concert at the Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

250 Durham Rd, Ottsville PA

\$12 adults, \$10 kids 5-18, free under 5

Gallimaufry combines fiddles, cellos, guitars, accordians, vocals, drums, banjos, pianos, trumpets, and banjos in Irish, Quebecois, and Old Time tunes along with elements of rock and funk to create powerful sets that enthrall both the ears of listeners and the feet of dancers. Their unbridled energy and sophisticated sound have been electrifying dance floors all across Ohio and beyond: individually talented and collectively creative, the band's members have had great success collaborating in their arranging process, creating a sound that is decidedly unique and unabashedly energetic. And once you hear them in Ottsville, you can dance to them the following night at Bethlehem's Valley Contra Dance!

### Come join us for Wednesday Night Jam Session

We host jam sessions most Wednesday evenings at 6 pm; you can view the full calendar at our website:

ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com. Many of the songs we sing and tunes we play are posted here before each session so anyone who wants can come already knowing a tune or two! \$5 suggested donation!

### Camp Homebody for 8-12 year olds

July 6 - July 10, Stockton, NJ

Join Loie Gallagher (rising 3rd grader) and her mom, Chris, a dance/theater artist and educator for a movement and art adventure!

Our 1 week camp explores creative movement and physical theater in collaboration with nature and visual art. Using their body as a teacher/maker, children investigate the elements of movement - dynamics, space, shape and rhythm combined with creek swimming, small creature observations and rock, "paper" and stick collecting. Then children engage in an unique art project with owner/artist, Kelley Roberts of Paperboat and Bird, a beautiful art space just a short walk to on the towpath in Stockton, NJ. On the last day, the whole family is invited for an informance (informal, interactive workshop led by the children), dance party and art viewing at Paperboat and Bird.

Send an email to Chris, [cbodwitch@gmail.com](mailto:cbodwitch@gmail.com), to request details and register.

### FOR SALE

14' "Pure Fun" Trampoline; Like New!; Features: Vinyl; Made with strong, rust-resistant galvanized iron steel tubing using patented T-Section construction; Snug, secure fit of T-Section assembly ensures extra stability and prevents shifting over time; W-shaped legs offer eight balanced contact points which add stability and prevent wobbling or tipping; 14-foot, 88-spring trampoline is easy to assemble and requires no tools or extra drilling; High-performance steel springs provide deeper, more exciting bounce; Includes double-spring set and all-weather cover; (does not include sides) \$150.00; Free delivery and installation (optional);

Call or text Mike at 609-672-3304, or Karen at 609-851-6539

### Small Adult or Kid's Kayak For Sale

Perception Prodigy (orange/yellow) 10' kayak for smaller paddlers up to 150 lbs. I found this boat perfect for self-paddling adventurous kids ages 6 and up, but the boat got to be too short around 5'4". Younger children could give paddling a go, then ride along with a tow rope. This kayak would be \$400 new. I am selling the kayak, paddle and life vest (for 35-95 lbs.) for \$175. No commitment test drives on Lake Nockamixon! Melanie (215) 280-3154.

### Summer Crafting

Every Wednesday at Frenchtown Park families will gather for children to play while parents join in making crafts for the school festivals ahead of time. The crafting is just suggested, not a must-do. Begins the week after school ends. Come between 10 am and 3 pm. Contact Kymm Phibbs with questions, [kymmphibbs@yahoo.com](mailto:kymmphibbs@yahoo.com)

## Art Classes in Riegelsville

The Riegelsville Library's Art in the Library program continues to run through the year, offering many wonderful art classes and workshops over the summer, for children and adults. Anyone interested in knowing about upcoming classes while River Valley Waldorf School is on summer break is welcome to contact the library and ask to be included for notices via email. You can reach the library by phone 610-749-2357 or email [Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com](mailto:Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com).

## Up Coming Classes

- Introduction to Calligraphy with Catherine Lent  
Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> 6:00-9:00 pm  
Open to teens and adults of all experience levels
- Module Origami with Catherine Lent  
Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> 2:30-4:30 pm  
Open to ages 8 through 15
- The Summer Landscape in Watercolor with Doris Ettlinger  
Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> 9:30am – 12:30pm  
All levels welcome. Open to ages 16 – adult
- The Lyrical Abstract – Painting and Collage with Emily Thompson  
Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> & Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm – 9:00pm  
A two-part workshop - Open to ages 16 - adult

## Ticks bugging You?

The safest, most effective, and cost efficient way to keep these parasites off ourselves and our children is to make your own bug spray with the highest quality essential oils. As a doTerra wellness advocate I'm passionate about giving my children the outside time that is so essential to their development, yet keeping them safe from tick-borne illness. Visit <http://www.mydoterra.com/bridgetbrier> to purchase Certified Therapeutic Grade essential oils from your fellow River Valley Waldorf family! In addition, for the months of May and June, 5% of all proceeds will be donated to the Lyme Research Alliance in honor of Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

## Volunteers for Peace

Working with individuals, groups and families to plan volunteer experiences in Haiti this summer, Volunteers for Peace is a non-profit organization based in Vermont that organizes service projects all over the world. Go to their website: [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org) for a full listing of projects or call 802-540-3060 for more information about the work they are doing in Haiti.

## Reduced Rate HANDLE® Assessments

Elverson, PA, June 19-25, 2015

HANDLE: Holistic Approach to Neuro-Development and Learning Efficiency

HANDLE is a multiple award winning approach that has helped thousands of people worldwide to enhance human capability from infants to senior citizens.

For the first time in the United States HANDLE Assessments are being offered at a reduced rate in a clinical Practicum. These Assessments are being offered to members of the public as part of the final Module of A HANDLE Practitioner Course. The students will do assessments and an experienced supervisor is involved in every step of the process.

Who might benefit: Individuals with the following labels, syndromes and conditions have benefited from HANDLE programs: Academic differences, Dyspraxia, Learning Difficulties, Autism, Selective Mutism, Behavioral Issues, Brain Injury, Stroke, Cerebral Palsy, Speech/Language difficulties, Regulation Difficulties, ADD/ADHD, Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, and much more.

Package cost: \$995. (customarily cost is upwards of \$1500.) *Chief Supervisor & Practitioner Course Instructor: Cathy Stingley, HANDLE, Instructor & Education Coordinator of the Americas (ECA) for The HANDLE Institute. For further information please contact, Rose Litschauer 610-570-7408 [rgraham21@verizon.net](mailto:rgraham21@verizon.net), or Cathy Stingley. To apply for a Practicum Assessment please contact Instructor at 907-235-6226 or [handleofhomer@yahoo.com](mailto:handleofhomer@yahoo.com)*

## WHENNA?

All-natural mehndi by Catherine Lent Design

June-July 2015 Schedule 908-996-7325

Check Facebook or Instagram for updates/additions/cancellations

### JUNE:

thurs. 11th	river gypsy	10 - 6ish*
wed. 17th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment	**
thurs. 25th	river gypsy	10 - 6ish*
fri. 26th	lovin' oven	11:30 - 6ish*
sat. 27th	WRIGHTSTOWN, PA farm market 9-1*	

### JULY:

wed. 1st	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment	**
fri. 3th	lovin' oven	11:30 - 6ish*
fri. 10th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment	**
sat. 11th	BASTILLE DAY river gypsy	10 to 6ish*
wed. 15th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment	**
sat. 18th	lovin' oven	10:30 - 6ish*
thurs. 23th	river gypsy	10 - 6ish*
fri. 24th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment	**
thurs. 30th	pulp 10-4 by appointment	**
fri. 31st	river gypsy	11:30 to 6ish*

## Housesitter Needed

The Carpenters are looking for someone to barter house/pet sitting for a rent-free place to live in Bethlehem for part of the summer. Please let us know if you can recommend someone — [renell@rcn.com](mailto:renell@rcn.com) / 610-997-0650.

## Core Principles of Waldorf Education

### Summer Adult Course Offering - Waldorf School of Princeton

#### Foundation Studies Program

July 15 & 17 and July 20 & 22 - 8:30 a.m. 1:00 p.m. (2nd camp session, same hours. Cost \$450)

What are intrinsic qualities and methods of Waldorf Education?

The course will focus on the seven Core Principles of Waldorf Education., developed by The Pedagogical Section Council of North America. As Waldorf education moves around the world, it becomes imperative that schools and individual teachers develop their curriculum out of these principles rather than seeing the curriculum as a recipe for imitation. The artistic work in this course will give participants a view into how these experiences speak to children in their phases of child development.

Created as:

- A continuing education for Waldorf teachers of all disciplines.
- An opportunity for teachers in other schools to incorporate Waldorf methodology.
- An opportunity for parents to gain a greater understanding of Waldorf education
- Personal development for adults in relationship with children

*Elan Leibner will lecture on the Core Principles. Mr. Leibner was a teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 18 years. He is presently the chair of the Pedagogical Section of North America and travels nationally as a mentor and evaluator of Waldorf teachers and faculties. He has been the Pedagogical Director the Foundation Studies Program in Princeton for 13 years.*

*Tertia Gale will offer Eurythmy. Ms Gale taught Eurythmy at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 20 years and was one of the founding teachers of the school. She has continued to teach in the Foundation Studies Program for the past 13 years.*

*Pamela Shafer will offer artistic work in painting, drawing, and sculpture. Ms. Shafer is the Sculpture and Fine Arts teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton and facilitates the Foundation Studies Program.*

## The Art of Equitation

Jen Diedrich (mom of Addison, 3rd grade) is offering a riding lesson program individually designed for each rider's expectations, goals & dreams with the attention needed to be safe and have fun. Safety is always the first priority. Jen is a lifelong equestrian with a passion for teaching that brings out the best in beginning and developing young riders. Students focused on the show arena as well as those who simply love riding and understanding horses are very welcome. Lessons both in and out of the arena, horse shows and camp offered. Reach Jen anytime (215) 603-9999 or catch her at pickup.

## Editor's Note:

Once again, we have THREE articles this week to take advantage of all of the wonderful information that is coming our way.

From NPR

### Out of the Classroom and Into the Woods

Kids in the US are spending less time outside. Even in kindergarten, recess is being cut back. But in the small town of Quechee, Vt., a teacher is bucking that trend: One day a week, she takes her students outside — for the entire school day.

It's called Forest Monday.

Eliza Minnucci got the idea after watching a documentary about a forest school in Switzerland where kids spend all day, every day, out in the woods.

"I would do that in a heartbeat," she thought to herself. Then reality hit. "We're in a public school in America. That's not going to happen."

But her principal at the Ottauquechee School in central Vermont surprised her by saying: Try it.

Every Monday morning, the kids suit up for a day outdoors. Rain or shine — even in the bitter cold — they go out. They head to the woods next to their school where they've built a home site with forts and a fire pit.

First thing, the kids go to their "sit spots." These are designated places — under a tree, on a log — where each kid sits quietly, alone, for 10 minutes. Their task is to notice what's changed in nature since last week.

"There's more moisture in the air," a boy named Orion Bee tells me. An astute observation: It's early April on the day I visit, and the snow is starting to melt, making the air feel slightly soggy.

Playtime is next. Kids run around and do all kinds of things they're not allowed to do inside, like yell and throw things. Down by the stream, two boys are working together to build a dam.

"We can't roll it," says one boy, pushing with all his might to try to move a downed tree onto the dam.

More About Forest Schools

Listen to the American RadioWorks podcast

Set Up A Forest Kindergarten

"We can roll it!" insists the other boy. They push and push, to no avail. Eventually, one of the boys realizes he can get leverage using the tree's branches. Teacher Eliza Minnucci is standing about 20 feet away, watching.

"We're supposed to study force and motion in kindergarten," she says — and these boys just got a real-world lesson.

"Outside offers so much," she says. "It is sort of the deepest and widest environment for learning that we have."

There are formal lessons in the forest, too. After playtime, the kids visit learning stations. At one, they paint using natural materials. At another, they make letters out of sticks. One girl struggles to make an "S."

"I'm going to get some curvy sticks!" she declares. Realizing that curvy sticks are hard to come by, she soon comes up with the idea of making a backwards "Z" instead.

"Kids are so resourceful out here," says Minnucci. "In the classroom, we chunk everything into small pieces. We teach them discrete skills and facts and they put it together later. That's a good way to learn, but it's not the way the world works," she says. "I like giving them the opportunity to be in a really complex place where they need to think about how to build a dam with a peer and at the same time, think about staying dry and staying warm."

There are very few rules in the woods. Take care of yourself, take care of others, don't wander too far away; that's pretty much it. The goal is to let kids experience independence and help them learn the self-regulation skills that are so important to becoming a successful adult. Minnucci points to a kid sitting in the stream.

*(Continued on next page.)*

"It's 33 degrees out. He's sitting in water. And he's going to figure out whether that becomes uncomfortable or not," she says. "I don't need to make a rule for him. He's going to figure that out. This is a place where he can learn to take care of himself."

Minnucci worries that U.S. schools have become too focused on academics and test scores and not enough on "noncognitive" skills such as persistence and self-control. There is growing attention on the importance of these skills, but Minnucci doesn't think traditional school is set up to teach them very well.

Forest Mondays, however, provide lots of opportunities.

"I see some amazing grit," she says with a smile, looking over at the boys who have successfully moved the downed tree onto their dam.

At Ottauquechee School, taking children into the woods requires more adult supervision. Grants pay for an additional forest day teacher. And most Mondays, there's at least one parent volunteer. Chris Cooper comes often.

"I like spending time with my son," he says. "I think it's a really great idea that they get the kids out. They're able to just kind of explore and figure things out on their own."

And what do the students think?

"We get to play and we don't have to stay seated forever," says kindergartner Jacob Tyburski.

When Minnucci started this experiment two years ago, she knew it would be good for the rowdy boys, who clearly need to run around more than the typical school day offers.

What she didn't foresee was how good it would be for the children who can sit still and "do" school when they're 5 years old.

Kids who are good at school need to understand there's more to life than acing academics, says Minnucci. And students who aren't excelling at the academic stuff need to know there's value in the things they are good at.

Clearly there's a lot students are learning in the forest. But what about standardized test scores?

Minnucci says scores went up more last year than any other year she's been teaching. She's quick to point out there could be lots of reasons for that.

What her students gain from the experience might not be measurable, she says, but that doesn't mean it's not worth doing.

Her principal, Amos Kornfeld, agrees. He says schools are being forced to think about everything in terms of data and measurable outcomes, but he doesn't need test scores to tell him forest kindergarten is working.

When the kids come back from the woods, they look happy and healthy, he says. "Schools need to be focusing on that, too."

*Emily Hanford is an education correspondent for American Radio Works.*

From the Conway Daily Sun, Conway, New Hampshire

## **The Waldorf Way: Local Teenagers Bust Stereotypes**

By Meghan Gilroy

It's not every day that you see teenagers bouncing up and down with excitement as the next lesson at school is announced; who volunteer to babysit for free on a Friday night to help out another family; or happily invite much younger children to join in their outdoor games. And these same kids easily cast aside their video games and cellphones to have an open, present conversation with an adult.

(Continued on next page.)

These are normal occurrences at the White Mountain Waldorf School in Albany. There, both a love of learning and being kind, helpful, and self-confident are interwoven into the carefully thought-out curriculum.

Two years ago, my husband and I were contemplating moving to the Mount Washington Valley. Finding the right school for our "about to be a" kindergartner was a big factor in our decision-making process. As a former Teacher For America public school teacher, I highly value education and wanted to find a school that was a good fit for our family. When I toured the WMWS and met several of the eighth-grade students, I was immediately sold. Contrary to most stereotypical teenagers, the students were excited about school and cheerful about keeping an eye on my son while I explored their campus. I had found our school community.

Like many people, I had thought of a Waldorf School as being "hippie," with little reading, math or science. Yet my misconception was quickly dispelled when I entered the elementary and middle school classrooms. I discovered that in many ways, Waldorf Schools are a classic education. The goal is to educate the whole child — their hearts, hands, and head, with an emphasis on nurturing strong values such as being cooperative, responsible, and caring.

The WMWS in Albany is part of a worldwide movement that was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919 in Germany. Waldorf Schools have spread around the world to over 60 countries, with more than 1,000 independent schools and 2,000 kindergartens. Known for creative play with lots of movement, color, song and story designed to appeal to the early childhood years, with an increasing importance on deep exploration, problem-solving, and independent thinking in the upper grades. When you enter a Waldorf kindergarten classroom, you find a warm, welcoming, calm environment with soft pretty colors, lots of wooden toys, and a feeling of creative whimsy. Knitted mice can be found tucked into moss gardens, and fairies and gnomes hovering over nature displays. Exactly the kind of space I'd want my little guy to be when he was away from home.

While in the early years of Waldorf schooling, free play, creativity and imagination, and time in nature are stressed, in the upper grades, students dive deeply into lessons on everything from Greek and Roman history to geology and Shakespeare. As students move into the elementary and middle school classrooms, you'll discover gorgeously illustrated and detailed textbooks that are handmade by the students on their science, math, history and literature lessons, as well as an array of evidence of their wood-working, handcrafting, musical, and sports activities and skills.

By writing their own textbooks, the students demonstrate that they deeply understand the material presented. And let me tell you, they certainly do.

While leafing through one eighth grader's textbook on my first tour, I skimmed their beautifully handwritten article on an eastern European country with highly detailed facts on the population, history, culture and food with perfect grammar and punctuation. "Hmmm," I thought to myself. "This sounds like it was copied off an article on the internet. Strange! I didn't think Waldorf encouraged middle school children to go online and reprint info verbatim." When I turned and asked Denice Tepe, the outreach director, about the source of the information, what she told me amazed me. The material did not come off the Internet, but was rather presented to the students orally by their teacher the day before. The lesson then was given time to "sink in" overnight and the next day, the students were expected to recall the lesson and write a report on it. I could not have been more impressed!

Still, even after seeing the evidence of high-level learning in the upper grades, I was concerned about when my son would start reading if the school's curriculum did not emphasize this in the younger years.

Karen Albert, the director of WMWS, explained the school's philosophy, "In today's fast-paced, goal-oriented society, Waldorf is unique in making sure that each lesson is introduced when a child has reached a developmental level where they can more easily and quickly absorb the information. We intentionally 'hold back' on overtly teaching reading and writing to 4- and 5-year-olds so that by the time they are in first and second grade they are ready, eager learners who can quickly and easily read, write and spell. By the time our students are in middle and high school, we can hardly get them to put their books down. And the time spent in the younger years developing their fine motor skills through activities such as knitting, or when we instill a curiosity about nature during extensive outdoor playtime really pays off when our students can effortlessly hold a pencil to write in first grade or who have consistently entered and won regional science fairs in middle school."

Since becoming a parent at the WMWS, I am repeatedly delighted with the amount of thought that goes into how lessons are presented and how a love of learning is fostered. After being a part of the school for two years, I've realized that I didn't mind that my 6-year-old wasn't fully reading or writing yet. I did, and still do, deeply care that he is a kind, caring person who is curious about the world. Being a creative problem-solver who knows how to  
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play cooperatively with others will be lifelong skills that will ultimately serve him well in life — more so than at what age he read his first book. Now as a first grader, he's well on his way to fluent reading.

The benefits of a Waldorf education go beyond the academics, as I've seen firsthand with my own child. Within a few months of attending WMWS's kindergarten, my son was noticeably calmer, more cooperative and helpful, and more excited about going to school. He also showed more interest in reading and writing than at his previous nursery school where he regularly expressed frustration over being drilled with worksheets. WMWS most definitely rekindled my child's love of learning.

And although I was, and continue to be impressed by the school's amazing teachers and welcoming administration, it's really the eighth graders who I have to thank for my son's education. From the first tour of the school to the time when one of them offered to baby-sit for free on a Friday night to help us out as a new family in the Valley, these teens are living evidence that this way of schooling works in nurturing the next generation intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

So if you decide to take a tour of the campus like I did a few years ago, don't be surprised if you see students gleefully skipping — backwards no less — around their classroom, led by their passionate teachers, while chanting multiplication tables. Or a bunch of 13-year-olds bounding to the front of the room to act out a play that illustrates a literature lesson that they just learned. I can't wait to see my son as an eighth-grade Waldorf student — still curious about the world around him and kind to the people he meets in it.

From [lauragraceweldon.com](http://lauragraceweldon.com) – Free Range Learning

## **Reading Readiness Has To Do With The Body**

By Laura Grace Weldon

### **Sitting down.**

Today's kids sit more than ever. Babies spend hours confined in car seats and carriers rather than crawling, toddling, or being carried. As they get older their days are often heavily scheduled between educational activities and organized events. Children have 25 percent less time for free play than they did a generation ago, and that's before factoring in distractions like TV or video games.

Left to their own devices, children move. They hold hands and whirl in a circle till they fall down laughing. They beg to take part in interesting tasks with adults. They want to face challenges and try again after making mistakes. They climb, dig, and run. When they're tired they like to be rocked or snuggled. Stifling these full body needs actually impairs their ability to learn.

We know that our little ones walk and talk on their own timetables. No rewards or punishments are necessary to "teach" them. Yet children are expected to read, write and spell starting at five and six years old as if they develop the same way at the same time. Academics are pushed on preschoolers with the assumption this will make them better students. This approach is not only unnecessary, it may be contributing to problems such as learning disorders, attention deficits, and long term stress.

Studies that follow children's reading instruction at ages five and seven find earlier lessons may damage reading development. By the time children reach the age of 11, students who were instructed earlier show poorer text comprehension and less positive attitudes toward reading than children whose instruction started later.

Literacy isn't easy. It requires children to decode shapes into sounds and words, to remember these words correctly in written and spoken form, and to understand their meaning. Allowing reading to develop naturally or teaching it later tends to create eager, lifelong readers.

### **Why? Why pushing school-like lessons hinders learning.**

Children pushed to read young (not those who naturally pick it up) tend to rely on right brain processes because that area matures more quickly. These early readers are likely to guess at unknown words using clues such as appearance, context, beginning and ending letters. Their main tactic is memorizing sight words. These are valuable methods but not a balanced approach to reading. Such children may quickly tire after reading short passages or read smoothly but have difficulty deriving meaning from what they read. The procedure they use to decode words can make the content hard to comprehend. These reading problems can persist.

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On the other hand, children benefit when they learn to read naturally or are taught later. That's because, as the left brain matures and the pathway between both hemispheres develops, it becomes easier for them to sound out words, to visualize meanings, and mentally tinker with abstractions. They memorize short sight words but sound out longer words, an approach that is less taxing. As they incorporate more words into their reading vocabulary they more easily picture and understand what they are reading.

developing eager readers,

### **Developing eager readers**

In order for children to read, write and spell they must be developmentally ready. Some are ready at the age of four or five, some not for many years later. This readiness includes complex neurological pathways and kinesthetic awareness. Such readiness isn't created by workbooks or computer programs. It's the result of brain maturation as well as rich experiences found in bodily sensation and movement.

These experiences happen as children play and work, particularly in ways that cross the midline. They includes expansive movements such as climbing, jumping, digging, swimming, playing hopscotch and catch, riding bikes, sweeping, running. They also include fine movements such as chopping vegetables, drawing, building, playing rhyming and clapping games, using scissors, and playing in sand. And of course there's the essential growth that comes from snuggling, listening to stories, singing, trying new tastes, enjoying make believe. Children are drawn to such experiences. Without them, they won't have a strong foundation for learning.

how to boost reading readiness,

### **Play is related to reading readiness.**

These activities stimulate the child's brain to develop new neural pathways. Such activities also build confidence, smooth sensory processing, and create a bank of direct experience that helps the child visualize abstract concepts. Well-intended adults may think a good use of a rainy afternoon is a long car ride to an educational exhibit. A young child is likely to derive more developmental value (and fun) from stomping in puddles and digging in mud followed by play time in the tub.

There are many other factors contributing to reading readiness. Perhaps most important is a supportive family life where play, reading, and conversation are an enjoyable part of each day. But it helps to remember that young children want to participate in the purposeful work of making meals, fixing what's broken, and planting the garden. They also need free time without the built-in entertainment of specialized toys, television, or video games. Their development is cued to movement. These bodily experiences prepare children for the magic found when shapes become words, words become stories, and they become readers.