

# Heart To Hand School

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## Art and Creativity

Waldorf Schools consider art education for children to be of primary curricular importance. In fact, our approach to art is what first attracts many parents to consider enrolling their child in a Waldorf school.

There's a bridge of wondrous light  
Filled with colors shining bright:  
Red and orange, yellow, green,  
The fairest colors ever seen,  
Blue and violet, magic rose,  
Down from heaven to earth it goes.

Author Unknown

## Philosophy

When you enter Heart To Hand School, the first thing you may notice is the care given to the classrooms. Soothing colors and pictures are on the walls, living plants and natural fabrics soften the room's square corners, and you sense that a special quality exists when you see the materials the children use in their school work. Physical environment is important to the young child. Through their senses, children take in all the myriad sights, sounds, smells, and feelings of the world. For this reason, it is vital to ensure that the environment is beautiful as well as safe.

Another initial impression may be the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers you meet. They seem genuinely engaged with the students as individuals and truly interested in forming relationships with each family. Our teachers ask questions such as: How do we prepare children for today's world? How do we call forth enthusiasm for learning and work, interest and concern for their fellow human beings, a respect for the world, a healthy self-awareness?

The Waldorf early childhood educational movement recognizes that schools should be truly comprehensive: open to all girls and boys who are developmentally ready; with a curriculum for all pupils which is as broad as time will allow; and with a healthy balance of artistic, practical, and academic activities. Waldorf preschools, each in their own way, set out to meet these objectives.

Heart To Hand School is dedicated to generating a genuine inner enthusiasm for learning within every child. We achieve this in a variety of ways. Every lesson is presented in a dynamic, artistic, pictorial, or dramatic manner that engages each student's imagination, feelings, will, and cognition. This approach removes the pressure for competitive testing and reward, enabling motivations for learning to arise from within.

## Preschool & Kindergarten: A Homelike Environment

Waldorf preschool and kindergarten teachers begin their work with the young child by creating an environment that resembles a warm and loving home, rhythmically repetitive and secure. Here they respond to the developing child through two broad themes.

First, teachers engage themselves in domestic, practical, and artistic activities which the child can readily imitate (for example: baking, painting, gardening, and handicrafts), coloring the work with the annual flow of seasonal moods and festivals.

Second, teachers nurture the children's power of imagination by telling carefully crafted stories, designing educational games that match developmental needs, and helping them to experience many aspects of life

more deeply by encouraging imaginative play. Where toys are used, they are made of natural materials, together with cones, shells, and other objects from nature that the children themselves have collected.

Learning is the key to human development, but it is not a simple, homogeneous process. What to learn, when to learn, and how to learn are arrived at through a comprehensive understanding of the human being through all stages of development. In addition, and of equal importance, the best teachers engage in continuous, conscious, and careful study of the particular children who have been entrusted into their care. The teacher strives to help the child become a clear-thinking, sensitive, and grounded human being.

For our preschool and kindergarten students, Heart To Hand teachers foster an atmosphere of reverence for one another and the surrounding world. They don't so much direct or oversee activities as much as lead by example and initiation, working relationally with the children individually and in groups. A daily rhythm is established by balancing periods of indoor and outdoor activity, and pairing relaxed imaginative play with curriculum elements requiring more directed effort. It is a truly natural, loving, and creative environment.

## The Role Of Art In Education

It is not the task of preschool and kindergarten children to produce finished works of art. This is the time for discovering the wonders of creative expression. Developmentally, these discoveries begin through explorations of color, followed next by practicing with forms. For the young child, art naturally begins with the heart and hand more than the head. At this age, the progression from heart to hand to head is characteristic for all true learning.

We can best educate the hearts and minds of children through what we provide their hands, through the selection of materials and choice of colors we offer them to utilize in their own manner of exploration and discovery – not by limiting them with kit-sets to manipulate in prescribed ways, nor by setting them down to copy mandatory letters, words, and sentences.

By providing stimulating environments and materials, and the opportunity to explore in the way most natural to each child, we as adults can be delighted by the revelations of what our children are perceiving and learning of the world through that child's artistic creations.

### *A Conversation on Color*

*Barbara Patterson, River Park School in Chicago*

Two girls were playing together in my Waldorf early childhood class. Amy, who was 5 years old, was fair skinned; Sarah was dark skinned – a lovely six year old soon to go to first grade. They had been together in the class the previous year, so knew each other well.

Suddenly Amy looked at Sarah and said, "Your skin is black!" as if she had seen the color of Sarah's skin for the first time. Hearing this comment from my work table, I was immediately concerned for Sarah. How could I protect her from being hurt? But Sarah replied in a matter of fact way, "Your skin is white." Then Amy said to Sarah, "You have a red dress on." Sarah replied, "You have a red blouse on."

Two boys were playing nearby and had heard the conversation. One boy said, "Black isn't in the rainbow." The other boy said, "Neither is white." Then the play resumed without further ado.

Here we go, to and fro, over the rainbow bridge we go.  
Treading softly, treading slow, over the rainbow bridge we go.  
Gathering light from sun and star, gathering light from heaven afar,  
Down to earth all things to greet, sharing the light with all we meet.  
Here we go, to and fro, over the rainbow bridge we go.  
Treading softly, treading slow, over the rainbow bridge we go.

Author Unknown