

*«The healthy social life is found
when in the mirror of each human soul
the whole community finds its reflection
and in the community
the virtue of each one is living.»*

Rudolf Steiner

Waldorf education: Country association meetings and conferences in various countries

North America: From February 7 - 9 in Spring Valley, the annual Waldorf Early Childhood Conference took place, with more than 350 early childhood educators in attendance. Speakers included Susan Weber, Ruth Ker and Patricia Rubano, speaking on the theme of " Life Forces - Supporting and Nurturing the Healthy Sense of Life in Young Children and the Adults who Care for them".



France: From February 14 - 16 in Mulhouse, 130 Waldorf early childhood educators from kindergartens and child care centers met to work on the question " How do thoughts, gesture and language affect the young child?".

In



addition, there was an intensive practice of Ellersiek hand gesture games.



Speakers included Irmela Kuebler, Serge Maintier, Jacqueline Walter-Baumgartner and Ingrid Weidenfeld. The opening lecture took place in the government training center for early childhood education.



Romania: 35 early childhood educators from Romania took part in this year's country meeting in Timisoara from the 14. to 16th of April . The theme for the conference was caring for social relationships around the child - the relationship to parents and to one's colleagues. Experiences of watercolor painting and eurythmy definitely contributed to the success of the conference and its very open but sometimes difficult conversations. The presenters were Lidia Popescu, Philipp Reubke and others.



Ukraine: 43 students and Waldorf early childhood educators took part in a conference in Krivioj Rog from March 23 - 29th. Participants came from Kiev, Krivioj Rog, Dnipropetrowsk, Odessa, Nikolaew, Donetsk, Kramatorsk, Saporoshje, Winniza, Lugansk and Kemerowo (Russia). Tatiana Sabrodina, one of the conference organizers, wrote: "there was a very good and open atmosphere. The lectures by Wolfgang Sassmannshausen stimulated new questions. The students have a received a new impulse and also new questions. They went home with a wish to make the education of children in their cities healthier."



The Nordic Countries: From April 4 - 6 more than 500 Waldorf early childhood educators from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden came together at the Culture House in Jarna, Sweden.

Many years ago the idea arose to have a conference for the early childhood educators from all five Nordic countries. The original question was: what do we need for the education of the small child, if we think about the future of the child? Are there common Nordic values in our educational work and shared educational questions that we carry in our Nordic countries?

In the end, the theme of the conference was formulated in the following way: "What are the foundational values in childhood that offer the child a healthy future?"

As a preparation for the conference, we worked with a lecture where Rudolf Steiner mentions three virtues that are especially important for a healthy future for the child: gratitude, love and responsibility (from the *Child's Changing Consciousness*, GA 306, Lecture 6). The prerequisite for the development of these capacities in the child, according to Rudolf Steiner, is the self-education of the adult. Therefore every morning during the conference the following passage from the lecture was read in the five Nordic languages:



„All education is essentially self-education, and we as educators and teachers can only provide the environment for children's self-education. We have to provide the most favorable conditions where, through our agency, children can educate themselves according to their own inner destinies."

The participants and organizers experienced the conference as especially successful, which has motivated everyone involved to continue this collaboration in the Nordic countries. Who knows, perhaps we will meet again in a few years in another Nordic country...



*Tina Iwersen and colleagues
Helsinki, Finland*