

BLÁTHÚ NEWSLETTER



An update for members and friends

May 2023

Like swelling waves that flood the land,
A green spring-tide is surging, streaming.
Saps flow, touched by a mighty hand
Whose force we feel, though dimly dreaming.

God weaves amidst the radiant light.
His helpers work in joyful bliss.
With his creating we unite
When we, with open hearts, behold all this.

From *In the Light of a Child*, by M H Burton

Welcome to the May 2023 newsletter!

Outside, the sun is shining, the air is warm and carries the scent of good green things. I sit at my kitchen table, finishing off the newsletter, the door open to allow in a morning breeze. As ever, the last task is to write an editorial column. Oh, but how the outdoors calls to me: the warm hum of bees, the birds conversing amongst themselves, the flowers sending out their hypnotic scents, the lush green of the grass, the colours of the meadow flowers pushing through the unmown lawn. Nature is enchanting, in so many ways. This is not just a metaphor!

At this time of year, from Bealtaine to Midsummer, we are drawn out of ourselves into Nature, into the warmer air, the rich variety of colours, the rising green growth. We throw off our extra layers with abandon, let the summer sun kiss our skin (often under a layer of sunscreen, if you have the pale northern skin like me). We feel our bodies relax as we soak up the warmth of the sun's gaze. The increasing light as we move towards the longest day seems to make us feel lighter too.

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An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



We increasingly live outdoors, cooking on a fire pit or barbecue, eating al fresco, staying up late with the long light evenings. Our troubles seem to float away. Shakespeare caught the reality of this time in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We really are encouraged by unseen forces to leave our everyday world behind, to live differently, freed of our normal responsibilities and cares.

I don't know about you, but I often feel quite "out of myself" as the summer stretches ahead, I could even say that I am "away with the fairies" at times. How true these perceptions and sayings are!

They say that in summer, the earth spirit, Gaia, "turns in love to the cosmos." Nature wears her finest, lightest gown of flowers, and the soul of the earth is "poured out into cosmic space" to soak up the energy of the sun and the stars. As the Earth itself sleeps, Nature becomes more awakened. It is not hard to believe that "flowers are the dreams of the earth."

Living in harmony with the rhythms of the year, staying aware of the turning seasons through observation of nature, our own changing mood, and the reflection of this in our thinking, feeling and actions, is a healing practice. The year breathes in, breathes out, and pauses here and there in the course of its turning. As the earth breathes out, this is a time to en-joy, enlighten. A time for dancing, singing, music, for leaping over the fire at midsummer before the days begin their slow journey back towards the dark.

Don't forget to pick a few daisies, or stop and smell the roses. As Goethe said: "Flowers are the beautiful hieroglyphics of nature with which she indicates how much she loves us."

Let us truly enjoy this time.

In peace,
Ruth Marshall

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We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

Whether you are a teacher, practitioner, parent, student - or if you are just interested in what BLÁTHÚ does - we welcome your contributions to the newsletter.

Perhaps you would like to send in your seasonal reflections, good ideas, articles, stories, songs, book reviews, crafts, patterns, or recipes.

All your suggestions that can enrich our experience, and ultimately, nourish the children, are very welcome.

Please send your contributions to:
Ruth Marshall, email: nc.blathu@gmail.com
by Fri 20th July 2023



IASWECE

 **IASWECE**
International Association for
Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education

BLÁTHÚ is a recognised member of IASWECE, the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education. IASWECE gives financial and pedagogical support to projects in order to develop and maintain the quality of Waldorf early childhood education throughout the world. For this IASWECE depends on the generous help of colleagues and friends, and therefore welcomes your donations. See <https://iaswece.org/how-you-can-help/> for bank details.

For the IASWECE newsletter, go to www.iaswece.org/iaswece-newsletter/

REFLECTIONS ON CHILDHOOD SERVICE WEEK

By Ulrike Farnleitner



Every year NCN offers a childhood service week and Bláthú is invited to collaborate with colleagues in Monaghan. The theme of this year, **Supporting inclusion through art** <https://ncn.ie/csw-webinars-programme-2023/> had been chosen carefully, and Bláthú's contribution, a webinar on 17th April was the first of many.

Variations of the theme were offered by different organisations, all concerned with early childhood. This time of exploration and presentation finished on 8th May. Exploring the potential of hundred languages by Prof Emer Ring gave an insight on the theme from the Reggio Lens. Our contribution was named **"What children taught us about kindness, inclusion and a nourishing environment"**.

With all the joining participants, I went on an online journey. As always with the digital media, it is challenging to not look into the eyes of participants, and to only read in the chat box about questions and concerns. However, I felt my own enthusiasm for this theme and I displayed with many photos the way how to perceive the ways children express themselves.

As a highlight I showed a video that had been recorded during the preparation time from a puppet show **'The Name of the Tree'**. I had changed this South African story slightly, and we created a suitable ending. All the figures were created for that. My thanks goes to Heike who opened the Kindergarten in the Steiner School in Callan, Co.Kilkenny, and her time to play it.

Even for us adults, it is touching to hear that only through the mistakes of the others, was the success possible. The awareness and the learning were taken on by the slowest animal, the tortoise. Of course, she succeeded through her mindful slowness. While the ones that were considered to be the fast ones - the lion, the goat and the hare - had failed. What an image!

And of course, in real life, the children who participated in the puppet shows, heard and remembered the right word and could remember by heart immediately. They are truly the winners.

"The Name of the Tree" from the Book: **"For the Children of the World"**, <https://iaswece.org/home/>

IASWECE MEETING

LIESTAL SWITZERLAND APRIL 2023



Imagine to be in warm Switzerland, but in Irish rainy weather! That is what happened to us!

Each day of the conference, we began with a verse that unites us with our colleagues all over the world, the families and children in our kindergartens, and all students in the various projects. This verse, read in different languages, sounded truly universal.

The theme for the conference was based on the lecture by Rudolf Steiner—The Mission of the Folk Souls. We had study time, and also worked artistically with colours and with eurythmy.

Context Sensitivity

Philip Reubke, from the Pedagogical Section in Dornach, spoke about Context Sensitivity: educators must perceive and work with the cultural and geographical context they find themselves in. One also needs to perceive and take seriously the times we live in—from the seasonal times, to the cultural times, to the larger times. He referred to the 7th lecture of The Spiritual Ground of Education, the Oxford course in 1922, GA 305. For a school to function well, it is clear that we need to get to know one another first—who are the parents, the teachers, and the children? Then we can work and develop from there, with context sensitivity.

Everything we think and feel comes through in our behaviour and that does affect the child. Can we then say, therefore, that out of all of this what is important is our religious/spiritual life? Our inner striving to develop or lift ourselves to something higher is what matters. How we do this doesn't matter, whether it is through listening to a concert, reading Steiner, or taking a walk; it is up to each



individual. What we experience and develop in our being is what matters.

How could we take up this context sensitivity in our work with colleagues and parents to really perceive the conditions we find ourselves in and to create new cultural celebrations which are meaningful and context-sensitive?

For our visit to a typical Steiner kindergarten of the country, we visited the kindergarten that Jaqueline Baumgartner had founded 40 Years ago. We could see how much effort and attention had been put into this place. Jacqueline is also an expert in Ellersiek's Rhythmical Musical fingergames. There in Rheinfelden we visited the bridge that connects Switzerland with Germany. While we admired the river, we imagined the stories about the Rhein Undines and Water kings!

On a break walk in Nature I interviewed some of my colleagues on the theme of inclusion and diversity in the light of art. I cherish these little snapshots of wisdom and we will make some of them available to all our members. It shows so clearly that we, as Steiner Early Childhood Educators, are aware and awake to being present for the children; we create our timetable from their needs, while we offer rhythm and repetition which support the child to feel secure and enveloped in the world, despite the rising anxiety and nervousness.

Neil Boland from Auckland University had created with IASWECE a survey concerning the post pandemic ... you can read the full report on the website www.iaswece.org. And you will find soon, on our website, a short summary in English, as well as the Irish version, (thanks to Ann O'Reilly who kindly translated it). www.blathu.org



From our IASWECE member countries:

Collectively we noticed a fundamental shift in the world and ourselves. Big things are happening in every country. We were invited to share burning issues from our countries, not just about difficulties in the kindergarten, to help us form a picture of what is living there.

Ukraine: Many families have left Ukraine. They have been coming together for seasonal festivals. Through the help of a foundation, they now have an air raid shelter at their school in Odessa, so they can have their kindergarten open, which consists of 5 children.

Turkey: Colleagues had spoken to the Turkish Steiner association right after the earthquake. Many of the initiatives were alright, but they had not heard from some of the smaller initiatives in the East. The Turkish Association quickly got in touch with the Friends of Waldorf Emergency Pedagogy team, and 5 people went right after the earthquake to help.

They are waiting for a team to come to train some of the teachers. A school in Alanya took children in from other areas. 14 million people were affected by the earthquake, 6 million of these are children, and 1 million are Syrian refugee children. Their team needs to work quickly with these children because of the trauma. On Instagram, they have



published guidelines on how to protect young children from all the horrific images in the media, and the general stress for families and schools. They were very touched by the international help from around the world, especially Taiwan, where students in class 12 reacted to this World Situation very quickly with support.

This earthquake affected Turks around the world. Everyone has been deeply moved and is looking for ways to help.

What are the children asking of us when events like this happen? How do we keep ourselves resilient, healthy, and helpful?

France: There is a little revolution happening in France. They now close the kindergarten 1 day a week so that the kindergarten teachers can also go demonstrate, because the parents were asking why they were not taking part. However, the demonstrations are getting more violent. The demonstrations are not just about retirement, but also about the government making laws without consulting the people.

Waldorf kindergartens are now in the news and considered a sect. Whenever something has to do with spirituality, it is very difficult in France for it to be taken seriously. Many false things are being said and Waldorf schools are being ridiculed. Every week Waldorf is in the news on TV or in the newspapers. The French Federation is working with lawyers to respond to the attacks. Despite the attacks, the kindergartens and schools are fully enrolled, but schools are in danger of being closed because of the false attacks.

Kathy sent a petition around so that we might have the opportunity to support them in their effort to start communication with the authorities.

China: Schools in China have been closed for 3 years and just opened up again in December. Very many people got sick when everything opened up again. The economy is terrible after all the lockdowns. Parents cannot afford private schools, so they have lost families. The political situation is very restrictive on private schools and any education streams coming from the West. All the schools with Western names had to change their names. They cannot be called Waldorf Schools, or Montessori. The government does not officially say that Waldorf is bad, one just cannot say that the education is from the West. The birth rate has dropped drastically. 10 years ago, there were many children on waiting lists, now there are not enough children enrolled. In 2019 there were 320 kindergartens, now only 224.

The teachers still work very hard, they still work with the Study of Man and other things. WECC (training) is still going on, online., but they lost 70% of their students over the last years. China has done outstanding work in running its own courses. Bing started an online course, and 1800 participants meet monthly to work on the six basic exercises.

Covid polarized on so many levels. Bing: 'The situation is trying to separate human beings, but anthroposophy still gives us hope, strength, and purpose.'

FUNDRAISING

An ongoing feature throughout our meetings is the theme of fundraising. Not only that we need to find funders for our world projects on a long term basis, but we are also grateful to receive small and big donations. There is a new link on the IASWECE website for this. www.iaswece.org

Also, we brought handcrafted items from our countries that were made skilfully and with loving intentions, and these were either offered by donation during the April World Teacher Conference or raffled in some of the countries. What a wonderful way to connect and bring a sense of multicultural efforts into our consciousness.

We, Blathu, also need to fundraise here at home on an ongoing basis for the participation of our representative on IASWECE. Any surplus would go to IASWECE for their projects.

You can watch short interviews that Ulrike filmed with with some of our international colleagues on BLATHU's YouTube channel.



Aurelia, from Norway speaks on Diversity, Inclusion and Art



Silvia from Brazil speaks on Art and Inclusion



Silvia from Brazil speaks on Art for Children



Sono from Japan shares a finger game

Click on the images above - or on the links below - to watch

Aurelia: diversity, inclusion and art

<https://youtu.be/PigmCde5g40>

Sono: finger game from Japan: <https://youtu.be/cpOv021PXkY>

Silvia: Art and Inclusion: <https://youtu.be/6kQjAgn9kGs>

Silvia: Art for Children: https://youtu.be/v_wLrRiXIF4

Constanza Kaliks a member of the pedagogical section in Dornach shared her thoughts with us at the IASWECE Conference. Notes taken by a council member

There is a sense of urgency in education worldwide since Coronavirus. It was always like that, but there was a consciousness that education was the basis of every community. What is new is a sense of urgency connected to loss. Where are the orientations for what we feel we need to do now? How do we orient ourselves?

This feeling of urgency and loss brings a lot of insecurity. Now we are all asked in education to have something that we are deeply connected to worldwide. It is to connect to the real other, through the angel. The connection to the real other is always with all others that are on earth. This reality that we share by living at the same time. My angel needs to meet with your angel. This imagination brings us directly to our task in education which is more urgent than it was 100 years ago, to give the child continuity and stability through change. This urgency of education is different from that of a doctor. To embrace the child in a stable world - a world of continuity. And as a society we are unstable. Will the world exist in 5 years? We need to carry this positivity and certainty in our souls, in the reality of the changing world. For this source, we have the School of Spiritual Science, where we can learn together for this common world and for the trust of those who are coming full of hope to meet all the others who are already here.

The School for Spiritual Science

Steiner brought in the development of Anthroposophy, the wisdom of the School of Spiritual Science, to transform the human being. A place for learning, teaching, and researching, all that is connected to the human being in becoming. This is an expansion of human knowledge. Everyone can ask what is my contribution for an ongoing understanding of Anthroposophy especially as we are involved in active participation.

BLÁTHÚ'S CPD PROGRAMME FOR 2023



Many problems can be avoided through clarity of communicating.

This workshop will ask:

- How can we top up our communication skills?
- How to solve small problems through art and observation?
- What are the helping tools for successful teams?
- How can art be supportive?

We will explore, in theory and practice:

- the HOW-TO of communication
- our listening skills, and non-verbal understanding
- team building as a process of respecting otherness
- the different temperaments as a key for understanding oneself and the other

**10th June, 9.30am -
4.30pm**

Farmyard Kindergarten,
Strawberry Hill, Cork

COST:

Members: €35

Non-members: €60

Join on the day (combined
membership & workshop): €55

Bring food to share for lunch
*A CPD certificate of completion
will be provided.*

**Farmyard Kindergarten,
Strawberry Hill, Cork City
Saturday 10th June**

Book via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/communications-and-teamwork-a-creative-exploration-tickets-639261557527>

"What is more wonderful than the light? - Conversation."

JW von Goethe, The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily

**To book: please check our website for details: www.blathu.org
For more information, please contact Ruth, at nc.blathu@gmail.com, or tel: 089 2411816**

TRANSITIONS...TO SCHOOL

By Ulrike Farnleitner

During our recent workshop about how to celebrate festivals, the question was raised about what is the best way to celebrate transitions.

Of course transition is an ongoing feature in the course of the day. We transit from indoors to outdoors, from play time to tidy up, to ring time to snack time, to garden time, to story time. There are so many more times of transitions, like painting, crafting, working on a project, puppet shows and many more.

The seasonal awareness helps us to swing with the movement of the sun in our planning and preparing. Nature shows us an incredible "timetable" which is so much dependent on the time of the year, the weather, and geographic situations.

Every year, we celebrate a most special transition, and that is end of the summer term. Big summer holidays, big shift for all present. This change is apparent for the younger children who stay with us for another year, and for the older ones who move on to first class. They reached their 6th or 7th birthday and showed signs of class readiness. Some clearly, and some not so obviously, and sometimes another year in kindergarten is the way to go.

Our hearts are full of sadness to lose our wonderful helpers of all trades, and at the same time, we are so glad and proud of all children whom we have accompanied these

years. They have developed greatly and gained so much in their time with us and their pals.

What to do?

We think of a sailor, maybe a merchant that needs to travel to get goods in a faraway country. We create stories. We imagine the next part of the journey ahead. We want to equip the child with a visible gift for their new adventures, but as always, we are integrating them in the work and success.

Some groups create their story as a puppet show where children had sewn a simple puppet over time and are allowed to play, with the teacher, the transition story. Some groups create boats where children can sand and drill, cut branches, create the arch and weave their railings, and a small puppet with a school bag on its back might be the surprise present given at the end of term celebration. And of course, in the little school bag there are raisins for all the good days to come!

Please, drop us an email and let us know how you are preparing for this transition with the children. There are a multitude of games and songs for this time of farewell. While we are heading towards June and towards the big summer break, we can make our work for new term in September mindful and easy.

A lovely gift for a child making the transition to school is a gnome - with his own schoolbag.



REFLECTING AND PLANNING ON TIME

By Ulrike Farnleitner

How about to sit down now and reflect month after month, on the highlights, the learning, the necessary changes, the notes, the wealth of insights, and to write those down in a year planner? Now, while all is fresh and clear in your mind.

Think back:

How did you create a warm atmosphere for the new children and parents?

Did you welcome everybody with a little story?

Did you invite them in August already or now to join on an afternoon for two hours, to help to clean the logs, the dolls beds, to work with sanding paper, oiling wood, mending what is needed, washing dolls clothes, hanging them on the washing line at child heights... To wash the dolls coats and hats and socks in lukewarm water while using small brushes is an adventure!

To role-model what it means to be busy and active with all these activities, is a beautiful way to gain the trust of children and I am convinced for families in general.

I think you have so many examples that you can continue with throughout your year. This is work, but a most rewarding reflection for your mind and fantastic preparation for the autumn term. And then you can relax and go into summer mood.

Before that, you have set the date when you start learning the ringtime and refresh the songs and stories: in general, 3 weeks before you need to use them and show them to your children. With this etheric time, you will always be ahead of your tasks and deeds, and never burn out or collapse because of too many demands. You will feel safe and secure, your joy and confidence will increase, and many ideas will stream into you when you then work with your new group again.

This flexibility is serious work at first but will come into flow immediately. Imagine you have time then to deepen gestures of your ringtime. You will have more time to read and study deeply the meaning of your work ahead, have time enough for parent talks and time for yourself too! A successful year will come towards you.

Reflective questions - different perspectives:

Cornelis Boogerd, in 'Nurturing Potential', from Floris Books, offers some questions for our own research:

- Do children imitate the educators in different ways: mood or gestures?
- Do children imitate one educator more than the other?
- What gives children strong impressions?
- What aspects of the classroom does each educator take care of? How does she do this?
- What effect has the environment on the mood, work and play of children?
- What ideal enthuses you? Do you love your work?
- How do we interact with each other?
- How purposeful is our work in the kindergarten?
- In which way are you working on the development of harmony of your temperaments?

And Rudolf Steiner would ask:

- Do the children love their educators?

A Reflection on BRMT

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Having had the opportunity in my Easter holidays to receive a session on BRMT -Blomberg Rhythmic Movement Training, I was stunned about the effect that it had on my body and mind. The main focus was to see first which reflexes are not integrated in my body and therefore cause stress to the system. I learnt that unintegrated reflexes hamper the full access to all parts of the brain. I had flashbacks from childhood where I struggled to play badminton I realised this inability to watch the ball coming was probably due to these reflexes that were not integrated in the right time. I could have become a super star in badminton if teachers would have had the knowledge to realise that these were struggles based in my body!

I wondered how that might be for children who get this treatment and how is that for me now as an adult. I experienced that it took time to relax and to trust the process and that obviously an adult body shows less flexibility than a child. It was so interesting to discover that my body is able to function differently with the practicing of exercises.

My task now is doing them faithfully so that I would be able to keep that integration mood in my body until the integration work is done. What an achievement

PLAY - SOME OBSERVATIONS

By Linda Grant

This essay was written as part of my post grad studies in Play Therapy for NUIG. After studying the required texts on Child development and on Attachment Theory, it occurred to me that Steiner Kindergartens could be viewed through this lens. I made these observations based on that study. I feel it shows us what we know as the healing nature of Steiner Kindergartens, but in other terms.

In my work as a Steiner Kindergarten teacher, as a craft teacher of children up to age 10 years and in recent years as a Leader of Parent and Child Groups, I've observed many children and their parents. I've encountered many happy children, confident children, troubled children, and children whose behaviour is challenging. I've also observed children in their relationships with each other and in their relationships with their parents.

Observation and a reflective practice are cornerstones of a Steiner Kindergarten teacher's practice. Observation in a Steiner Kindergarten is not obtrusive, being more like a loving attention that permeates the room or outdoor space. This loving attention is akin to what Hughes (2004) describes as attunement between mother and infant, but applied in a group setting. One-to-one attunement is also present, e.g. when a child brings the teacher a new discovery, a leaf or stone, to admire and enjoy together. This attunement is an important part of the relationship between teacher and each child in her care. To be able to be present in this way requires a slowness, and the Steiner Kindergarten has a slow pace. Activities are gently paced so the child is not hurried from one activity to the next. A steady rhythm between child-led and teacher-led activities is the supporting structure. The teacher's attunement with each child, the day's structure, and the very specific activities brought to the children, create a therapeutic environment where children's needs, especially in the area of attachment, are met (Oldfield, 2001). Knowing Bowlby's (1997) attachment theory and its importance in the life of a child gives us a foundation in understanding child behaviour.

Levels of insecure attachment are observable in most young children. As Hughes (2004) tells us, there is a spectrum. In Steiner early childhood

education we speak of a mantle of protection around a child, the mother's love. It is not always intact. This can be seen in the child's behaviour towards playthings, in relationships with peers especially during play, expressions of need towards the teacher, and towards their mother. Their relationship with themselves, and how they deal with difficulties, is also revealing. A young child struggling to put on their coat or shoes reveals not just something of their level of skill, and temperament, but also self-confidence, and their experience of being supported or not when learning new skills. Both Hughes (2004) and Bowlby (1997) describe the early relationships as setting down our internal attachment patterns which we bring with us through life.

When we look at a child before us, we need to be able to see not just the physical characteristics, nor the biography, of that child, nor their current stage of development, but also their current needs at this stage of their developmental journey. We need to see that this child before us has their own tasks in life to complete, has something unique to offer the world. Building the relationship with the child, gaining their trust, is well-described by Hughes (2004). Having consistency, not only in the relationship with the child but also in the structure of the morning, in the physical environment, all this supports the development of trust. Playthings kept in their own particular places bring consistency and security. For example knowing what to expect on entering a playroom, that the soft toys are found on the second shelf. In a Steiner Kindergarten consistency in the physical environment, in the relationship with the child, in the daily, weekly and seasonal rhythm, all build trust in the world for the child.

Gender, ethnicity and cultural diversity are important too. Globally more girls than boys

receive no formal education (Santrock *et al*, 2021). What effect might this have on child development? We must be careful not to view only through the lens of industrialised Western society. While working with Steiner schools in Vietnam I visited the peoples of the high mountainous Sapa region. Here, cultural diversity is so rich that every village has its own dialect, its own traditional costumes and crafts.

On turning 7 years of age, young girls are taught embroidery, starting with the simplest stitch. The stitches are very specific to each tribe, and form a symbolic language in themselves. The children join their mothers and other women of the tribe to learn these stitches, and work together to create the clothes they wear. Younger children, and infants carried on their mothers' backs, are also present. Fabric is woven from fibre, plants are grown to give dyes, the cloth is embroidered with traditional stitching, and made into garments. There is now pressure to bring formal education to children in these mountain villages. Their rich cultural heritage will not be taught in the primary school. Will a media-driven onslaught of Western culture bring an end to the cultural heritage which gives purpose and meaning to their lives?

Formal education is not the only way to learn. Santrock *et al* (2021) also tells us how in some Eastern cultures, e.g. Japan, most children learn to read and write from their parents. There are in fact many ways to learn and develop, including within a community group of mother, grandmother, aunts and neighbours. We must balance our interpretation of data, ever-mindful of bias, with other values and ways of living. We need awareness of cultural diversity, other value systems and traditions, and the role they have in child development. Learning through play and imitation of the adult in the activities of daily life are rich sources of learning for children in many cultures.

While Santrock's outline of the stages of play, and ages at which they develop, is a valuable framework, we must not limit our understanding of the child to analysis of type of play alone. Knowing all the types of play, from an infant's Sensorimotor

explorations, Practice Play, Symbolic Play in early childhood, through to organised rules-based games of middle childhood, is useful. Yet examining and analysing this play should not detract from seeing the child as a whole, with needs, capabilities, and potential. This child has come into the world to experience trust and love. Building a full picture enhances our understanding of the whole child. That understanding opens us to what Hughes (2004) describes as empathy both with the child, and their underlying affective state.

In my experience this empathy is hugely important in building a relationship where the child feels able to engage in free creative play. Facilitating a child's creative play requires not only observation through loving attention (as earlier discussed), it also requires an inner intention or disposition of empathy. This was clearly described by Hughes in "Facilitating Developmental Attachment"(2004). Allowing the child to unfold their story, holding the space for the experience in that moment – these are essential for free creative play. It is a creative process that holds the possibility of being deeply therapeutic and healing. Rudolf Steiner understood the essential healing nature of education, we see it present in Steiner Kindergartens everywhere.

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READING – AN ANTIDOTE?

By Ulrike Farnleitner

I was fascinated to read the poem "Television" by Roald Dahl, who says so clearly that it is a hypnotiser. (By the way, how many hypnotisers do we use these days and allow children to handle them?) In his view TV dulls the imagination of all children. In his way to portray his view so clearly he says, "...it clogs and clutters up the mind, it makes the children dull and blind...". He warns us that this watching will control their minds and with an overload of foreign impressions they will not be able to think for themselves.

I remember also in the book 'Matilda' by the same author, where he lets her explain that she had to watch television with her parents and even sit eating with her dinner on her knees in front of the TV set. Her parents lack an understanding of healthy parenting or educating. He ridicules this adult generation and the dullness of these kind of parents who are so seemingly entirely interested only in themselves instead of getting fit for the healthy upbringing of children.

I remember my upset as a ten year old child not being able change the pain in the world, having seen and heard news. This information moved on to the next and next item so quickly. I wanted to stop it and to think about it and to become active and use my heart and hands to solve their difficult situations. But I was overwhelmed and not understood in my questions. These days all children are exposed earlier and with much more intensity than I had experienced. None of my family members had a cell phone of their own or a computer in the house.

Today we are so interested in quality, we have quality standards in everything we want to buy, with sell-by date and the location of production.

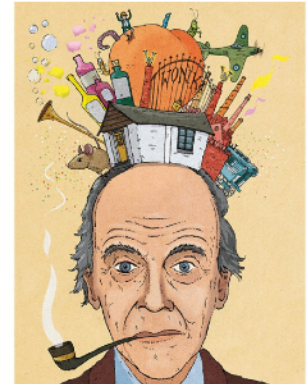


Image by Wesley Merrit

We know if these goods were produced on a bio-diverse farm or not, we are aware of too much sugar or fat in yoghurt and much more. We are informed about so many dangers and traps that might hamper our health and the health of our children. We are obsessive with quality and quantity. And I wonder what do we do that children can use all their senses on a daily basis? How often do we sit and tell children a story off the cuff? Let our imagination go wild and go with it out into nature, away from sitting in front of and dictated to by technology. Honestly, do you also discover, that you might want to take your phone with you, just in case? Have we become addicted to our phones, viral connections? Is it already engrained in our thinking to be available 24/7? Do you switch off the wi-fi connection when the family goes to sleep at night? Can you let go? We are still role models for the young and our habits and ways to deal with these gadgets give examples for the future generation.

What if we would start implementing quality into our day? As Roald Dahl suggested that reading is the antidote, we read to children. We can even read clouds! What is this day to become? We meet a snail on her way through the wet green grass, we read her story written on her house! So much to find out by reading. Try it out ! 😊

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8503169-Television-by-Roald-Dahl>

🐌 Snail Poem 🐌

He creeps
And sleeps
Among the heaps
Of fallen leaves ...

The tiny snail
His slimy tail
A shiny trail
Behind him leaves.



- E Simon
13

JOIN BLÁTHÚ TODAY!

As a member of BLÁTHÚ, you are part of a recognised professional body which, through its mission and actions, is committed to furthering the profile and formation of the Steiner-Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

During the lockdowns, we suspended membership fees, but now that “normal service” is resuming, we need to ask you to renew your membership. BLÁTHÚ depends on your membership fees.

Types of membership:

Associate membership is available to organisations such as VCOs, Universities or Colleges who wish to associate themselves with BLÁTHÚ, receiving updates and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €65 p/a

Individual membership is available to members of the general public and parents of children who may be attending one of our member settings, receiving updates, newsletters and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €25 p/a

Settings Membership is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which allows you to avail of FULL benefits. 3 contact persons receiving correspondence, usually lead teacher, assistant teacher & the committee secretary. All members of staff/committee can avail of discounted entry to BLÁTHÚ workshops & events.

Cost: €75 p/a

New or smaller initiatives such as parent & toddler groups can take out **reduced** membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts.

Cost: €35 p/a

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Benefits to All Members

- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education throughout the Early Years sector.
- Receive the quarterly BLÁTHÚ newsletter
- Receive a discount on BLÁTHÚ events and publications
- Receive regular updates & job vacancy information
- Mentoring and support

Additional Benefits to Full Members

- BLÁTHÚ is a recognised professional body
- BLÁTHÚ represents you at national and international levels
- Your service's website can be linked from listing on www.blathu.org

So, what do I do now - how do I join BLÁTHÚ?

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Ruth Marshall: Email: nc.blathu@gmail.com or tel: 089 241 1816, and request a membership form, or download the form from our website

FOR THE SEASONS - A FESTIVALS SCHEDULE

Month	Date	Festival / Event
May	1st May 1st May 4th May	Bealtaine / May Day Workers' Day Star Wars Day (<i>May the fourth be with you!</i>)
June	Thursday 40 days after Easter Sunday 50 days after easter 21/22nd June 24th June	Ascension Whitsun/Penecost Summer Solstice St John's / "Midsummer Day"
July	Last Sunday	Reek Sunday / Garland Sunday Lughnasadh
August	1st August / 14th August	Lammas

Exploring the seasons and festivals in Galway

A few photographs from our recent CPD workshop on celebrating festivals: a lovely day sharing memories, games, stories, singing, dancing, and food, in the gorgeous environment of Galway Steiner Kindergarten. BLATHU CPD workshops are a way of meeting up with others working in the same field, as well as a place to enhance your existing skills and knowledge. Here's some of the feedback from participants:

- "It was great to meet other educators in an open way"
- "Beautiful, as always, all creations were a feast to the eyes"
- "Wonderful storytelling in a calm environment"
- "Food for the soul"
- "Festivals discussion was very inspiring"
- "I benefitted from the wealth of experience brought by Ruth and Ulrike"



FOR THE SEASONS -NATURE'S GIFTS



From Bealtaine to midsummer is the time for picking fresh herbs and hanging them to dry.

Some of my favourite herb teas from the garden:

- Lemon Balm, Fennel and Mint
- Rose petal tea
- Garden flower mix : rose petal, calendula petals, elderflowers, lemon balm

That garden flower mix also makes a soothing and relaxing foot bath. Make an infusion and then add it to a basin of warm water. Settle back with a book, and let your troubles soak away!

Herb Robert is a common wild plant, with feathery leaves and a small pink flower. It belongs to the Geranium family of cranesbills - so called because of the shape of their seed heads, reminiscent of a crane's bill.

When squeezed, its leaves have a slightly unpleasant foxy smell, but if you crush them and rub on your skin, the smell will discourage midges from biting!

Long ago in Ireland, a compress soaked in an infusion of Herb Robert was used to relieve backache.

To make a tea: put a freshly picked sprig or two into a pot with boiling water, cover and leave it to steep for 10 minutes. Strain and drink, or use as a wash for cuts. It is useful as a mouthwash, and apparently helps after visits to the dentist.

The plant contains a lot of moisture, and will not dry well for storage, so it is best used fresh.



Speedwell (Veronica) is another very common plant, that can be found growing amongst grasses in lawns and by roadsides. It has small blue flowers.

A tea made from speedwell is said to be restorative, and energising.

We might prefer to use it to make a refreshing foot bath that revives tired feet..

To make a foot bath: First make a strong pot of speedwell tea, and then pour this into a basin with enough warm water to cover your feet. Let your feet soak for 20 minutes or so, adding more warm water if it cools too much (actually, best have someone else on hand to top it up for you!).



FOR THE SEASONS -NATURE OBSERVATION

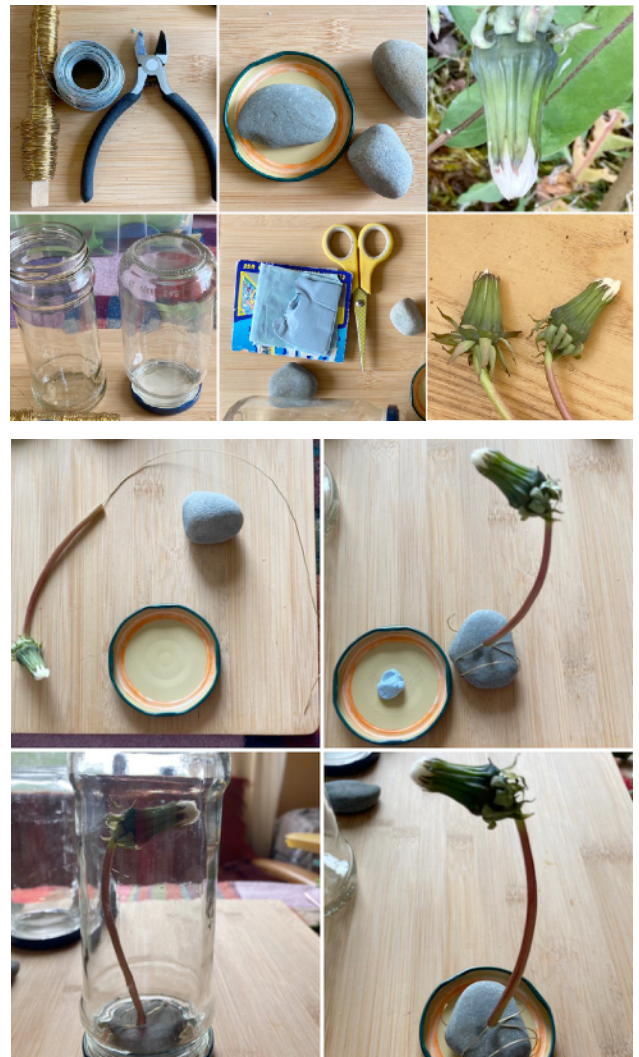
Dandelion magic to blow you away!

You will need:

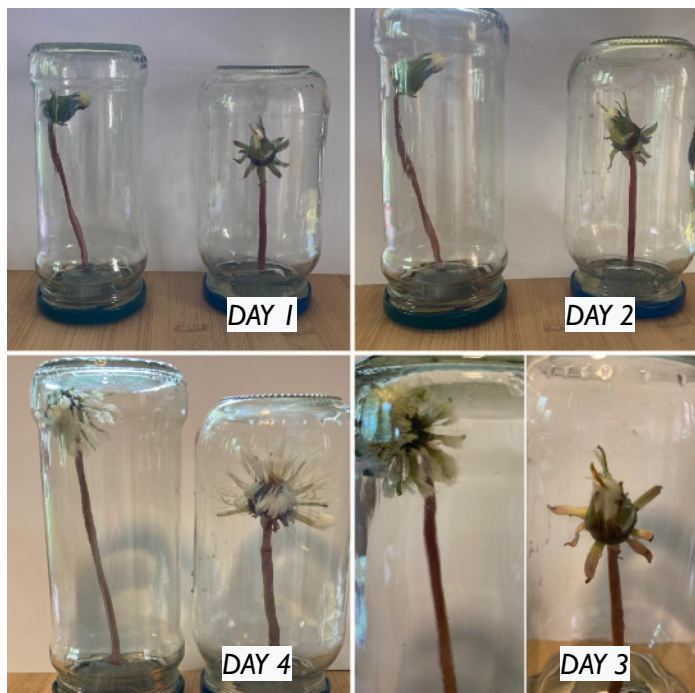
A jar with a lid
Thin flexible wire and wire cutters
Scissors
Blu-tack
Flat-bottomed pebble, smaller than the jar lid
A dandelion, just after the yellow petals have gone, and before the white puff-head has opened.

What to do:

Pick a few dandelions. Make sure that they have lost their yellow petals, but have not yet opened up their white seed head.
Cut the stem to the length needed to fit in your jar. (It needs to be a few cms shorter than the jar.) Cut a length of wire, and smooth and straighten this out between your thumb and first finger.
Push the wire up the hollow stem until it meets the dense flowerhead. This gives some support and helps the the stem to stand up straight. (1)
Wrap the other end of the wire around a pebble several times to anchor it. (2) Then use blu-tack to stick the pebble to the inside of the jar lid. (3)
Now carefully place the upside-down jar over the lid and gently screw it closed. (4)
Sit back and wait. Over the next few days you can watch the dandelion clock start to open. You can be a scientist and observe nature in action, without the dandelion being battered by wind and rain.



Did you know? The dandelion is a flower that shows us the whole universe! Sun, moon and stars are all there.
Sun: the yellow flower; Moon: the round white seedhead;
Stars: each seed when they start to blow away is like a star.



*I first saw this idea when a friend sent me a link to Denise Hope's (home educating mum) website: mudandbloom.com
I tried it out, and took my photos day by day, and wrote my own instructions. - Ruth Marshall*

FOR THE SEASONS - RECIPE

Yeast dough nests

Ingredients:

500g flour - any flour, be it wheat or spelt, wholemeal or white
100g butter
250ml milk
80g sugar brown or demerara sugar
30g dry yeast - if you know where to find fresh one, this is a special treat to bake with it
Bourbon Vanilla - a pinch of it

Method:

Mix the dry components together, flour, sugar and bourbon vanilla.
Warm the milk and melt the butter in it.
Add the liquids to the dry ingredients, and mix together to form a smooth dough.

You can form now the bread you want, whether you want to make plaits, or to form little nests from the dough.
Use a brush to glaze the tops with either milk or cream.
Let the dough sit until it has risen.

To Bake:

Start baking it at a low temperature and only when it had risen sufficiently, raise the temperature to 190 degrees. Finish baking.
Enjoy every bite!



Summer Host Families Sought for Swiss Students

Dear Colleagues of the Waldorf Schools,

We are two teachers from the Waldorf-Steiner school in Geneva, Switzerland: Anne-Marie, is a crafts teacher for the primary classes and Marianne is a class teacher with the 4th class this year.

We each have a daughter of the same age, 17 this summer. Each one of them would love to find a host family in England for the summer.

They would be happy to get involved with the family that welcomes them: child care, pet care, various small jobs at home. Of course, we will participate in the cost of accommodation and food. We are also open to welcoming a student in our family in exchange.

We hope that you can help us in spreading this message to open and welcoming families in your Waldorf network, by forwarding this e-mail to teachers and families, or printing the letters attached and displaying it in the school...

You will find attached our letter with more details, and our daughters' letters in which they introduce themselves. ***
We thank you very much for considering our request and we hope you will answer us soon.

Don't hesitate to contact us by phone if you have any idea.

Kind regards,

Marianne and Anne-Marie

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Alice's mother
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Anne-Marie Forissier
Danaé's mother
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+41 76 616 77 26

*** If you would like more information, please contact me at nc.blathu@gmail.com and I can forward the mothers' letters.

Ruth Marshall

FOR THE SEASONS - A STORY

A House, a Home, and a Happy Little Gnome

**An action tale for children
by Carol Brogan, 2023**

**An action story for young children, on
receiving a gift of a cracked stone, a
geode that shows crystals inside.
This can be part of a small circle time.**



Hold the stone clasped in both hands at chest height and close to the chest. Make sure the stone is completely hidden in your hands.

Look at your hands (you are projecting a mixture of looking curious, perplexed and wondering what is inside).

Extend the index finger of your outer clasped hand and say,

"Sssh, sssh".

Put the stone to your ear and listen intently for a few seconds with wonder.

Extend your clasped hands to the nearest child's ear and say

"Listen, can you hear them?"

Give each child a chance to listen without rushing. When each child has listened:

"I wonder... who is living, deep within the ground?"

"And if they're REALLY there, do they ever make a sound?"

Unclasp your hands very slowly to reveal the closed stone, give the children plenty of time to scramble and have a look, and then to settle.

Holding the stone carefully:

"A rock? A stone? A house? A Home?"

Lowering the stone, say:

"Down, down below, does it rain?"

Make rain with the right hand)

"Does it snow?"

Make snow with left hand.

"Made of stone or brick"

Wonder with the right hand

"Can you hear a pic, pic pic?"

Tap the floor or table with your hand

"Someone lives there"

Tap the stone

"Someone lives there, and builds the home with so much care"

Slowly open the stone to reveal the cavern, marvel and allow the children to marvel

"A rock, a stone, a house, a home.

Who could live here? Why! A happy little gnome"

Slowly move the stone to make the crystal shimmer

"With crystals for a ceiling, and sparkles for a floor," Motion ceiling and floor with right hand,

"A comfy chair, a cosy bed, a little hole picked for a door." Motion the small part of the stone opening and closing.

"A rock? A stone? A house? A home? A perfect crystal home for a happy little gnome"

Close the rock together, cover slowly with clasped hands and lowering to the floor in front of you, say:

"Deep and deeper underground, the gnome sleeps....

all is safe... all is sound"

Close your eyes and sleep.

RANNTA AGUS AMHRÁINÍ AS GAEILGE DON SAMHRADH

Samhradh Samhradh

Samhradh, samhradh, bainne na ngamhna
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn
Samhradh buí na nóinín gléigeal
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn.

Bábóg na Bealtaine, maighdean an tSamhraidh
Suas gach cnoc is síos gach gleann
Cailíní maiseacha bán-gheala gléigeal
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn

Thugamar linn é ón gcoill chraobhaigh
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn
Samhradh buí ó luí na gréine
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn

Samhradh buí na nóinín gléigeal
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn
Ó bhaile go baile 's go Malainn 'na dhiaidh sin
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn

Tá nead ag an ghiorria ar imeall na haille,
Is nead ag an chorr éisc i ngéagaibh an chrann,
Tá'n chuach 's na héanlaith a' seinm le pléisiúr,
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn.

Tá an fhuiseog a' seinm 's a' luascadh sna spéartha
Beacha is cuileoga is bláth ar na crainn
Tá míl ar an gcuiseach 's coilm a' beiceadh,
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn.

Samhradh, samhradh, bainne na ngamhna
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn
Samhradh buí na nóinín gléigeal
Thugamar féin an samhradh linn

Summer, summer, milk of the goats,
We brought the summer with us,
Fair summer of the bright daisies
We brought the summer with us

May Dolls, summer Maidens
Up each hill and down each glen
Girls dressed up so white, bright and radiant
We brought the summer with us

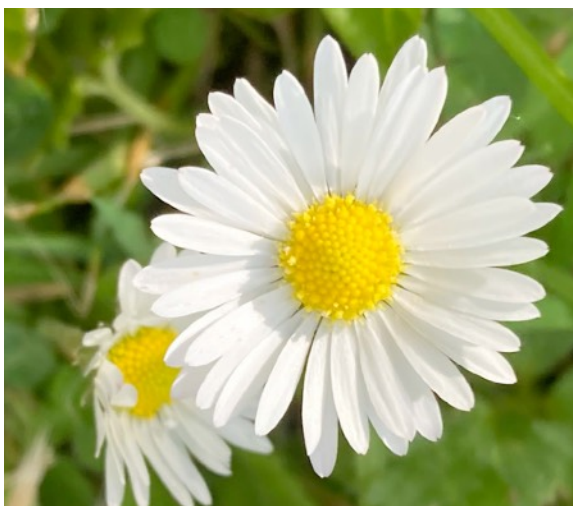
We brought it with us from the branch-filled woods
We brought the summer with us
Golden summer from sunset
We brought the summer with us

Fair summer of the bright daisies
We brought the summer with us
From town to town and to Malin after
We brought the summer with us

The Hare has a nest on the cliff edge
And the Heron's nest in the branches of the Glen
The Cuckoo and the birds are singing with pleasure
We brought the summer with us

The lark is singing and fluttering in the sky
Bees and little flies and trees in bloom
Honey in hives and doves are calling
We brought the summer with us.

There is a beautiful recording of this song by The Gloaming.
listen to it here: <https://youtu.be/VjE33BQ7aJ4>



RANNTA AGUS AMHRÁINÍ AS GAEILGE DON SAMHRADH

A haon is a dó

Aon dó, muc is bó,
Trí ceathair, bróga leathair,
Cúig sé, cupán tae
Seacht ocht, seanbhean bhocht,
Naoi deich, císte te!

One, two, a pig and a cow,
Three four, leather shoes,
Five six, a cup of tea
Seven eight, poor old woman,
Nine ten, hot cake!

An Féileacán

Féileacán bán is féileacán buí
Ag eitilt leo go ciúin sa gaoith
Féileacán bán is féileacán buí
Ag tuirling ar na nóiníní.

A white butterfly and a yellow butterfly
Flying with them quietly in the wind
A white butterfly and a yellow butterfly
Landing on the daisies.

Nóiníní

Nóiníní bána ar imeall na habhann
Rachfaidh mé síos agus piocadh mé ceann,
Ceann Beag do mo mhathair's Ceann Beag
liom féin
Ceann Beag do na chairde ar oileán i gcéin.

Deanfaidh mé sleabhna des bán agus óir
Deanta as nóiníní bána go leor
Beidh sé go hálainn anuas ar mo cheann
Mise i mbanríon ar imeall na habhann.

White daisies on the edge of the river
I'll go down and pick one,
A Little One for my mother and a Little One
with me
A little one for the friends on a distant island.

I will make a chain of white and gold,
Made of many white daisies
It will be beautiful on top of my head
I will be Queen of the river bank.

Ceol arsa a t-asal

"Ceol," arsa a t-asal
'Sé istigh sa ghort.
Éist le mo ghlórsa
Is é is binne port.
Ée-á, Ée-á, Ée-á, Ée-á, Ée-á.

Music said the donkey

"Music," said the donkey,
And he in the field,
Hear my voice
It is the sweetest tune.
Ee-á, Ée-á, Ée-á, Ée-á, Ée-á.



Listen to a lovely recording here:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=ceol+arsa+an+t-asal+lyrics&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=ci d:7af509ff,vid:tELzEQa4NN8>

With thanks to Linda Grant for contributing the Irish verses and song links

A VISIT TO GALWAY STEINER KINDERGARTEN

By Ruth Marshall

As National Coordinator for BLATHU, my role is largely office-based. It was a welcome change to put on one of my other hats (or perhaps I mean my storyteller's mantle!) and go on a day trip to Galway to co-facilitate our CPD workshop on Celebrating Festivals along with my colleague Ulrike. Of course, as a mentor, Ulrike visits kindergartens all the time, but it was an enjoyable novelty for me.



It's always worthwhile to take a look around another setting, and notice how they have arranged things.

Of course, the Steiner Waldorf kindergartens will have so much in common, but each will also be unique.

Something that stood out for me, were the outdoor facilities - the real hand-powered water pump!

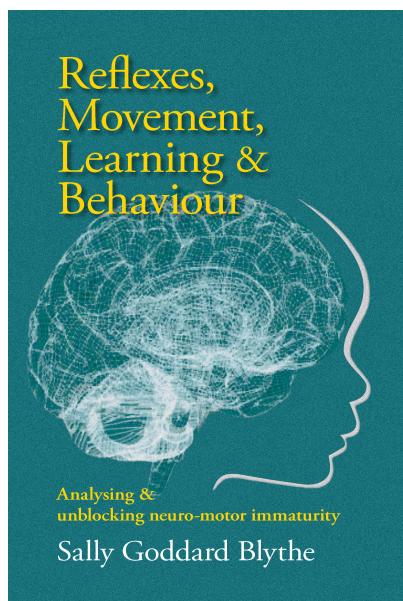
Another was the welly-holders above the coat hooks. And don't they make a gorgeous colourful display?





Hawthorn Press

Press Release



Title:	REFLEXES, MOVEMENT, LEARNING & BEHAVIOUR
Subtitle:	Analysing & unblocking neuro-motor immaturity
Author:	Sally Goddard Blythe
Pub date:	1 st May 2023
Release :	April 2023
ISBN:	978-1-912480-78-4
Illustrations	Diagrams, illustrations black and white
Size:	234 x 156mm
Binding:	Paperback
Extent:	336pp
Price:	£29.99
Series:	Early Years Education
BIC codes:	JMC - Child and developmental psychology VFD – Popular Medicine and health

Description: *Reflexes, Movement, Learning & Behaviour* covers an area of education and emotional wellbeing that either is overlooked or falls between professional domains. It provides information that can help parents, teachers and other professionals to understand what lies behind the under-achieving child and adults who suffer from balance-related anxiety disorders. The method fills a yawning gap in 'the system', which often fails to recognise underlying physical factors in under-achievement, behavioural and emotional problems. Identifying some of the mechanics involved is the first stage in moving from victimhood to being able to live with a problem and in many cases, overcome it. It helps parents and teachers to understand children better, introduce more effective coping strategies if needed and ideally corrects some of the underlying problems, enabling children and adults to become more resilient and flexible in response to stress and to realise their potential.

Contents: Introduction: Why physical development matters and its relationship to school readiness and learning success.

1. Primitive reflexes – their influence on life and learning
2. From primitive reflex to postural control
3. Brain development: Establishing a hierarchy
4. The senses: Interreceptor and exteroceptor systems
5. Examples of reflex testing.
6. What can be done? Levels of intervention from individualized programmes to how parents can help; awareness in schools; signs and symptoms of listening problems; music as a primary teacher; visual processing; simple changes in the classroom; nature and nurture; use of electronic media.
7. History of the INPP method and selected papers by Lawrence Beuret MD and Sally Goddard Blythe

Appendix 1: Case Studies
Appendix 2: A short history of reflexes and the INPP method
References and Glossary
References and Index

- Analyses how neuro-motor immaturity influences physical, behavioural, learning and emotional blockages in children and adults
- Pioneering, updated research into how primitive and postural reflexes affect learning and emotional wellbeing.
- Recognising neuromotor immaturity - signs, symptoms and behaviours
- What can be done? Case studies, screening, neuromotor training, sensory programs, action songs and movement.

Summary: Reflexes, Movement, Learning & Behaviour addresses: Why is the physical basis for learning important? How immaturity in aspects of physical development impacts learning, emotional wellbeing and behaviour? How this can be identified? How can this be assessed and what forms of remediation are available.

Author: Sally Goddard Blythe is Director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology. She researches the relationship between physical development and learning. Her remedial programmes help transform children's learning through movement. Her widely translated books include *The Well Balanced Child*, *The Genius of Play*, *Raising Happy Healthy Children* and *Movement: Your Child's First Language* from Hawthorn Press, and *Attention Balance and Coordination*, *The ABC of Learning Success*.

Readership: Educators, learning professionals, child psychologists, doctors, movement specialists and parents will find this an essential and unique resource.

Endorsements: *Provides a readable yet comprehensive overview of primitive and neonatal reflexes and postural control. These are holistically integrated into descriptions of human senses, neural structures and systems, along with their relevance for learning delays, disorders, and psychological conditions. Her expositions and recommendations draw on empirical-scientific analysis, many years of therapeutic experience, and a phenomenological-symptomology, offering readers from wide ranging backgrounds her unique theoretical and therapeutic insights into reflexes and learning.*
Associate Professor Sebastian Suggate, University of York

If you view a learner as just a brain carried around by a body, it is rather like servicing a car engine without checking the brakes and tyres. That might be fine, but often you will waste fuel and occasionally you will crash. Sally is one of the leading experts in understanding how the body and mind work together, how to spot where there is a problem and then what to do about it. These issues are not simple, but they are important for thousands of children. Reflexes, Movement, Learning and Behaviour will give you a comprehensive resource to work with.
David Morgan, creator of the Easyread System and All Aboard Phonics.

At a time when parents and professionals emphasise and analyse school readiness and learning yet children are the most sedentary in history, Sally Goddard Blythe has put the horse back before the cart. Physical literacy and movement have always been the poor cousin to proper cerebral learning, until now. This book provides an excellent comprehensive overview of this emerging area.
Dr Aric Sigman, child health education lecturer, author of *Getting Physical*, winner of The Times Educational Supplement's Information Book Award.

Every ounce of Sally Goddard Blythe's passion and commitment to her career-long quest to analyse and unblock neuro-motor immaturity is captured in this book. It is essential reading for anyone wanting the fullest picture of this important field.
Mike Boulton, Emeritus Professor of child psychology at the University of Chester.

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KINDLING



KINDLING

The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education



Issue 40 - 2021

Theme: Diversity & Inclusivity
Festivals & more

The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education

Published twice yearly in the UK, available as printed copy or PDF (for worldwide subscription) KINDLING contains themed articles (Issue 39 and 40 are both on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) songs, stories, crafts, research, health, information, book reviews, news and more...

It is of interest to anyone concerned with the young child and Steiner Waldorf early childhood education and care.

For more information, please Email: earlyyearsnews@aol.com
Please note one 'y' in the email address.

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events

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Or contact Ruth at
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*Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are the views and opinions of the authors of the articles themselves and are included for your interest and information. They are not necessarily the views or opinions of **BLÁTHÚ**, its staff or members.*

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