



Kindergarten At Saltwater School

The Kindergarten Environment is a warm and supportive place, where the child is secure in feelings of love. Physically, it is a simple, beautiful, and harmonious space so as not to over-stimulate the child, and to encourage imagination and creativity.

The Teacher is aware that imitation is one of the child's main learning tools, and that she must take care to be worthy of imitation. "Each simple deed, if done with wonder and reverence, will be imitated in such a way by the child, that the qualities of wonder and reverence will grow in the child, nourish her/him, and sowing the seeds of those soul qualities which are so vital — reverence towards living things, respect, consideration, and tolerance towards fellow human beings."

Rhythm & Routine are very strengthening for young children, and give them a sense of security and trust. In kindergarten there is a daily rhythm, which provides for free playtime as well as group activities. At free playtime, the child may choose to be involved with a group of others, or to play on their own within the classroom. There are many natural materials available like wool, shells, rocks, clothes and pine cones, as well as handmade toys that leave a lot to the child's imagination, thereby calling forth the child's own natural creativity. At this time, the child may also decide to join into one of the many tasks with which the teacher is involved, such as watering plants, sewing, dusting, polishing, ironing, sweeping, bread baking or gardening.

Free Playtime provides the child with many options, some of which include:

- ~ *Beeswax Crayons* - When the children use beeswax crayons for colouring, there is no instruction given, but the teacher often joins in and soon the children begin to imitate the different ways of using these broad block crayons.
- ~ *Beeswax Modeling* - The beeswax can be warmed and softened, and small fingers find it enjoyable to use because of its pliability and the way it lends itself to creating three-dimensionally.
- ~ *Finger Knitting* - As with modeling beeswax, finger-knitting develops small muscle coordination and is good preparation for when the child begins to write.

~ *Painting* - In painting, a feeling for colour and space is developed in the child, the results often giving good insight into a child's nature and mood. Painting has a therapeutic effect upon all children. In the process of painting, the child fully experiences and lives into the living qualities of the colours and inwardly experiences how one colour reacts upon another.

~ *Seasonal nature crafts* - brings an awareness and appreciation of Nature and her gifts.

Group Activities within the school day involve songs, games, finger plays, drama, and nature walks. Some games and songs will be in different languages.

Daily Activities are different each day. There is a great deal of respect for the child's own natural creativity within the curriculum, and for that reason, as much as possible, the teacher does not create artistic models for the children to replicate. However, in the passing on of new skills and in the use of new materials, often the teacher participates.

Story Time is often the highlight of the day. The stories, mostly spoken, may be tales about everyday things. Sometimes the stories relate to seasonal changes and the lives of birds and animals. Fairy tales are also told in kindergarten. The teacher may create stories, which relate to the particular disposition of the group that she is working with, and many of the stories may be curative. The children also experience the fairy tale in puppet play and acting form.

Discipline is an important part of the class environment. The children become aware of the limits, which are upheld firmly and lovingly by the teacher. The children are also encouraged to begin to develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions and practice skills, which are demonstrated by the adults. "Use your words instead of hitting," or "Please don't do that. It hurts my feelings." Again, the teacher is very aware of how imitation is so active in these young children and how important it is for the adults in the school to react with care, reverence, and respect for the feelings of others and for their surroundings.

Seasonal Celebrations & Festivals are a very important part of the Waldorf curriculum. Each classroom has its own nature table where the children may bring things that they discover in the world outside and where the teacher creates scenes to represent the magic of that time of year. Poetry, songs, stories, and creative activities, both indoors and outdoors, enable the child to live deeply into the seasons. In addition, there are festivals each year. Certain festivals are celebrated within the classroom with just the children and teachers attending, and others are

celebrated as a community, with parents and relatives welcome. Some of these celebrations are Michaelmas, Autumn Lantern Walk, Advent Spiral and Spring Festival. The teachers invite children to bring their families and to share in songs, stories and festivities as a community.