

The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center
at



Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher
Education Program

Student Handbook

2019-2020

Dear Sophia's Hearth students,

This handbook is your practical guide to accompany your journey through your teacher education work here at Sophia's Hearth. Our intention is to clarify some of the most commonly asked questions concerning expectations for the optimal learning environment and ultimate professional development of our students.

If you have questions about tuition, financial aid, or finances, please contact:
Cynthia Cote, Business Manager, cynthia@sophiashearth.org (603)357-3755

For any other questions, contact

- Katherine Scharff (518)583-3405 katherine@sophiashearth.org
- Jane Swain, (603)399-4404 jane@sophiashearth.org
- Janene Ping, (518)701-1025 jpings@hawthornevalleyschool.org
- Susan Weber (603)352-7370 susanweber@pobox.com

Certificate Options & Categories:

There are two possibilities for students to undertake in our teacher education courses. One option is the Birth to Seven Certificate Program, which takes four summers with three weeks in the intervening months, along with a series of webinars. The second option is the Birth to Three Certificate Program, which takes two summers with two weeks in the intervening months. The Birth to Three Certificate Program is a subset of the Birth to Seven Certificate Program and comprises the first 13 months of the Birth to Seven program.

Cohorts start each summer and are referred to by their Year (summers completed) as well as the year the cohort will complete the Birth to Seven certificate.

There are two categories of students in our certificate programs. One category is termed, IN-SERVICE STUDENTS, meaning those who are working in a Waldorf Classroom setting. The second category is termed, PRE-SERVICE STUDENTS, meaning those who are not working in a Waldorf Classroom setting.

Course class attendance and credit:

Being present is the beginning of our work together! We ask that you be punctual to all classes out of respect to your classmates and instructors. If you must miss a class, please let your instructor know beforehand.

The class attendance requirement policy is 80% for any given course. If you should miss more than 20% of class time in a course, you will receive an incomplete for that course. In certain circumstances, make up work may be possible to meet course requirements.

Reflections on Your Experience:

"You cannot transmit wisdom and insight to another person. The seed is already there. A good teacher touches the seed, allowing it to wake up, to sprout, and to grow."

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Becoming a teacher is a process that invites and requires self-reflection. Our program provides many exercises in self-reflection and time for practicing. Whether in course work, your personal journal, or in your practice teaching, your self-reflection will provide insights, new possibilities and ideas, and develop the social community that is at the heart of our work together.

In addition, you will complete a specifically designed self-review when your visiting classroom mentor comes to you and a final evaluation at the end of the program. All of these provide experience in developing a healthy practice towards self-review. Course reviews also provide important insights regarding the experience you have had. From our side, course reviews by our students provide valuable windows for our teachers and staff, revealing how you have received our efforts and where we might enhance our teaching to better serve you.

Course Completion Self- Evaluation

Each student will develop a reflective self-evaluation using the guidelines below as he or she looks back upon the teacher education experience. This paper is to be completed during the final summer session (either 2nd or 4th). Please write 2-3 pages of reflection describing your experience using the questions below as guidelines:

- In what ways do you feel that you have been actively engaged in your own self-education?
- In what ways do you feel that you have become a researcher of your own questions?
- What are your practices and habits for engaging in reflective learning?
- In what ways do you feel that you are beginning or continuing to develop your "pedagogical instinct"?
- In what ways do you feel that you have strengthened your capacity to serve as the resource for the child's self-education?
- As you reflect over your research project, what hopes and intentions do you have for continuing to explore the theme of your project?
- What are your biggest questions as you leave your training experience?
- What areas of Waldorf early childhood pedagogy do you see as your teaching strengths and challenges?
- How has this program helped you with these?

Sophia's Hearth as a Community:

It is our intention that your experience at Sophia's Hearth will include a supportive experience of growing with others who share your studying, learning and working dedication to the young child and their families.

Program Advisor:

You will be assigned an advisor from the core faculty at Sophia's Hearth. Your advisor guides the overview of your full program with you: your studies, your classroom teaching practicum, your independent research project, and other larger questions as you pursue your work. She will review your workbook each in-person session at Sophia's Hearth.

Classroom visiting mentor:

You will also have a classroom visiting mentor, who may or may not be the same person as your program advisor. Your classroom visitor will spend time with you in your teaching activity throughout the program. Her role is to support the unfolding of your capacities as a teacher, to explore your questions and hopes through these months. She does not come in an evaluative role and a written report about her visit is only shared with you and Sophia's Hearth teachers.

Your classroom visitor will meet with you immediately after each visit to discuss your questions and her observations; your strengths, areas for further development, questions, and needs.

These are your responsibilities with regard to classroom visitors' visits:

- to inform your school faculty chairperson or other leadership person as well as your immediate colleagues of the dates and times of your mentor's planned visits.
- to plan a time during each visit when you and your mentor can meet together. This should be no less than 2-3 hours each day. Remember that your mentor has traveled and set aside time for this visit in order to support your work. Make good use of her availability and clear your own calendar for these special days!
- to provide all meals and lodging during her visit.
- to write a 1-2 page reflection paper following the visit that describes your insights, questions, and new understandings.

Aspects of Your Direct Classroom Experience:

Experience in a classroom setting is an integral part of preparing for early childhood teaching and caregiving. It is the essence of this work to develop over time a living feeling for the nature of the young child, for the delicate and profound developmental processes over the first seven years. Without this intimate association with the child, the actual capacities for the work cannot unfold, the true questions cannot arise, and the learning through life's experience cannot take place. Therefore, this element of the teacher training at Sophia's Hearth Family Center carries tremendous value. What follows is an attempt to bring much that is intangible, individual, and unpredictable into a context of planning and time-related expectations that forms a guide for this important experience.

BIRTH TO SEVEN CERTIFICATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

Classroom Practicum teaching and Observation:

Each teacher education student at Sophia's Hearth participates in a structured experience in a context that works out of Waldorf early childhood education. The details of your structured experience will be determined with your advisor, based upon your previous teaching experience and current teaching situation.

IN-SERVICE STUDENTS (working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

- It is Sophia's Hearth's expectation and a requirement by WECAN that each student will spend a minimum of three days each week in his or her practicum experience.
- In addition, a minimum of two weeks (10 days) of observation/practicum during the course of study, must be in a classroom other than their own. Ideally part of this time will take place in a setting with the age group that is not the same as your own classroom. See guidelines for Practicum and Observation visits.
- The practicum should begin in the autumn following the first summer's course work and continue until the course of study at Sophia's Hearth is completed, although the arrangements will be adapted to each student's situation. Each classroom day will be defined as at least a full morning.

PRE-SERVICE STUDENTS (not working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

- Students who are not working at least three days per week, in a Waldorf Early childhood classroom must have a minimum of six weeks of practicum with experienced Waldorf Early Childhood teachers.
- In addition, a minimum of two weeks (10 days) of observation during the course of study. Ideally part of this time will take place in a setting with the age group that is not the same as your own classroom. See guidelines for Practicum and Observation visits.

II: BIRTH TO THREE CERTIFICATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

IN-SERVICE STUDENTS (working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

- It is Sophia's Hearth's expectation that each student will spend a minimum of three days each week in his or her practicum experience.
- In addition, a minimum of one weeks (5 days) of observation and practicum during the course of study, in a classroom other than your own. Ideally this will take place in a setting with the age group of birth to three. See guidelines for Practicum and Observation visits.
- The practicum should begin in the autumn following the first summer's course work and continue until the course of study at Sophia's Hearth is completed, although the arrangements will be adapted to each student's situation. Each classroom day will be defined as at least a full morning.

PRE-SERVICE STUDENTS (not working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

Students who are **not** working at least three days per week in a Waldorf Early childhood classroom-must have

- a minimum of one weeks (5 days) of observation and
- three weeks (15 days) of practicum with an experienced Waldorf EC teachers.
This will take place in a setting with a birth to three age group.

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICUM AND OBSERVATION VISITS (all students).

This is a golden opportunity to observe this transformative education in practice! The observation form on page 9 of the handbook is to be submitted to your program advisor.

Below is the protocol for these visits.

- Be sure to make clear plans with the teacher whose program you will be visiting, determining when he or she would like you to arrive and what the teacher would like you to do during your practicum/observation visit.
- Plan with the teacher ahead of time ways you might contribute to the classroom.
- Pre-service students should plan on developing finger games, circle or a story as well as inform the classroom teacher that a classroom mentor will be visiting during their practicum experience.
- Do refrain from asking questions or engaging the classroom teacher with conversation during your visit. He or she is engaged with her work with the children, and this is what you have come to experience! Try to plan a time for conversation about your visit following your time in the classroom.
- When visiting the teacher may offer you a task that keeps your hands busy while you experience the classroom setting. Your engagement in work supports the play and work of the children in a beneficial way.
- Try to avoid conversations with the children, as you are not there to be engaged

with them. If a child engages you in conversation, you will find that your minimal responses will guide the child back into his or her own activity, which is, after all, what you hope to observe!

What to observe:

- What are the ages and numbers of children in the group?
- What are the arrangements for play, for children's extra and outdoor clothing, for toileting and diapering, sleeping, for eating, for caregiving?
- The children's play: Identify the various developmental stages of play that you observe. What groups of materials are in this classroom? What themes did you observe in the play, and how did the children explore and use the materials?
- Rhythm of the day: What was the rhythm during your visit?
- Transitions: What were the transitions in this group? How are they brought to the children?
- Language games, touching games, songs and verses – how were they brought to this group?
- Stories – was there a story for this age group? What was the story on your visiting day and how was it brought?
- What is the 'staffing pattern'? A single teacher, a team, changes in various parts of the day?

Practicum Contract

Your contract will include the following information and will be sent to your advisor by September 15:

1. Your name, address and phone number.
2. Practicum program's name, address and telephone number.
3. Primary classroom teacher's contact information (if not you, yourself): email/ phone
4. Dates for your practicum: From _____ to _____.
5. Weekly schedule and plan for your participation: days/week and hours/day
6. The goals you hope to achieve in your practicum experience.

Observation Format for a *Classroom Visit Day*

Your name:

Location and teacher's name of observed teacher's program:

Dates and hours:

Age and number of children in the group:

Describe what you observed during the day/s, using the observation guidelines in your student handbook. You may use this form or send your observation electronically.

Submit to your advisor and to Katherine Scharff: katherine@sophiashearth.org within two weeks of your observation day/s. Your report will be included in your permanent file at Sophia's Hearth.

Classroom Visitor's Report Outline:

- I. A brief description of the classroom setting and demographics of the class
- II. A description of the student's responsibilities and role in the class or group
- III. Areas of strength, capability, commendation
- IV. Suggestions for next steps in developing his or her work
- V. Particular questions or concerns of the student

A second visit, if this is possible, will make reference to areas III – V.

Student's reflection of classroom visitor's visit:

Each student will write a reflection of the work with your classroom visitor following each visit. This provides an opportunity for you to recall the salient points of your work together, to articulate from your perspective what your next steps will be. This reflection is to be sent to your classroom visitor and to your Sophia's Hearth faculty advisor within two weeks of the visit.

Student Assessment:

Sophia's Hearth maintains an ongoing portfolio for each student. This begins with your admissions application and concludes with your personal self-evaluation for the program joined with your advisor's written final assessment. You have a course record that your advisor will share with you at each residential session. The course record (see attachment) includes the pass/fail and credit hour recognition for each course, the acknowledgement of completion of each major component of the program to include:

- Practicum completion
- Research project presentation
- Research project documentation
- Self-evaluation
- Final advisor's report

Research Project:

As part of your program at Sophia's Hearth, you will develop two personal research projects for the birth to seven course of study. For the birth through three course of study will include one research project. The intention of the projects is that you will intensify your observations, gain understanding as well as self-knowledge, reflect upon your practices, and learn to better articulate what you are doing to experience a new kind of professional and personal freedom.

Through the group process, you will develop a specific, concrete question. The statement of the question is shared with your advisor.

As the culmination of your project, you will create a written report or other concrete documentation that will be given to the advisor. Each project will include a written paper. The paper will include:

- *Statement of your question*
- *Your method of investigation* (reading, visits for observation, film, photography, painting, etc.)
- *Data that you may have gathered* – anecdotal descriptions, results of a survey you have conducted, for example
- *Conclusion: what have you learned through the **process** of this project?*
- *Bibliography. A **minimum of 3 sources** that may include books, articles, video, interviewing a knowledgeable person, attending a lecture, etc.*

You will prepare a 10–15 minute oral sharing for the spring session and or the summer session

Curriculum Resource Notebook: Organizing your curriculum materials for teaching

As part of your training at Sophia's Hearth, you are required to create a Curriculum Resource notebook.

You will need a loose-leaf binder with dividers (or we invite you to develop another personal approach to organizing material as a support for your experience). This notebook should organize the curriculum material that is integral in your development as a teacher: sections for songs and games, for little puppet stories, for festival preparation and background; for seasonal activities for children and/or parents.

It should also have a section for reference to your Sophia's Hearth assignment pages, self-evaluations, and for reflective writing that refers to specific aspects of your work. This binder or organizational folder might also include articles of interest for parents and for yourself, details from parent meetings or activities as they have the possibility to become a valuable resource for future work. Keeping all your materials together will save much time and frustration!

It may also be helpful to keep all the reading texts for your program, reading and written assignments together as well.

Your Curriculum Resource Notebook is a practical resource which you can use as a resource throughout your professional life. As clarified above, it is a place to gather materials for your work with children which lives at the core of your experience. Thus – it is a document your journey of the year with the children.

- This notebook is a point of reference to be shared with your Sophia's Hearth advisor and classroom visiting mentor. Your advisor will review your work at each residential session and your classroom visitor will review it when she comes to your classroom.
- The creation of this notebook will develop your skills in organization and allow you to review your own path in becoming a teacher.

You will also be assigned reflective essays arising out of your teaching practicum as assigned by faculty. These will be submitted to the instructor who has assigned the work as well as to your advisor.

KEY DATES:

September 15th - Practicum contract due to advisor

January 15th – Year 1 Research Project: Description of Research Project including method of investigation and method of recording findings. Preliminary bibliography. Send to advisor.

February 15th – Year 3 Project (Birth to Seven): Description of Research Project including method of investigation and method of recording findings. Preliminary bibliography. Send to advisor.

March 15th – All Research Projects: Update on research project due to advisor

March/April – Year 1 Research Project: Paper due to advisor at the start of the spring week

May 15th – Year 3 Research Project: Written Research Project submitted for review to Advisor. Advisor will review work and give recommendations as to any changes needed.

Birth to Three Course Completion Self-Evaluation: Second Summer of your studies on Friday of your first week.

Birth to Seven Course Completion Self-Evaluation: Fourth Summer of your studies on Friday of your second week

Classroom observation due: within two weeks of your observation day

Classroom visitor (to your classroom) self-reflection: within two weeks of the visit

Tuition & Payment Policies as of 1/1/2019

Tuition

The Enrollment Agreement states:

I hereby confirm my enrollment in the teacher education course at Sophia's Hearth Family Center.

I understand that I am responsible for the entire tuition of the program, less any tuition assistance or discounts I may receive.

I intend to complete the full program but understand that if I must withdraw from the program, I am still responsible for the full tuition.

This is signed by students upon enrollment.

Payments

Payment plans are offered to help students afford their studies at Sophia's Hearth. Tuition payments do not imply a pay as you go fee structure. Full tuition is expected from all students regardless of their attendance in the scheduled course.

Payment plans can be spread from the date of acceptance through one month following scheduled date of completion. If the payments go beyond the one-month post completion, a \$2.50/month charge will be added for each month it is extended. Payment plans agreed upon prior to 1/1/19 that give up to 12 months beyond the completion date will be honored with no additional fee. Payment plans agreed upon prior to 1/1/19 that give more than 12 months beyond completion will be subject to the fee after the additional 12 months.

Leave of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence from the teacher education program at any point during the program. This request should be in writing to the Program Director. Students are invited to stay in touch and notify the Program Director when he or she is able to return to take up active participation in the program. The student is expected to continue to complete all tuition payments as originally agreed upon and stated in the enrollment agreement.

If the student returns to the program within 2 years, a re-enrollment fee of \$350 will be charged. No additional tuition will be charged provided the original tuition was paid in full. If full tuition was not made as originally scheduled, the amount that was paid will be applied as a credit towards the current tuition rate and the difference will be due along with the \$350 reenrollment fee.

Students returning more than two years after the leave will have the tuition paid applied to the current rate. The difference as well as a \$350 re-enrollment fee will be required.

A Leave of Absence does not have a defined duration; however, additional course work may be required.

Withdrawal from Program

A student who wishes to withdraw from the program may do so at any time. Tuition payments are expected to be completed as scheduled. If the amount of monthly payment is an issue a revised payment plan can be worked out.

Program Dismissal Policy

Understanding that successful preparation for Waldorf early childhood teaching is an intensive process, we also recognize that under certain conditions the student's capacity for continuing his or her work may not enable the student to meet the depth of engagement needed to successfully prepare for teaching at this point in her or his life's journey.

Therefore, the Director of teacher education at Sophia's Hearth reserves the possibility to terminate enrollment under the following situations. These conditions include:

unsatisfactory performance in the teacher education program is based upon

- Attendance which does not meet the required minimum per policy as given in student handbook and the student is unable to meet given requirements for making up the course work.
- Required course work is not submitted by required deadlines or not at a passing level of quality.
- Both oral and written requirements for the research project are not completed within time guidelines.
- The practicum requirements are not completed as approved by the Advisor.
- Other individual situations that might arise.

A student may be dismissed by the Program Director under such circumstances. In such case, written notification will be sent to the student by registered mail.

Certificates of completion will be withheld until all requirements of the course are completed, including tuition payments.