

KINDERGARTEN
TWIN RIDGES HOME STUDY

SIXTH LEARNING PERIOD
PART A
By Marguerite Vulfs

Circle

Free Play

Change Is In The Air

Painting

CIRCLE

So much of the Circle these last few weeks has been focused on singing and for many parents that seems like enough. Circle time though is also social and along with that movement is important. Movement can be using fine motor skills, such as in finger plays using nursery rhymes, or it can be a circle in which you walk, skip, dance and clap. Earlier in the year we did a simple circle "Farmer in the Dell" and that is probably familiar to everyone.

When searching to create a movement circle, choose a song or verse that perhaps follows a theme for the circle. In Learning Period #5B I mentioned birds. Many Waldorf teachers also use "King Winter" as a theme or the "gnomes" working.

"What are the gnomes all doing each morning just at eight?"

"They jump out of bed, they jump because it's late" Tra la la la, la la la"

This circle goes around the clock from morning until night time. I learned it by heart from my training and it is quite long. However, you could take it and create your own circle, using each of the times after eight, i.e. nine, ten, eleven etc. Usually when I first introduce it, we make it to "11", and for some children I take it all the way to bedtime the first time. It is also a rhyming circle so when you create it, make sure it rhymes.

Continue working with Kindness in your Circle. Part of this learning period can be devoted to it and it can be reflected in your circle. The talking crystal idea helps children to "speak out" about their thoughts, and you can interweave kind gestures into that as well. Children being able to "speak out" about what they see in the world is important, especially this time of year when the outer world seems more challenging to learn about due to the weather.

Another fun way to hold Circle this time of year is to introduce instruments again to your circle. You can begin with the child's own instruments - hands and feet - with simple clapping and stamping. However, free playing with instruments is also very fun. I always, as the adult, demonstrate first. The children will naturally either be quite soft with the instrument or loud, so try to strike a happy medium. Also keep the instruments in a nice basket or box and teach your child to replace them gently. You can make your own instruments as well using a simple tube, sealing it on one end and filling it with small items like rice or beans, and then sealing it on the other end. It also is nice to get together with friends and create a "music day", exploring singing and instruments and listening to the sounds of nature. The river especially this time of year is roaring and the migrating birds are fascinating to listen to.

FREE PLAY

This is a moment for you to really look around your home and play spaces and make sure that what you are offering your child to play with still matters to them -- and to you. Sometimes tucking certain toys away and introducing a couple of other things at this time of year makes a big difference in play. This time of year lends itself to building "forts" so make sure you have cloth and clothes pins to do this. Some of you might have play stands and clips but chairs and tables work well too. The cloth ideally is long enough to drape and make a really good roof. A light sheet can work well for this as well. This free play moment is important in that the building time is part of the mathematics time as well as introduces patience and cooperation. It is really fun and takes the edge off of being home on super rainy days.

The brain has the majority of its development in the first five years of a child's life. This is one reason that play is so important. Each time a child creates something new in their play, they are actually also creating a new neural pathway. This, in turn, creates new possibilities for comprehension later. So PLAY!!!

You might take inventory to see if you have enough open ended play items -- or if you have too many. An open ended item is something that a child can turn into anything using their imagination. There are some basic items that help in play. Also, with the outdoor kindergarten/forest movement worldwide, there is the trend to use everything open ended. However a child's play also imitates life and there are basics a child might need. If your child wants a small broom, purchase it! They will put it to good use!

This moment to play is so short in a child's life -- make sure you are getting plenty of it in your daily home school routine. With quality play there is a "hum" in the air of peaceful balance. That's when you know they are fully engaged. A way to help with that is to play yourself, setting something up for them, perhaps singing quietly to yourself. Sometimes a child needs an adult demonstrating play to remind them of being a child again. A goal for the child is to play on their own for at least an hour. Also this is a great moment to have friends over to play. The social weaving of early friendships is a lifelong gift that helps to create connection and confidence in the world and within themselves.

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

The New Year brings a moment to evaluate what is important for your child. In Learning Period #5B, I had you look at that a bit. This learning period should be about implementing it and further examining what works and what does not. The next five learning periods are a time of rapid learning and change for your child. Some of them will be having birthdays and all of them will have a leap in development. The child of January is often completely different than the child of June. And you want that. There is the lovely tendency to want to hang onto Early Childhood for as long as possible. A child grows, though, and has different needs in that growth.

If you are happy with your schedule, keep it. It will bring comfort to your child. However if anything seems not quite right, change it now and create something new. Perhaps your baking day is better on a Friday and painting is better in the afternoon. This is the time period where having a schedule can seem sort of dull to the adults. But it is something a child inwardly needs. They are rapidly completing a stage of physical growth and having a schedule actually helps with that.

Imagination is a wonderful trait. You might see some changes, though, in how your child plays. They may become less like an animal and want to pretend they are people more. This often happens someplace in the 6th year or moving toward the 6th year. This change is a reminder that you also need to remember to introduce those things you might have left out in your curriculum. Perhaps now they will be more ready for it.

PAINTING

"Rainbow, lovely glow,
Put some color in my hand,
Together we'll paint a fairy land"

This is the beautiful opening verse for painting that I learned and have kept. If you would like to call me at (530) 478-1204, I can sing it to you over the phone.

Watercolor painting using Waldorf inspired methods is very satisfying and beautiful. It can also be frustrating at first for adults to demonstrate.

The three primary colors are used - red, yellow and blue. Some catalogs mention "circle red" etc and these colors are fine to use, but I prefer the colors of cadmium red, lemon yellow and cobalt blue. The mixing of these colors can be done in a jar with a lid - put a teaspoon of pigment in to start and a little water to mix. Mix it with a brush and then add more water, put a lid on the jar and shake it. From this jar you pour a small amount into a baby food size jar.

Begin with one color. Use cold pressed paper, gently run it under some water and place it on a masonite painting board where it will stay to dry. Make sure it is as smooth as possible. Demonstrate painting to your child first. I like to begin with the color red. Then in another session, I introduce yellow and then in another blue. Then I start introducing two color combinations together. It might not be in your personality to do it this way, but I have found that for a child, they enjoy the discovery. It is important that they are the ones "Discovering" the color combinations.

I gently introduce the color on the page. You can tell a little story that is also helpful. I have used the color as the guide for the story - for instance referencing the colors in nature and during the seasons. "The winter sun shone brightly through the dew drops of the green cedar trees" could be a beginning of a painting story.

The set up when you introduce a second color includes a jar of water. Learning to dip their brush in the water to rinse it and keep the colors clean can be a year long task for some children. They have a tendency at times to make muddy paintings. This is fine as long as it is part of a painting process and not just intentional all of the time. The goal is a color experience for them rather than creating form.

There will be moments in painting when they have the "perfect" picture color wise. These are the moments you can gently say, "This painting looks complete. Can I get you more paper?" and whisk the masterpiece away. There are other times when they will not be "done" and turn it into a process of painting. This will usually look rather dark and muddy but the process will be complete for them.

Make sure the paintings dry flat and completely. Everyone is surprised that the paintings look so differently after they dry than when they were wet.

Created by Marguerite Vulfs January 2019