

and shape the physical organs. They need teachers who look and act with happiness and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love. Such a love that streams, as it were, with warmth through the physical environment of the children may be said to literally “hatch out” the forms of the physical organs.

RS, *Education of the Child*]

If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of its life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; what matters is what sort of person you are.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood* *The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education* □ 7

Here we may explore the following questions as educators:

- Do happiness and joy live in this group of children and their teachers?
- What are the most joy-filled aspects of the work?
- Which aspects of the work are least permeated with joy?
- How is the teacher’s earnestness and serious striving held in a dynamic balance with humor, happiness, and “honest, unaffected love?”
- Are there moments of laughter and delight in the room? How does humor live in the community of children and adults?

## **Adult Caregivers on a Path of Inner Development**

*For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher’s own being.*

RS, *Essentials of Education*]

*Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: what I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. . . . [W]hat does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in our hearts and minds and affects our world view and the way we stand in life.*

—Rudolf Steiner, “*Education In the Face of the Present Day World Situation*,” June 10, 1920

Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child’s development.

The spiritual environment includes recognition of the child as a threefold being – of body, soul and spirit – on a path of evolutionary development through repeated earth lives. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the kindergarten, and for the relationship between adult and child.

In addition to the questions we have already pondered above, we may ask:

- How is the adult actively engaged in inner development as an early childhood educator, and as a human being?
- How is she cultivating a relationship to the children on a spiritual basis?
- How is the educator working with her colleagues to foster an environment of spiritual striving and a deepened study of child and human development?
- Does she strive to approach her work in such a way that the children in her care are not burdened by unresolved issues in her personal life?
- Do goodness and moral uprightness stream from the being of the teacher? Is her inner and outer activity in coherence with healthy social and ethical values? Is she striving to be an example worthy of the children’s imitation?
- Does the educator love the children? Does she work to create healthy, caring relationships with their parents, with colleagues, and with the community? Does she love the earth, and the world into which the children are incarnating?
- How does she see her relationship to the past, the present, and the future of our human journey?

This is the very challenging realm of self-knowledge and the activity of the individual ego of the adult – a realm where it is difficult to be objective in our observations. Yet ultimately it is this realm that may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer 8 □ WECAN Classic Reprint