

The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center
at



Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher
Education Program

Student Handbook

2024-2025

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 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 janene@sophiashearth.org

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. 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.

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. The advisor guides, in collaboration with the student, the overview of the full program. The advisor will oversee your studies, your classroom teaching, your practicum, your independent research project, curriculum resource notebook and other larger questions as you pursue your work. The relationship requires mutual respect between both parties. Advisors will notify students of expectations and due dates and the students will make every effort to meet them.

Classroom mentor teacher:

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

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

These are your responsibilities regarding Classroom Mentor Teacher 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. This should be no less than 2-3 hours each day. Remember that your mentor has traveled and set aside time for this visit 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.

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 assignment

Each student will develop a reflective self-evaluation using the guidelines below as they look back upon their 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 on 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?

Direct Classroom Teaching 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 Teaching Experience

Each teacher education student at Sophia's Hearth participates in a Classroom Teaching Experience in a context that works out of Waldorf early childhood education. The details of your Classroom Teaching 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):

- Students will spend a minimum of three days each week during the school year in their Classroom Teaching Experience.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience 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. Each classroom day will be defined as at least a full morning or afternoon.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience will include four days of visits by a classroom mentor teacher assigned by Sophia's Hearth.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience Contract will be submitted by September 15.

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 work out a Classroom Teaching Experience plan in writing with the Program Director. This plan will consider prior training and experience.

Classroom Teaching Experience Contract (assignment)

In-Service students will write up their classroom teaching experience and send it to their advisor by September 15. Pre-service students will work out the details with the program director. All contracts should include the following:

- Your name, address, and phone number.
- Program's name, address, and telephone number.
- Primary classroom teacher's contact information (if not yourself) including email and phone.
- Dates for your Classroom Experience: From _____ to _____.
- Weekly schedule and plan for your participation: days/week and hours/day
- The goals you hope to achieve in your classroom experience.

Student's reflection of classroom visitor's visit (assignment):

Each student will write a reflection of the work with their classroom mentor teacher 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.

Practicum in an Established Waldorf Early Childhood Setting

In-Service Students (working in a Waldorf classroom setting at least three days per week):

- A minimum of three weeks (15 days) of observation/practicum experience during the course of study. One week can be in your own school with an experienced Waldorf early childhood teacher guiding you through the practicum.
- A minimum of five days of the practicum should be in the same Birth to Seven classroom that is not located in the student's current work location.

Pre-Service Students (not working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

Students will work out their practicum experience along with their Classroom Teaching Experience with the Program Director. An Institute Advisor will visit at least once during the training.

Birth-to-Three Certificate Student Expectations

Classroom Teaching Experience

Each teacher education student at Sophia's Hearth participates in a Classroom Teaching Experience in a context that works out of Waldorf early childhood education. The details of your Classroom Teaching 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):

- Students will spend a minimum of three days each week during the school year in their Classroom Teaching Experience.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience 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. Each classroom day will be defined as at least a full morning or afternoon.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience will include two days of visits by a classroom mentor teacher assigned by Sophia's Hearth.
- The Classroom Teaching Experience Contract will be submitted by September 15.

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 work out a Classroom Teaching Experience plan in writing with the Director. This plan will consider prior training and experience.

Classroom Teaching Experience Contract (assignment)

In-Service students will write up their classroom teaching experience and send it to their advisor by September 15. Pre-service students will work out the details with the program director. All contracts should include the following:

- Your name, address, and phone number.
- Program's name, address, and telephone number.
- Primary classroom teacher's contact information (if not yourself) including email and phone.
- Dates for your Classroom Experience: From _____ to _____.
- Weekly schedule and plan for your participation: days/week and hours/day
- The goals you hope to achieve in your classroom experience.

Student's reflection of classroom visitor's visit (assignment):

Each student will write a reflection of the work with their classroom mentor teacher 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.

Practicum in an Established Waldorf Early Childhood Setting

In-Service Students (working in a Waldorf classroom setting at least three days per week):

- A minimum of three weeks (15 days) of observation/practicum experience during the course of study. One week can be in your own school with an experienced Waldorf early childhood teacher guiding you through the practicum.
- A minimum of five days of the practicum should be in the same Birth to three classroom that is not located in the student's current work location.

Pre-Service Students (not working in a Waldorf classroom setting):

Students will work out their practicum experience along with their Classroom Teaching Experience with the Program Director. An Institute Advisor will visit at least once during the training.

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICUM AND OBSERVATION VISITS (all students).

This is a golden opportunity to observe this transformative education in practice!

Protocol for these visits:

- Be sure to make clear plans with the teacher whose program you will be visiting, determining when they 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.
- Students should plan on developing an artistic activity, finger games, circle, or a story to present to the class. Please discuss with the teacher ahead of time what you might lead.
- Pre-service students 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. They are engaged in their 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 their 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?
- What are your observations and thoughts on the class you observed?

Practicum & Observation Report (assignment)

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

- 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.

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 includes the course name, instructor, credit hours, and 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-to-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* – for example: anecdotal descriptions, results of a survey you have conducted.
- *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-to-15-minute oral sharing for the spring session of Birth-to-Three and for the fourth summer session for Birth-to-Seven.

Curriculum Resource File: Organizing your curriculum materials for teaching.

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

You will need a loose-leaf binder with dividers or computer file system (or we invite you to develop another personal approach to organizing material as a support for your experience). The resource files 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 resource file 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 File should support your work 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.

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

KEY DATES:

September 15th – Classroom teaching 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 – Graduating Research 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 – Graduating Students Research Project: Written Research Project submitted for review to Advisor. Advisors will review work and give recommendations as to any changes needed.

July 1st – Graduating Students Research Project due to Advisor and Katherine Scharff

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

Tuition is charged for the entire program. The tuition agreement/acceptance letter that is signed at enrollment locks in the rate of tuition for the program assuming the student will be completing on schedule. If completion of the program is delayed the tuition rate will be adjusted to correspond with the new cohort (see leave of absence). If a student chooses to withdraw, a percentage of tuition is due (see withdrawal).

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.

*** PROGRAM COMPLETION CERTIFICATES WILL NOT BE PROVIDED UNTIL STUDENTS MEET ALL ACADEMIC AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS ***

Leave of Absence

Due to changes in the program to meet Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) requirements for both the Birth to Three and the Birth to Seven program, the following rules will be in effect for students wishing to take a leave of absence.

Sophia's Hearth understands that students may need to step away from their studies for any number of personal or professional reasons. However, due to ongoing changes to the program and requirements by the WECAN, students who leave for more than two years may be required to do substantial additional work.

Students who enroll starting after 11/1/19:

The student should notify the Program Director to request a leave of absence.

Students are expected, per their enrollment agreement, to continue the monthly payments established at enrollment.

Payments may be reduced as the enrollment will be extended. This can be discussed with the Business Manager and confirmed when the leave of absence is requested.

Students are invited to stay in touch and notify the Program Director when they are able to return to and take up active participation in the program. At least one month's notice should be given to allow staff to prepare for their return.

Tuition will be reset to the tuition for the current cohort.

Students who have enrolled prior to 11/1/19 and will rejoin the program in Summer Session 2020 or later:

Students are invited to stay in touch and notify the Program Director when they are able to return to and take up active participation in the program. At least one month's notice should be given to allow staff to prepare for their return.

Additional weeks of attendance may be required to meet programing changes. This should be discussed with the Program Director to determine when and how much additional attendance is required.

The Tuition rate will be adjusted to the current established rate for the cohort the student is joining. All tuition paid previously will be applied to the new rate.

Withdrawal from Program

It is our hope that all students who enroll in our programs will be able to complete the full program they commit to. We recognize that this may not always be the case as life happens in unexpected ways. However, Sophia's Hearth commits a great deal of time and resources to the support of students throughout their program enrollment and therefore cannot accept a stopping of payments when the student withdraws.

Tuition due at withdrawal will be calculated as a percentage based on the following table. The calculation will be based on the total tuition for the program the student was enrolled in. Tuition assistance from the Macalaster Weber Scholarship fund will not be considered paid towards tuition, as the award is forfeit upon withdrawal. AWSNA and other payments will be counted towards tuition amount due. It is the student's obligation to meet the requirements of these awards.

Birth-to-Seven Program

Date of Withdrawal (on or before)	Percentage of Tuition Due
Year 1 - Aug 1	10%
Year 1 - Sep 1	14%
Year 1 - Nov 1	25%
Year 1 - Mar 1	30%
Year 1 - June 1	40%
Year 2 - Aug 1	Rate for Birth to Three Program
Year 3 - Aug 1	80%
Year 3 - Jan 1	84%
Year 3 - Feb 1	90%
Year 3 - Jun 1	95%

Birth-to-Three Program

Date of Withdrawal (on or before)	Percentage of Tuition Due
Year 1 - Aug 1	19%
Year 1 - Sep 1	27%
Year 1 - Nov 1	40%
Year 1 - Mar 1	58%
Year 1 - June 1	75%

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 of unsatisfactory performance in the teacher education program:

- 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 classroom teaching or 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.