



CUAN NA GAILLIMHE CNS

A STEINER EDUCATION

NEWSLETTER SPRING SUMMER 2021



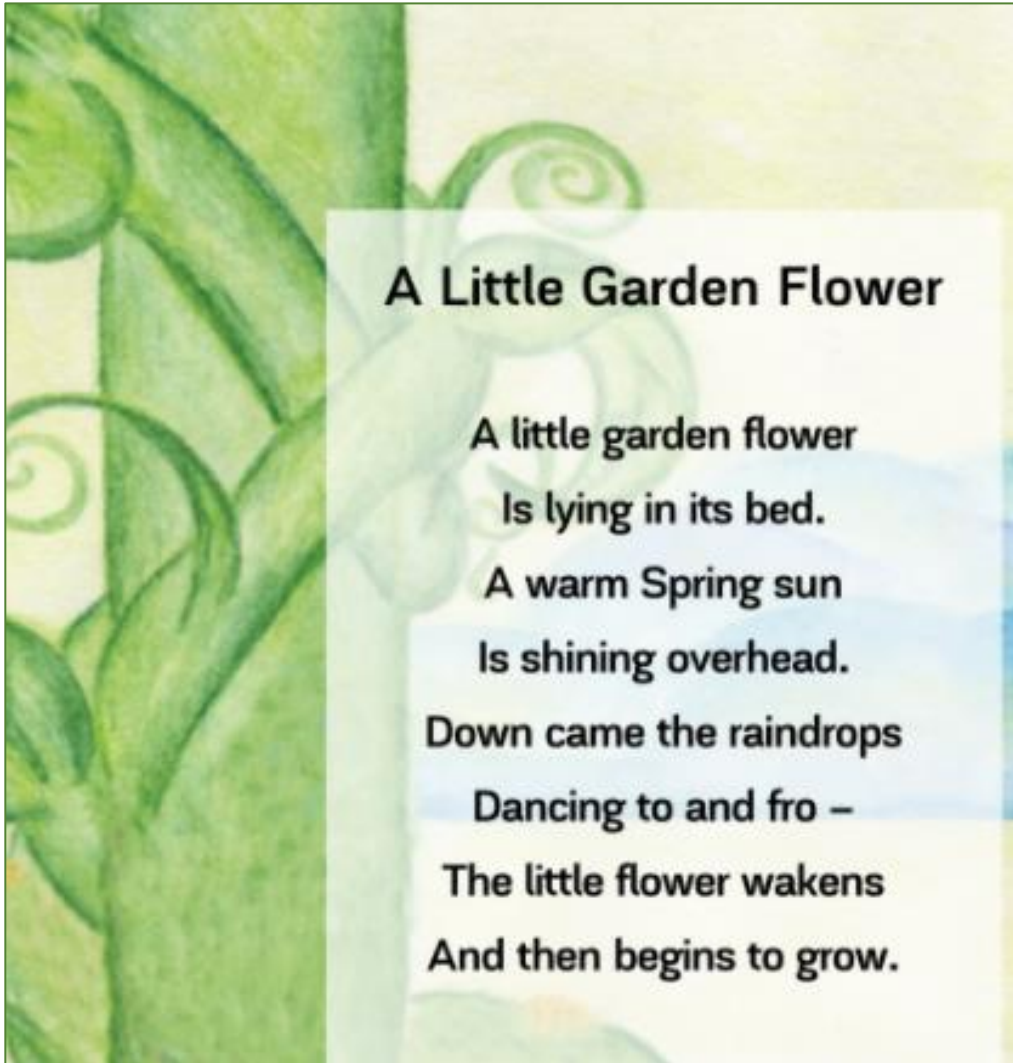
Welcome to the Spring Summer edition of our newsletter.

We are looking forward to meeting our incoming pupils in May as we get ready for the next school year. Currently, we still have space in our infant classes.

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VERSE



Author unknown.



PLACEMENT REFLECTION



My Name is Jenny Cunningham. I am currently in my final year of study to become a primary school teacher. I am completing my studies in Mary Immaculate College in Limerick and I chose to do my final school placement in my hometown of Galway. I was delighted to get the opportunity to explore Steiner education in the wonderful Cuan na Gaillimhe.

My time and at C.N.S was an experience like no other and it is something I will take with me throughout my future teaching and personal life. Teaching at a Steiner school was a completely different teaching experience to anything that I was used to. I learnt a variety of new skills and got loads of amazing ideas!

Throughout the nine weeks that I taught at C.N.S we did daily forest and nature walks to Barna woods, many of our daily lessons would take place here and I used natural materials such as leaves and sticks as resources for my lessons. We explored leaf identification, bug and minibeast study and learnt all about the different types of birds in our surrounding areas. Music and rhythm are a huge part of the daily life of children at C.N.S and this is integrated into every subject. We also set up a gardening club and engaged in activities such as planting vegetable beds, making bird feeders, creating a bug hotel, as well as making our own compost!

The team of staff at C.N.S were so welcoming and friendly, they helped me with any issues I had and encouraged me to explore the Steiner methods! The skills that are taught at C.N.S are skills that the children will have for life and holistic learning is a huge part of their ethos. I really loved how student centred and age appropriate their methods are and I would love to return in the future!



AN EASTER STORY: THE EASTER HARE

A long, long, long time ago there was a Mother Hare who had seven little hare children. One clear autumn day she said to her children, "I wonder who will be the Easter Hare from now on?" "Me! Me! Me!" they all cried at the same time, but the Mother said, "Hush, hush... , the one who can bring their Easter egg safely to the children's garden and who can hide it well in the grass, will be the next Easter Hare."

The first hare took the pink egg. He hopped over the bridge, ran through the bush and came straight to the children's garden. There was a tall fence all around the garden. The hare made a big jump, but he jumped too high and when he landed on the other side the pink egg had broken. When the Mother saw the broken egg she said, "You will have to wait a little longer until you can be the Easter Hare."



The next hare took the blue egg. He hopped over the bridge and into the bush. High up in a tree a bird sat in her nest. When he saw the hare with the egg she called out, 'Give me the egg, give me the egg!'. Before the hare knew what was happening to him, the bird had flown down and taken the egg in her beak and had carried it up to the nest. When the Mother heard about this she said, "You will have to wait a little longer too".

The third hare took the purple egg and hopped over the bridge and into the bush. There he met a friend who said, "Let's wrestle and play a little while". Before long they had wrestled and played, rolling along the ground until they rolled right over the purple egg and broke it!

The Mother Hare was not pleased about this and she gave the next egg to the fourth hare. This was a chocolate egg. The hare carried the egg over the bridge and into the bush. Who was waddling in the farmyard next door? It was a big fat pig. "Please let me try just a little bit of the chocolate egg," he asked. Well, the pig licked a bit and the hare licked a bit, and the pig licked a bit more and the hare licked a bit more... until they realized, they had eaten all of the egg! When the hare came home with a

ring of chocolate around his little whiskers the Mother said, "You will have to wait a little longer too until you can be the Easter hare."

The next hare took the orange egg. On the middle of the bridge he looked down into the sparkling water watching the little fishes swimming merrily to and fro. Rolllll... Plop! The egg fell out of the hare's paws and into the water and floated down the river. He surely could not be the Easter hare either.

The second last hare had fallen asleep in the Easter basket, so he had missed his turn.

The last and youngest hare took the golden egg. He hopped over the bridge and he did not look down into the river. He hopped into the bush and when the fat pig came and begged for the egg, he said, "I have no time, I have something very important to do" And hopped on. He met a friend who wanted to play, but this hare said, "I have no time, I have something very important to do". When the bird called from the nest, "Give me the egg!" the hare held onto his golden egg tightly and so he finally arrived at the garden. He jumped over the fence, not too high and not too low, just right. He landed softly in the grass on the other side and carefully hid the egg.

When he returned home his Mother was very pleased and said, "This year you will be the Easter Hare." The children were very happy too. They came running into the garden and when they found the golden egg hidden in the grass they exclaimed, "Hurray! It's Easter time again!"



Photo: Handcrafts completed by staff at Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS – a Steiner education during Ulrike Farnleitner's visit to our school in March 2019

HISTORY OF MAY DAY

May Day Song

Here's a branch of snowy May, a branch the fairies gave me.
Who would like to dance today with a branch the fairies gave me. Dance away,
dance away, holding high the branch of May.

-Author Unknown



May Day is a Northern Hemisphere festival (and is also called International Workers' Day) and is celebrated in many Steiner Waldorf schools. It is an ancient tradition of celebrating the arrival of summer. Known as Beltane in Celtic lands, and celebrated by the Romans recognizing the goddess Flora, May Day is a popular tradition. The May Pole Dance is a joyful experience, and often the centre of the May Day celebration. The May Pole often bears garlands and symbolizes the tree of life and growth of spring vegetation.

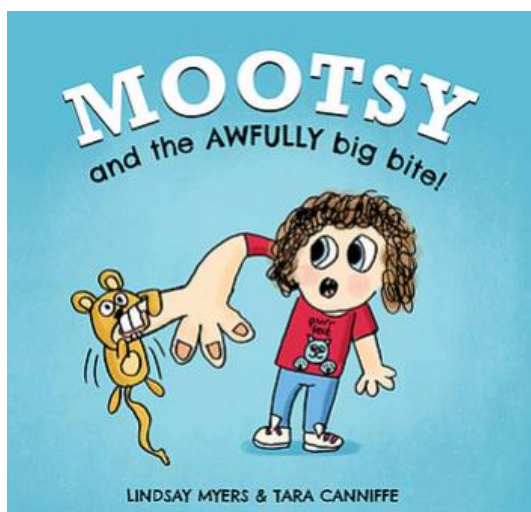
Mayday dancing includes musicians playing folk music, and dancers carry decorated sticks. Many wear floral crowns and some appoint a May Queen or May fairy to oversee the celebrations and dancing.



May Day brings promise to the farmer (good weather) and to the people weaving the pattern around the Maypole. It is the eternal promise of the future.

UPCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

A past pupil of our school, along with her Mum, have recently published a book 'Mootsie and the AWFULLY big bite'.



Lindsay Myers and her daughter Tara Canniffe are donating all proceeds of the book to the Galway Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (GSPCA). If it is something you would like to support please take a look at the [website](#) to purchase a copy.

About the Author:

Lindsay Myers is a lecturer in Italian and Children's Studies at the National University of Ireland, Galway. This is her first book for children and it is dedicated to her childhood pet, Mootsie, the gerbil whose awfully big bite caused her to change her perspective on many things.

About the Illustrator:

Tara Canniffe has been drawing ever since she can remember and thinks it is the best hobby in the world. She does not own a gerbil but she does have a guinea pig called Rascal, who also has very big teeth.



Weekend in the Hills 2021

This popular two day event is held at Slieve Aughty Centre, an eco-friendly and certified organic venue, situated 10 km outside Loughrea town in county Galway. Those attending the events (May 8th & 9th 2021), spend one or two days (depending on the course) learning their chosen skill. Most students go home with a finished piece, although this is not the objective of the event. The aim is to teach the techniques and skills needed to go home and pursue the craft or subject studied over the weekend.

For more information and booking please take a look at their [website](#).

PLAY, GAMES & SPORTS IN CHILDHOOD – THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME

By Jaimen McMillan RSMT, RSME and Adam MacKinnon
(www.steinerwaldorf.org)

As parents and educators our challenge is to help our children develop into healthy, happy, free adult human beings. To do that, we have to realize that a child is not a miniature adult, but a unique, developing being who has to go through a process of becoming a mature human being.

The infant, the young child and even the adolescent are to some degree “outside” themselves. They are in a process of incarnation, of bringing into their growing and changing physical bodies other dimensions of their being—energetic, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

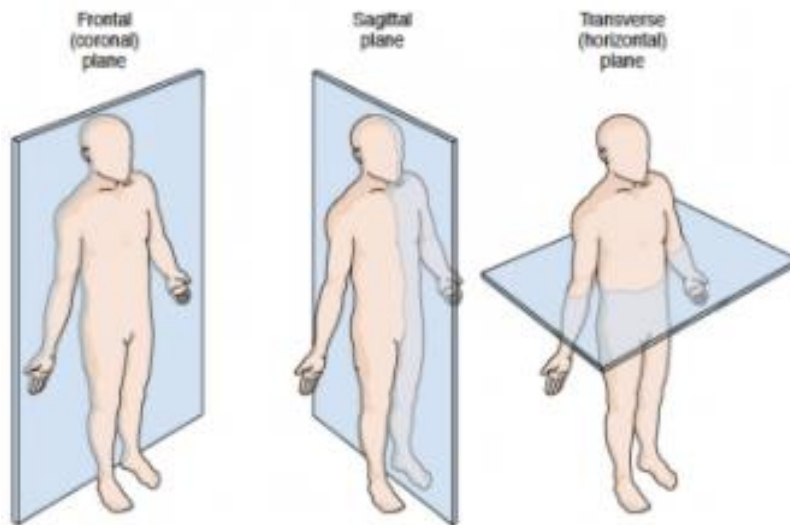
Rudolf Treichler, a psychiatrist who was a student of Rudolf Steiner, held that parents can help children by bringing them IN in such a way that they can go OUT again freely, IN enough so that the children are really present in their bodies (fully incarnated), and OUT in such a way that they can come back in. This rhythmical breathing of OUT and IN is necessary in becoming a mature, free adult.

If children are not brought in to their bodies in a timely way, they may ‘hover’ on the periphery of life—seeming dreamy, perhaps lazy, or even disengaged. On the other hand, if the outside world drives them in too much, they can get stuck, and then they can’t get back OUT in a healthy way. They may then seek inappropriate ways to get out, such as alcohol and drug abuse.

A predictable, observed daily schedule with established times for meals, play, going to bed, and getting up support a healthy “going in” and “going out.” Family time sharing experiences of the day in relaxed conversation is also good. Screen time with computers, smart phones, and television, especially for the young child is not helpful. The more time spent in front of a screen, the harder time the children will have to go “out”, to enter, for example into imaginative play or deep sleep. It is important that parents be role models in these areas.

One way children venture ‘out’ is through healthy movement. As a child grows and develops, there is a deepening relationship to the three planes of space: progressing

from the horizontal (transverse) plane; to the frontal (coronal) plane, and finally to the symmetry (sagittal) plane.



Birth to Seven – Mastering the Horizontal (Transverse) Plane

Until children are six or seven they are mainly involved in mastering the first plane of space, the transverse plane, the plane that unites UP and DOWN and involves balance. Play is the work of young children. Their primary task is to find and experience a balance between levity and gravity, and they seek out activities that help them do so. They love to climb—trees, monkey bars and the like—and to jump down. They love swings, slides, and teeter totters. For parents a good general rule is—let the children do what they love to do in nature or in a playground even if it may seem to involve some minor risk. It is what they need. Look for their rosy cheeks. When the children create their own relationship with above and below they are simply joyous. Anything that has to do with balance is helpful learning for them. Balance is the basis of every activity in life.

Adults have to provide opportunities for the children to fall down—even get hurt a little bit, without seriously injuring themselves of course. The experience of falling is really important. They need to hurt themselves just enough to learn consequences. A little bit of struggle, a little bit of disappointment—even temporary failure—is exactly what they need to find their own feet, and their way in life.

With infants, parents should see that the child spends time on its tummy as well as on its back. This switching of position challenges the child in important ways to deal with up and down. It is also helpful in integrating reflexes. Tummy time will help the infant develop the ability to lift up its (relatively) heavy head.

Even the simplest movement one does with babies, for example rocking them up and down gently, with subtle hovering pauses, can be a comforting and effective aid to helping them befriend the horizontal (transverse) plane.

Seven to Fourteen — Mastering the Frontal (Coronal) Plane

Moving the frontal plane involves fluctuating between the front and back across a central plane. During the second seven-year period of development, children love games that involve forward and backward movement. One excellent game for children during this time is “Mother, May I?” It exists in variations in cultures all over the world. The aim of the game and the desire of the children is to come forward, but they can do so only when given permission by the “Mother.” The Mother gives instructions and the other children must strictly follow them. The game is also an exercise in self-control. The children have to ask permission.

Hide and seek is another perfect game for the frontal plane game, as is Tag. Red Light/Green Light is another great activity through which children can learn to rein themselves in within the borders of the frontal plane. The fact that this and similar games are played by children all over the world, even when adults are not around to organize them, shows that, at some level the children realize that learning to master the frontal plane is important for them. I once had the joy and challenge of teaching a second-grade class that had a pupil who had serious problems controlling himself I introduced the game Red Light/Green Light to the children and this boy responded with “I hate this game! This is a stupid game.” However, one day we did not have the time to play Red Light/Green Light and this same untamed boy came up to me, tears streaming down his face, and said, ‘We didn’t play that game where I have to stop myself!’”

The key is to get children moving and for them to learn to control their movements -to be able, by themselves to stop on a dime. When they can, they have mastered the frontal (coronal) plane.

Fourteen to Twenty-One — Mastering the Symmetry / Sagittal Plane

The sagittal plane creates the symmetry between right and left and directs the young person forward with intention. In the middle school and high school years, the adolescent needs to learn to focus, aim, and direct his/her force towards definite goals. Fencing and archery are two activities that challenge young people at this time and can help them move through this stage. In fencing, one turns one’s body onto the sagittal plane and seeks to touch the other fencer, with precision, at lightning speed. In archery, one stands still but sends the arrow out along the plane. Basketball is another excellent activity during this period. The adolescent learns to extend him/herself forward in an arc, directing the ball toward the basket. The sagittal /symmetry plane is the plane that demands and develops precision. Mastery of this exacting plane can come only after healthy relationships to the other two planes have been developed. Baseball, Volleyball, Tennis, and Soccer (without “heading” the ball!) are some of the other competitive sports that also develop mastery of the sagittal plane.

Timing

Thus, from infancy through age seven, the child is finding balance in the horizontal/transverse plane. The next phase requires that the child learn to find the middle between forward and backward, developing restraint and self-control through an experience of the frontal/coronal plane. Then comes the satisfaction of setting a goal and going after it along the sagittal or symmetry plane. The important thing is that the intensive work on the symmetry plane comes after mastery of the other two planes. This brings us to the question: At what age should a child begin participating in organized competitive sports teams?

The dominant trend in North America is “the earlier the better.” This trend is based on the idea that if a child learns and develops the basic skills of a sport at an early age, he or she will be able to play at a very high level later on.

There are a couple of problems with this hurried approach. One is that, if a child has been playing on a soccer team since age six, for example (not at all uncommon today), then by high school he or she may have burned out and may even have lost all joy in playing. Many high schools are in fact discovering that fewer and fewer students are trying out for school athletic teams. They have had enough! There is an emotional element also. Young children may experience losing a game or making a crucial mistake in a game as much more distressing and traumatic than we adults can imagine.

Another problem is that the bodies of young children, bodies that are still growing and developing, are not up to the demands of recurrent practices, repetitive drills, and intense competition in games. Injuries sustained by over-training in childhood can last a lifetime. Movement therapists are seeing serious injuries among teenagers caused by the overuse of muscles and joints that hadn't developed enough to support the kinds of stresses that competitive sports were putting on them.

The following analogy may give a helpful perspective on having children begin playing on sports teams before they are twelve years old.

“I love butterflies, so I collect caterpillars, and I tape my caterpillars onto kites, and I fly the caterpillars up in the sky on these kites, so that they will fly better when they are butterflies!”

This is obviously ludicrous, but why then are we hoodwinked by the premise and the promise that children will do better at some do we think that children will do better at something if they do it earlier and earlier? Why can't we just let a caterpillar be a caterpillar? Why can't we just let a child be a child?”

Of course, children under twelve can play baseball, basketball, or volleyball, for example and enjoy themselves. But engaging in these sports as “play” is much different from being thrust into organized sports events for the sake of competition. When children are

playing together and become tired, they'll stop, naturally, on their own, when their body tells them to. But on organized teams, the child has to go till the clock stops, or the coach finishes the drills. In playing a game, children are simply having fun changing the rules to fit their abilities. In organized sports the emphasis is on competition, on winning, on overwhelming the other team, and the rules are immutable.

Also, when a child begins to engage in organized team sports, he/she starts to absorb the underlying philosophy of competitive sport. Simply stated, it is "This side is mine, that side is yours. I will defend my side, and I will attack yours." or "We are in a battle and my aim to overwhelm and subdue you."

Instead, why don't we simply teach the children to play together, before we put children into set frameworks where the goal is to defeat the other? Circus arts can play an integrating role here. In such activities, children can be challenged at every level, and everyone is a winner.

Age-Appropriate phases of Movement

As children develop, they need to go through the phases of movement activities in a wholesome, age-appropriate way. First, in early childhood they should engage in imaginative and free play, in nature as well as indoors, pretending they are animals kings, queens, knights, damsels, and dragons. Outdoor-play, especially in natural settings is very important. Nature is still the best teacher. Then can come such games as "Mother, May I?" and "Hide and Seek", which have flexible rules and no "winners" and "losers." Then can come informal team games, with flexible rules and an emphasis on everyone having fun, rather than on competition. Finally, when the child is approaching or in puberty organized team sports can come into the picture. Eurythmy, Bothmer Gymnastics® and Spacial Dynamics® are separate and unique disciplines that work together in Waldorf schools to address the inner and outer development of the child.

Learning the INs and OUTs of the dynamic progression from child, to youth, to teen, to adult, is an exciting journey. Today there is much peer pressure for children to join competitive teams at an ever earlier age. Parents should insist on their right to allow their child to develop at her own pace. Telling a child "Not now, that needs to wait" may be one of the most important parenting decisions mothers and fathers will ever make. Every age comes with an expiration date. Each child is a "caterpillar", not a little adult. Parents can create the spaces and the opportunities for their child to fully benefit from every stage before it is time for them to move on to the next one. The stakes are high. The prize is having a real childhood.

