



Wasatch

charter school

SPRING/SUMMER 2026 | ISSUE 4



*“Dance away, dance away holding high the branch of
May” – May Fair song lyric*

Photo By Shannon D’Amico May Fair 2026

WHY GIVING BACK TO OUR PUBLIC WALDORF SCHOOL MATTERS TO MAC GAULIN:

BY MAC GAULIN
CHAIR OF THE WCS BOARD

It has been my honor to work as a board member alongside the incredible faculty and staff at WCS for the last 6 years. As I enter my last year, I feel both appreciative of the profound experiences that our children are accruing, and wistful in thinking about my own journey through Waldorf education, from 5th through 12th grade.

When I graduated from Austin Waldorf High School, I had, under my belt, experience in seemingly every art: dance (not just Eurythmy!), theater, choir, orchestra, jazz improv, watercolor, oil painting, stone carving, sand sculpting, blacksmithing, chip carving, carpentry (yes, that's art), and surely others I've forgotten. But I hadn't taken any chemistry, and our biology class was primarily about making wine (to be fair, I was in the third graduating high school class, so it was a transition period and they do teach chemistry now).

While that might sound like a terrible recipe for a kid who was about to head off to become an Electrical Engineer, I had absolutely no qualms. I knew that I would figure it out: that's what Waldorf taught me to do. I went off to college bragging that while they might have learned from textbooks, I had been writing my own since fifth grade (what else is a main lesson book?). But even knowing how unique my education had been, I was still jarred by just how large a difference my approach to learning was compared to most of my peers. Where I sought fundamental understanding, others looked to memorize. Where I delighted in finding connections between classes and subjects, others liked the silos: finish a class and move on.

“Because of Waldorf education and Steiner's methods, I have an instinctual awe for the physical world and a passion for creating and sustaining community.”



Mr. Mutua's Meadow class engaged in their chemistry block. Science in our middle school is hands on, students learn the 'how' and 'why' by experience. Photo by Shannon D'Amico

Now, all these years later, as a research professor teaching undergrads, I lament what I see as a lack of curiosity for that deeper understanding and the eagerness to engage. I am increasingly grateful that my early years on this earth were spent in discovering and creating beauty, not memorizing valence electron configurations (I'm told those are chemistry words; I wouldn't know). Because of Waldorf education and Steiner's methods, I have an instinctual awe for the physical world and a passion for creating and sustaining community.

And so I wanted to take a moment to reiterate just how special the Wasatch Waldorf School is and how lucky all of our children are to be a part of it, growing their appreciation of the world and each other. And I want to thank each of you for every effort you put into making this community shine and for the honor of getting to be a part of it.

THE PARENTING PAUSE

HOLDING THE RHYTHM OF SUMMER

BY MARLA MACDONALD
EARLY CHILDHOOD & PARENT EDUCATOR

As a child I remember the long, hot summer days I spent in Mapleton, Utah, roaming the corn and alfalfa fields and making little fairy dolls from hollyhocks. I remember climbing the apple trees and picking cherries in the neighbor's orchard. I remember making sand pies and cakes with the sand pile my dad dumped in the gravel driveway for his next brick masonry job. I remember chasing the wild cats next door trying to catch one to keep for a pet; summer seemed so long. I felt I had the freedom to just be a kid. When it was time to return to school, I was excited and happy to go back. Times have changed but children's needs have not.

Children long for the freedom of summer with time to play and explore their world. They need a more relaxed rhythm, and enough boredom to discover their own creativity, and their hidden sense of self, which cannot be discovered when the child is rushed from one activity to the next.

I know some parents who feel a need to take the child from place to place and to entertain them constantly, and therefore, the parents and children are not refreshed by the summer, but exhausted.

When we do not provide structure with loving authority, we can go too far with too much freedom, and our child will feel out of control. They may show us with meltdowns or by ruling the household with their upsets. Two very important ways we exercise loving authority are by holding clear and loving boundaries, and by creating a rhythmic life, even during the summer activities and travels we may take.

What are rhythms? They are predictable moments in our day that bring consistency. Times to connect and share. Times to share nourishment at meals and family times. Times to be together. A pause in the busyness of life to reset and connect.

What are boundaries? The NO that keeps our children from their own obsessions and constant going and going. The NO that protects our child's well-being. The NO that says "now it is time for us." Boundaries protect children from their own immaturity and allow them to relax and be children.

What parents can do to help children with the transition into summer and back to school again:

- Keep mealtimes consistent.
- Allow 10 to 12 hours of sleep; bedtime may be a bit later, but the young child still needs to get that much sleep.
- Plan a rest time or quiet time after lunch for all ages. It is so restorative for parents too.
- Start the day with a walk.
- Choose activities that you as a parent enjoy too; hiking, picnics, swimming, biking,
- Go Camping — anything to get the children outside and moving.

Oftentimes we see summer as a time for novelty but as Kim John Payne, author of *Simplicity Parenting*, describes one of the most meaningful things for our growing children is to return to places they have already been. An annual summer roadtrip can build a sense of self and place in a child that the constant stream of newness cannot.



SUMMER READING THROUGH THE GRADES

RACHEL FLEMING
WCS LITERACY SPECIALIST

Summer is an opportunity for students to read one on one with caregivers and enhance reading skills developed during the school year. Reading together as a family can form an essential part of the fabric of a daily summer rhythm.

Children look forward to hearing stories that enliven their sense of wonder and empathy, giving them a window into other places, people, and cultures. The bonding experience of hearing books read aloud at bedtime also increases children's vocabulary, comprehension, and ability to focus

while nurturing their own desires to become lifelong readers. When children engage in the reading process themselves, this can prevent the "summer slide." A recent study found that 3rd to 5th grade students lose about 20 percent of their school-year reading gains over summer break, and this can lead to increased learning gaps over time.

We ask Wasatch families to commit to 20 minutes of reading a day, either together or independently depending on the child's reading level.

Grade 1

Fairy and Folk Tales, Nature Stories, Alphabet Books, Poetry, and Picture Books read aloud or alone.

The right book for this age carries that enchanted quality: characters with one luminous trait, plots that resolve, language that rings. Whether a tale is heard or slowly sounded out, what nourishes most is the imaginative picture it leaves behind.

Grade 2

Fables, Legends of Saints and Heroes, Folk Tales, Poetry, Early Readers, and Picture Books read aloud or alone.

Books that hold this polarity, where the foolish and the wise, the brave and the timid — meet children right where they are. An ear for rhythm and wordplay is blossoming, and poetry read aloud continues to nourish it.

Grade 3

Creation Stories, Nature and Farming Tales, Practical Life Stories, Early Chapter Books, and Poetry.

Books rooted in the practical and the purposeful — in how things are made, grown, and tended — answer a deep need in the third grader. Chapter books that can be carried forward across several evenings begin to suit them well.

Grade 4

Mythology, Animal Stories, Local History and Geography, Chapter Books, and Poetry.

They are ready for heroes with flaws, for conflict without easy resolution, for the tension between fate and will. Independent reading is taking hold, and chapter books with momentum and character carry them forward.

Grade 5

Mythology, Biography, Historical Fiction, Nature Writing, and Chapter Books.

Fifth grade brings a kind of golden balance: children at this age carry an emerging clarity of thought alongside a still-warm imaginative life. Biography begins to matter. This is a ripe age for falling in love with a book and reading long into the evening.

Grade 6

Adventure and Exploration, Biography, Historical Fiction, and Longer Novels.

Sixth graders are growing into a new relationship with cause and effect, justice, law, and the way the world is organized. Books with moral weight, in which characters must navigate competing loyalties and make consequential choices, begin to resonate in a new way.

Grade 7

Age of Exploration, Biography, World Literature, Adventure, and Young Adult Fiction.

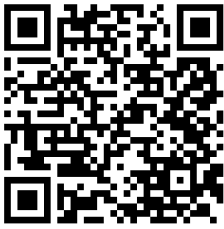
The seventh grader is moving towards self-awareness, curiosity, and sometimes restlessness. Age-of-exploration narratives offer models of individuals who dared to see the world differently. Fiction suitable for this age engages the growing capacity for empathy and moral nuance.

Grade 8

Revolutionary History, Social Justice, Coming-of-Age Fiction, Memoir, Biography, and Longer Novels.

By eighth grade, young people are ready to grapple with the full weight of history and the complexity of what it means to be human. Books that do not shy away from struggle, injustice, or the ambiguity of real lives are not too much for them; often, they are exactly what is needed.

SUMMER READING: BOOK LISTS & PROGRAMS



Waldorf School Reading List Through the Grades:

Created by the Denver Waldorf School's Library Committee and teachers.

An extensive resource for books that align with the developing child and curriculum, organized by grade. With multiple categories in each section, there sure to be something on this list to get readers in your house excited.

Summer Reading Through the County & City Libraries:

Use the digital record found on the Beanstack app or obtain a reading record from your local library. Record your reading activities and return it to the library to receive a free book and prizes! Participate in both the county library programs and the city library program!



Utah State Fair Park (Grades 1-6):

Read 10 books and return the form to earn one children's admission to the Utah State Fair, a free drink coupon, a free carnival ride coupon, bookmark, and a giant yellow slide coupon. The form can be filled out online or you can mail a paper version.

Barnes and Noble Summer Reading (Grades 1-6):

Children read a designated number of books, write about their favorite part in the Reading Journal, and bring a completed Reading Journal to a Barnes & Noble then choose their free book from the books listed on the Reading Journal. Readers may collect their book in July and August.



Book Your Summer:

Register for the summer reading program at your local library. Then enter for a chance at one of six regional \$2,000 my529 scholarships. One entry per reader, age 18 and under (born on or after May 1, 2008).

Book Your Summer runs May 1, 2026, through July 31.



WCS 8th graders launching down the river – photos by Kadi Samake

“The time for us has come to part,
this day’s work shines in our hearts.
Blessings on our day,
And peace upon the earth.”

Magnolia Class closing verse from
first grade

OFF YOU GO, INTO OUR WORLD THAT NEEDS YOU.

TO OUR GRADUATING EIGHTH GRADERS
PONDEROSA CLASS (FRAU MAAR) &
MAGNOLIA CLASS (MS. WOODS)

“As the saying goes, the days are often long, but the years are short. We only need to look at the remarkable physical growth of our students to remind us of that...” *excerpt from Rounding Out Another Year by Liz Beaven*

It seems fitting that in the last week’s our eighth grade class experiences a campout. They sit small, even in their growing bodies, under towering red rock walls that command a certain awe from all who stand near. Here there is a river, a flow that has carved those walls into what they are in this moment.

There on the sandy shores, each child steps into their boat. A life jacket for safety, a paddle in hand for steering, and a plan to contribute to the whole. Navigating with their chosen crew to a destination with skill and excitement.

Of course, this is not only a description of a river trip. It is a picture of what we hope for every child who leaves our care. The world is wide and at times asks something of us we did not know we had and oftentimes to find inside bravery and courage. May they find their footing in the current, trust their paddle, and look out for the ones beside them knowing many are behind them ready to help. So off you go dear children, into our world that needs you.



Class of 2026 around the evening campfire – photos by Kadi Samake

“May you stay compassionate and curious.
May you stay courageous and kind.
May you meet the world with open eyes
and a strong and steady mind.

And when life asks who you have become,
may you answer brave and free:

“I know myself. I know my worth.
The future is waiting for me.”

Excerpt from Frau Maar’s letter, “For the
Graduating Ponderosa Pines”