Wasatch charter school

FALL 2026 | ISSUE 6



"...We can look to one another, ignite our inner light of kindness, compassion, and hope, and share that warmth with the world."

—Mia Merchant, Class Teacher

Photo by Shannon D'Amico

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW WCS BOARD CHAIR: HOW DOES THE BOARD SUPPORT OUR SCHOOL?

Dear Wasatch families,

I'm excited to introduce myself as the new chair of the Wasatch governing board—and as someone who may already be familiar to many of you! I'm a former Wasatch special education teacher, and this school community has been an important part of my life for many years. Now retired, I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling, and volunteering. In addition to serving on the governing board, I also volunteer with adults with disabilities. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue giving back to a community I care deeply about.

One of my goals this year is to help clarify the Board's role and make it more visible to our families and staff.
So, what does the governing board do? Think of Wasatch as a ship. Our executive director and staff are the captain and crew—they run the ship every day, make the day-to-day decisions, and care for our students and families. The governing board is the lookout in the crow's nest. We help keep an eye on the bigger picture, make sure the school is headed in a healthy direction, and help identify challenges and opportunities along the way.

This year, I hope to help build stronger bridges of communication, connection, and trust among our board, staff, and families. The governing board isn't here to run the school day-to-day. Our role is to provide thoughtful oversight, support strong leadership, and help safeguard the long-term health and vision of Wasatch Charter School.

Most importantly, I want families to know that we are here, we are listening, and we care deeply about the future of our school.

I'm honored to serve in this role and look forward to getting to know more of you throughout the year. Thank you for being part of the Wasatch community and for all that you do to make it such a special place for our children.

Warmly,
Vivian Gayol
Governing Board Chair
Wasatch Charter School



Vivian Gayol, Governing Board Chair
Wasatch Charter School

Five key areas upheld by our board:

LEGAL & COMPLIANCE:
Making sure the school meets state charter requirements and other legal obligations.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP:
Overseeing the school's budget and financial health, and helping ensure long-term stability.

STRATEGIC VISION & FUNDRAISING:
Working with school leadership on long-term goals, enrollment, fundraising, and the resources needed for the school's future.

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT & POLICY:
Hiring, evaluating, and supporting our executive director and establishing high-level policies, while leaving the daily operation of the school to our administration and staff.

WALDORF PRINCIPLES & CULTURE:
Helping ensure that long-term decisions remain grounded in the Waldorf principles and values that make our school unique.

In addition to the many duties/responsibilities of the governing board, one of its key responsibilities is to ensure WCS is meeting and/or exceeding the benchmarks and goals established throughout its charter.



Photo by Shannon D'Amico

YEAR-END GIVING: COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

BY HEATHER CAMPBELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Imagine for a moment what we could do together. If all 380 of our families gave, our Sustainer Fund could grow substantially bigger. **Currently we have 78 (21%) of our families donating.** We would love to see this number around 50%.

Families, you are an important light. Any amount is welcome and helpful. If you'd like a guide, we suggest $15 a month, or $180 a year, per student. For new sustainers at the *Sprout Support Level - $25/month* we are gifting you a special table-top calendar (5"x7") showcasing chalkboard artistry from our school teachers over the years.

We invite you to let your gratitude light the way for our school. Please visit the *Help Us Grow* page on our school website to donate. Also, please check if your employer offers a gift-matching program. Employer matches are an excellent way to double the impact of your contributions to our school.

If you are ready to make your tax-deductible gift today, scan the QR code below and become a sustaining member of our community.

Your generosity allows our children to learn through the rhythm, beauty, and wonder our teachers bring to life each day.

Gratitude lights the way

Our teachers make our school glow. Your donations support them directly and help us continue to improve the quality of education we provide to your children.

$15	**Professional development book for teachers.** *(Seedling Sustainer)*
$25	**Fresh produce for a Hearth, providing snacks to the children.** *(Sprout Supporter)*
$50	**Social/emotional counseling visit.** *(Blossom Patron)*
$100	**Gas for teacher travel to training.** *(Canopy Guardian)*
$500	**Housing for a teacher at training.**
$1,000	**Summer Grades Training for One Class Teacher.**

Give today

CARRYING OUR INNER LIGHT AND GENEROSITY INTO THE AUTUMN DARKNESS

BY MIA MERCHANT
CLASS TEACHER AND WASATCH ALUMNUS

As we enter the Festival of Lights season, we bring to you a special 2 part article about the upcoming Lantern Walk, known traditionally as Martinmas. This festival is hosted by our current grade 4 teachers and families.

As the autumn days grow shorter and the crisp evening air carries the scent of fallen leaves, our school community prepares for one of the most cherished festivals of the Waldorf year: The Lantern Walk. Held each November, The Lantern Walk is an opportunity to honor inner light as the world gets darker around us at this time of year and marks a poignant transition in the seasons, inviting us to turn inward as the outer world embraces the quiet dark of winter.

Cultures worldwide honor the growing light within as outer days shorten, from India's Diwali to Thailand's Yi Peng. While Waldorf schools traditionally marked this seasonal shift with Martinmas (celebrating Saint Martin's compassion), many have transitioned to a universal Lantern Walk. This shift welcomes a rich variety of cultural experiences into our shared celebration of warmth and community.

In the early autumn, our festivals celebrate outward strength and courage. But as late autumn arrives, nature withdraws its life forces into the earth. The death that comes in the autumn promises the hope of spring, but for now, the trees stand bare, the sun sets early, and a natural hush falls over the land. For a young child, this deepening darkness can feel vast and mysterious. The Lantern Walk provides a gentle, reassuring bridge into this time of year, showing them that even when the sun hides its warmth, we possess the ability to create our own light.

"Each festival is an invitation to do just that: to gather, to celebrate the turning of the seasons, and to help our school flourish."

Why Do we celebrate Festivals?

Waldorf schools around the world are known for celebrating festivals throughout the year, and for good reason: these gatherings are a cornerstone of Waldorf education, offering both social healing and a sense of renewal. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, believed that when we learn to think with the course of the year, we enter into a kind of dialogue with the cosmos.

Our school is built upon this idea of rhythm, from the daily and weekly to the seasonal and yearly. The seasonal festivals serve as social reminders of the earth's own rhythms, helping us live in step with the year as it breathes, inhaling in winter and exhaling in summer here in the northern hemisphere.

Festivals are just as valuable for the social bonds they build among us. Harvard's School of Public Health has found that social connection contributes to a longer, healthier life. Our community, like any, thrives when we make time to be together. Each festival is an invitation to do just that: to gather, to celebrate the turning of the seasons, and to help our school flourish.



Families gather with their lanterns to experience a reverent, quite walk marking the shift in light here in Utah.

THE LANTERN WALK

A SHORT HISTORY

BY MIA MERCHANT
CONDOR CLASS TEACHER

For generations, carrying fire in winter was a ritual signaling readiness for the cold months and the hope of, eventually, the fertility of spring. Some researchers believe this pagan tradition merged with the Feast of St. Martin, or Martinmas, as Christianity spread through Europe. The feast marked the start of winter in medieval Europe and honored Martin, a generous young soldier who, according to legend, tore his wool cloak in two to share with a beggar on snow-covered streets.

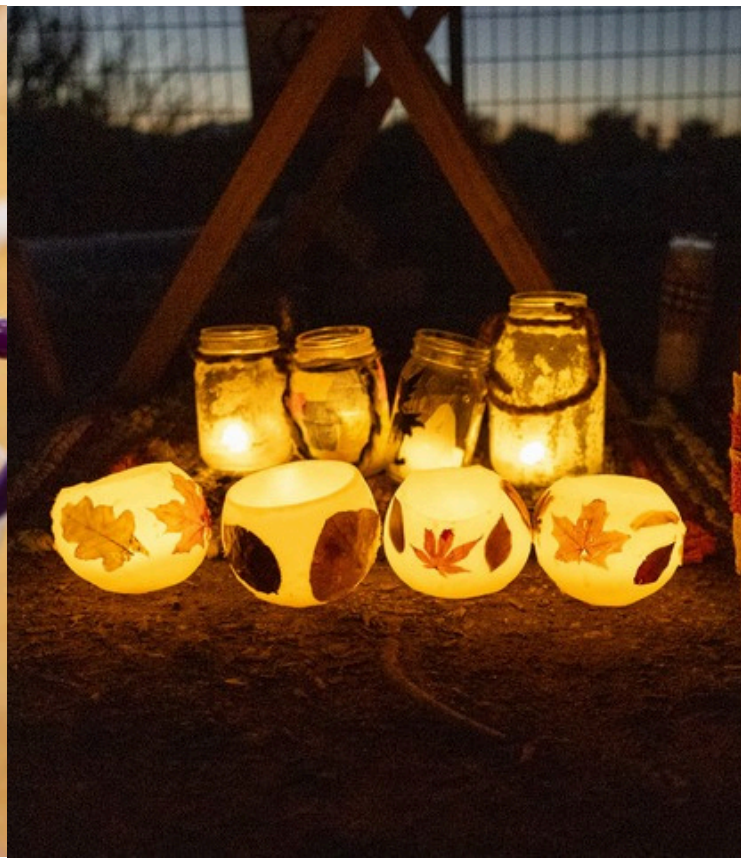
Traditionally, November 11th was a day when wealthy landowners hosted feasts for the poor, lit by huge bonfires that echoed even more ancient customs. Elements of these traditions live on in our celebrations today. In the Netherlands, children once carved turnip or beet lanterns for Martinmas parades, singing through the streets and often receiving fruit from neighbors as thanks. Paper lanterns eventually replaced the turnips and beets, and Martinmas is still celebrated, without religious connotations, throughout the Netherlands and Germany.

Thank you to all our families for helping us create and hold this space of wonder and reverence for our children. May your own inner lanterns burn brightly in the coming months.

At our school, the Lantern Walk is a reverent event meant to be a quiet honoring. When the evening arrives, families gather in silence. As candles are lit, the darkness is punctuated by a constellation of warm, glowing lights. Walking together, the children carry their lanterns with a sense of quiet reverence and wonder. The songs we sing—melodies about little stars, cozy lights, and guiding beams—echo softly through the night air, creating a protective cloak of community warmth.

The true joy of the Lantern Walk lies in this shared experience. It teaches our children—and ourselves—a profound, living lesson: when the world grows cold and dark, we do not need to fear. We can look to one another, ignite our inner light of kindness, compassion, and hope, and share that warmth with the world.





For weeks leading up to the festival, the children carefully craft their own lanterns. They paint, paper, and construct these vessels with deep concentration and pride. In doing so, they are not just making a craft; they are preparing a home for their own spark of light.Photos by Shannon D'Amico







Photo by Shannon D'Amico

TEACHERS SHOWCASE THEIR TALENTS WITH THE UPCOMING SHEPHERDS' PLAY:

BY PHILIP GOLDSMITH
EURYTHMY TEACHER AND SPECIALTY TEAM LEAD

In a Waldorf school, teachers lead by example. When a teacher steps onto the stage, children see that growth is a lifelong practice and that courage is learned by watching trusted adults take risks.

A group of teachers at our school have come together to prepare a special performance for the school community, sponsored by the Wasatch Family Foundation. We will be presenting The Shepherds' Play from The Oberufer Christmas Plays.

The play retells the story of the birth of Jesus in connection with three poor shepherds who, through their naive but humble consciousness, are able to hear the revelation of the birth and make their way across the land to the manger where it has happened. The play is full of heartwarming music and contrasts the rustic folk humor of the shepherds with their reverence, which serves as a wonderful lead-in to the darkest and coldest time of year.

This play is one of three plays which are traditionally performed in many Waldorf schools around the world in December. The Oberufer plays had been gathered and written down in the 1840s in eastern Austria. Prior to that they lived through oral tradition for many centuries. The plays retain a certain "medieval" quality in their style and speech, making them unique. They remain a beloved tradition and connection to Waldorf education's origins as they were performed in the first Waldorf school under the direction of Rudolf Steiner.

Before the play there will also be a small musical eurythmy presentation of Bach's Air on the G String to set the stage.

PERFORMANCE DATES:
Wednesday, December 16th, 5:00 – 6:15pm
Thursday, December 17th, 7:00 – 8:15pm
Location: music room
Doors will open 20 minutes before the start times.

All are welcome.

PARENTING PAUSE:

SURVIVAL GUIDE RESOURCES TO HELP DURING THE BUSY HOLIDAY SEASON

BY KANDYCE GALANIS
WCS SCHOOL PARENT

There is a particular hush that settles over our valley as winter arrives. Snow dusts the mountains, the evenings come early and crisp and as light from the sun dwindles, light inside homes becomes warm and soft. It is a season made for candlelight, and the old rhythms of gathering close. Children feel this deeply. The wonder of a lantern in the dark, a familiar song, coming in from the cold to a warm cup of cocoa, or a tradition repeated year after year gives them a sense of belonging that stays with them long after the season ends. And yet, many of us know how quickly the glow can turn to hurry.

Between the stress of holiday travel, the long lists of gifts, the crowded calendars, and the extra no-school days when siblings are together and screens beckon, a season meant for reverence can leave families feeling stretched thin. Kim John Payne, author of *Simplicity Parenting*, speaks to this with great warmth in "Simple Holidays: A Survival Guide", a small collection of podcast talks on his website, (see QR Code and link below). His reminder is a gentle one, if we do less, and do it with presence, the moments we share can become the ones our children carry with them.

For families with middle schoolers, this season can be a tender one. Our older children are growing into themselves, and they still need steady rhythm, quiet time together, and a parent who is simply nearby during ordinary moments, building small traditions together as they begin to grow away from the mystery and magic of their younger siblings during the season.

Whatever the age of your children, there is no need to take on everything at once. Choose one idea: light a candle, keep a family puzzle easily accessible, take a quiet walk under the winter sky, listen to a family audio book. A single small change can bring the warmth of the season back into the heart of your home.

SIMPLICITYPARENTING.COM TO LISTEN TO EACH EPISODE FROM KIM'S HOLIDAY GUIDE

Holiday Help:

Episode #241: Welcome to the Guide
Kim introduces his curated collection of talks, which offers practical advice and thoughtful strategies for the particular challenges families face during the holidays. He also speaks to the intensity that can come when families are together more closely over the break.

Episode #242: Traveling with Children
Many families spend more time on the road this time of year. Kim shares how to prepare children for the extra travel so the journey itself feels calmer, whether you're heading over the pass to visit family or just across the valley.

Episode #243: Photos and Gifts
Kim invites us to let children enjoy the season's special moments without it feeling like one long photo shoot. He reminds us that fewer photos make the ones we keep more precious. He also offers gentle ways to prepare children for gift-giving, set realistic expectations, and keep gifting authentic, including how to talk with extended family ahead of time.

Episode #244: Siblings and Screens
When children are home together for long stretches, tensions can rise. Kim offers insight into easing sibling squabbles and shares practical ways to keep screen time from creeping upward during the break.



Remember that a little time spent outdoors can help enliven and regulate a dulled spirit and body.
Photo by Shannon D'Amico

WASATCH KINDERGARTEN SOUP:

PROVIDED BY RHEA HOWARTH
HYBRID HOMESCHOOL KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

There is nothing better than a cozy soup on a fall day. If you have had a child in our Kinderhouse, you may recall the smell of this one wafting in the air upon entering the building.

This recipe feeds an entire class, so feel free to scale it down, or you could freeze some for an easy snack or meal later. It will take 20-30 minutes simmering covered on the stovetop for the lentils to cook until soft and the quinoa to "unravel."

This recipe is a simple, affordable and healthy way to feed your family.

"Chip Chop" Soup



INGREDIENTS:

2 T. olive or coconut oil

3 bay leaves

1 T. dried parsley

1 T. dried basil

1 T. minced or crushed garlic

1 yellow onion, minced

2 large tomatoes, diced, OR 1/4 cup dehydrated tomato powder, or 15 oz. can diced tomatoes.

1 cup coconut milk

2 T. vegetable Better Than Bouillon

4 tsp salt

1 tsp turmeric

1 tsp ground coriander

1/2 cup quinoa

1/2 cup green lentils

Chopped vegetables of your choosing (12 cups) keeping harder root veggies separate from softer veggies.

Water

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING:

- In a large pot, heat oil on medium heat; add onions and garlic. Careful not to burn.
- Once onions are translucent, add tomatoes, cook until broken down.
- Add parsley, bay leaves, and basil. Let become fragrant.
- Add the coconut milk, bouillon, tomato powder (if using), salt, turmeric, and coriander, rinsed quinoa and lentils. Stir together.
- If using root vegetables, add them now and cover with water. Let simmer.
- Test to see when vegetables begin to soften; add softer items now, such as zucchini, peppers, green beans, etc.
- Continue to simmer and test vegetables for doneness, this soup is ready once all vegetables, lentils and quinoa have reached your preferred softness.

THANK YOU FOR A SUCCESSFUL HARVEST FESTIVAL 2026!

BY TRICIA SULLIVAN
WASATCH FAMILY FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

As we approach Thanksgiving and this season of gratitude, we'd like to take a moment to appreciate the abundant generosity of our community.

The Harvest Festival this year, celebrating Wasatch Charter School's 10th birthday, was a new blend of school campus and farm field activities. ***A huge thank-you to each of the families and friends who raised over $23,500 to support our children's Waldorf education.*** It's an education that we know requires us to make an extra effort to provide in all its rigor and richness.

Our community came together in a beautiful and generous spirit and for that we are truly grateful.









Tractor rides were a new attraction this year at the farm. Smiling faces of teachers and volunteers, and a little student storytime. Many, many hands and hearts go into making this day possible. Photos by Shannon D'Amico

LOOKING AHEAD

Subscribe to WCS Google calendar for up-to-date info. Calendar can be found on the website under the resources tab.

12/1 **Giving Tuesday**
Become a sustainer

12/4 **St. Nicholas Festival**
(in-school event for students only)

12/11 **Santa Lucia Festival**
(in-school event for students only)

12/15 **Middle School Holiday Concert** at Olympus Junior High Auditorium

GET IN TOUCH

Is there something you would like to learn more about? Contact us by snapping the QR code.

See all newsletters online
wasatchwaldorf.org

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