



2026-2027

Olympia Waldorf School Festivals and Events Guide



Festivals at the Olympia Waldorf School

are not only a celebration of the year but nourish our souls while building a rhythm that anchors us to the changing seasons.

Festivals are a central part of Waldorf education and school life.

They are a celebration of life, connection to the earth, and the cycles of nature. Festivals can include tradition, songs, stories, dancing, food, sharing, and can help establish the rhythm of the year, providing a connection to the soul and our community.

Festivals can also help children understand time and seasons, learn about other cultures, and create a sense of joy and reverence.

The following festivals and events are unique to Waldorf education. Additional festivals/events that are more culturally based are not included below. This guide is intended to paint a picture of each event so you have a better understanding of why we hold them on campus and what might be expected as a student or family member.



FLOWER CEREMONY



The Flower Ceremony is a two-part ceremony that takes place on the first day of school and on the day of 8th grade graduation. They are beautiful bookends to the school year and the time a student is in the grades embodying belonging, connection, and appreciation. It is a beautiful and heartfelt ceremony that grounds the whole school in the circle of the school year and the 1st through 8th grade education.

What is the purpose and meaning of the Flower Ceremony?

- The flower is a symbol representing the unfolding of human potential. A flower bud gradually opens to reveal its uniqueness, which parallels the way in which students' capacities develop and flourish throughout their educational journey. The ceremony encapsulates the essence of growth, emphasizing the importance of nurturing each individual's unique qualities. As students, teachers, and parents weave together to partake in the Flower Ceremony, they engage in a shared experience of being on one journey – some just beginning, some further along – that embodies the very spirit of community in Waldorf education. The Olympia Waldorf community holds dear these moments of celebration!

What will my child experience?

- The Flower Ceremony is an event that marks the transition from one stage of life to another. Each school year begins with a Flower Ceremony where new 8th graders present a flower to the budding 1st graders. Waldorf schools make an effort to pause and observe these significant transitions in a child's life and help them understand the meaning inherent in those moments.

- During the ceremony, the 1st graders walk under a rainbow archway made by parents and loved ones and are met at the end by their teacher and 8th grade buddy. Throughout the year the 1st and 8th grade buddies will spend ample amounts of time together, with the older students in the role of guide and leader.
- In return, at the end of the year, the roles are reversed. During the 8th grade Graduation Ceremony, the 8th graders' parents and loved ones make a similar archway for the graduating 8th graders, and their 1st grader presents a flower to their 8th grade buddy, symbolizing gratitude and the transition to high school as they look out into the world with confidence and love.

How are different age groups included?

- Each year the 1st and 8th graders are the two grades included in the festival and the remaining 2-7 grades are there to witness and support the event.

How can families participate and prepare?

- 1st grade parents will need to be there to create the rainbow bridge for their student to walk through. 8th grade parents are also encouraged to witness their children as they step into this role of leadership and mentorship. All other parents are encouraged to stay for the ceremony and school assembly.



FESTIVAL OF COURAGE



A festival that calls on us to find the inner light of strength, fortitude, and compassion in preparation for the coming darkness of autumn and winter. The themes of this festival are essential as children develop into resilient and courageous people who are capable of living their truth and doing the right thing even when it is difficult. Darkness in the world, in each other, and in ourselves is inevitable. There will always be things we struggle with, things that we are afraid of, things that we are wrestling with. The Festival of Courage helps the children (and the community as a whole) practice encountering the darkness while calling on their courage and strength of will. As the festival falls in the autumn, the children (and community at large) are also connecting to a sense of bounty and a well resourced life. Finding the balance between facing our fears and remembering that we DO have the internal resources to meet them. We are not alone in the wilderness fighting our beasts. We have our connection to each other and to the earth and to our own confidence in our strength, fortitude, and compassion. The Festival of Courage invites us to deepen our ability to be with the darkness so that we can move through it.

***A note on dragons:** The symbol of the dragon means different things to different people and cultures. Traditionally the Festival of Courage has utilized the dragon as a symbol of the darkness and the fear often incited by the difficult things in our lives. Think Saint George and the Dragon and the ways the dragon was terrorizing the town and the fortitude, courage, perseverance, and quick thinking the Red Cross Knight had to embody in order to conquer the dragon. For many at our school, the dragon holds the

symbolism of guardian, bearer of wisdom and good fortune and the imagery of slaying the dragon feels like a negative deed. As a community we are still in process sorting out how we want to honor the majesty of the dragon. We encourage students and families to remember that symbols can represent different things to different people and within the story of the Michaelmas play, the symbol of the dragon is presented as a force of destruction, fear and darkness. In this festivals guide we will speak to the tradition of The Festival of Courage, the changes the school has made, and the themes alive in our celebration of this important time of year.

**“Brave and true I will be,
Each good deed, sets me free,
Each kind word makes me strong.
I will fight for the right!
I will conquer the wrong!”**

• **What is the purpose and meaning of the festival?**

- The autumnal festival offers an invitation to work with our deepest fears and to feel our deeper sense of purpose. We consolidate our forces within and work on our sense of self. In autumn we are invited to release what we no longer need or want to carry and the Festival of Courage helps us find the courage and strength to do so.
- The Festival of Courage originally stems from a tradition of Michaelmas. The symbol of Archangel Michael (pronounced MEE-khah-el) embodies courage, free will, and a summoning of the inner forces. Traditionally around Michaelmas there is the story and image of Michael taming, slaying, or casting the dragon into the earthly plain when it was waging war in heaven. The dragon represented a force needing to be transformed, our fears, the ferocity of the darkness in the world and within each of us. This version of a dragon is a symbol and is aligned with the European mythology of the ferocious and terrorizing dragon. The slaying represented the conquering of our fears, the transformation of that which causes harm. As autumn arrives we are all called to summon strength and courage to do battle with, or to transform, our own dragons that block us or overwhelm us, make us feel weak or powerless in our lives. The Festival of Courage invites us to connect to our courage and to fortify our spirits as we prepare for the darkness of winter

- With the Festival of Courage we are also acknowledging the autumn equinox, a time of balance and equality. Michael is also often depicted holding a set of scales, inviting us to notice what is out of balance in our lives and how we can hold the light and the dark, the good and the bad, the duality of life. We are invited to release that which pulls us out of balance.
- As the Festival of Courage is also our autumn festival, we celebrate the bounty of the harvest, expressing gratitude to the earth and farmers for providing nourishment for the coming year. There is a visceral experience of bounty that helps us feel safe and prepared for the hard months ahead.
- As we have moved towards more inclusion of cultural diversity within the curriculum, we have looked for ways to ground our celebration in our local environment. When the Festival of Courage returned to our school after the pandemic, we shifted away from the more eurocentric tale of Saint George and the Dragon to a story written by the faculty about the salmon's arduous journey to spawn. The thought was both to ground our tale in the PNW and also to tend to the children more gently in the wake of the pandemic and the BLM movement when everything felt tender and overwhelming.
- The play we have used the last few years depicts the story of three benevolent dragon brothers who come to earth in the form of salmon. As they travel up the river they encounter various challenges and see humans struggling in their farming work. Two of the brothers return to the heavens and take the shape of the sun and moon. The third brother remains on earth as a salmon to support the humans in finding the courage and will to persevere.



- As time has passed, it is now time to return to the roots of the festival by bringing back the Michaelmas play and the tradition of dragon bread. This year the 8th grade class successfully petitioned the faculty to bring back Saint George and the Dragon as the play. They were the last class to experience the play before the pandemic and they felt strongly that it is again needed for the students, speaking to many of the themes and intentions of the festival. With some parental support, they have designed and crafted a new dragon head so our dragon will feel more aligned with the western mythology of the ferocious dragon.
- This year we are returning to the tale of Saint George and the Dragon, aka The Michaelmas Play. In this story, a dragon is terrorizing a kingdom. A baby boy is found in the fields and taken to live with the fairies. As the boy reaches adulthood he returns to the kingdom as Saint George to fulfill his destiny and vanquish the dragon. With great courage, strength, fortitude, and persistence he slays the dragon. Throughout there is singing and verses spoken.
- **How does it connect to Waldorf education and child development?**
 - Steiner believed that the great battle between Michael and the dragon can be seen as a description of our times with Michael representing the spiritual path of higher knowing and the dragon representing materialistic drives that keep us separate from our spiritual connections. Michael points the way with his sword to a path of balance and connection to spirit and purpose. We all must use our own will and courage to walk that path.
 - In the Festival of Courage we invite the children to encounter their own courage and will to do difficult and/or scary things. The children embody these ideas through tasks that stretch their comfort zones and ask them to find courage in the face of fears and difficult tasks. They are asked to take on a task from beginning to end, individually and collectively, so they learn to take ownership over tasks and develop good work ethics.
 - The celebration is experiential through the play, the tasks of courage, and feasting. Various tasks are presented depending on the age of the child.
 - Gratitude plays a moral role here. There is also the feeling of trial by fire, when the individual stands perpendicular to their inner sun in preparation for a journey through renewal.



Is it symbolic in nature?

- Autumn brings a realignment and a shift from the outbreath of summer. It is a time of initiative and it requires forces of will and courage. The earth inhales, drawing life forces back to herself. The earth's surface becomes more bare but below the surface she is most active, resting, preparing and dreaming for the outbreath of spring and summer. Seeds drop to the earth, flowers cease to bloom, and animals prepare to return to the earth for the winter. We too have the invitation to slow down and turn inwards. Various autumnal festivals and traditions around the world speak to the idea of connecting our souls to the earth and her rhythm. This connection to the collective allows us greater confidence in facing our fears as we know we are not alone, but are part of something greater than ourselves.

What will my child experience?

- For this festival EC and the grades celebrate differently.
 - For EC: The children may listen to a story about a child taming a dragon, make dragon bread, watch the grades' play, and then return to their classes for a snack or join their families for the feast on the field. They may make or wear golden capes. "I give you a cape of light, to give you courage, strength and might!"
 - For grades: In the morning, the children all participate in various activities that require courage and willpower. Year to year the activities may vary, and different grades are presented with different developmentally appropriate tasks. Some examples are: cider pressing, butter making, obstacle course, hammering, wood chopping (older grades), weaving, making and burning gloom dolls, shaping a veggie dragon, making bread, crafting, etc.
 - To celebrate the harvest we bring vegetables to school and shape a dragon out of them. The veggies are later donated to the community to feed people in need.
 - Midday, families are invited to join in as the children perform a play and we sing together before celebrating with a feast of soups, bread, cider, and butter. The play has been performed outside the middle school with participants facing west. This placement has been the same for at least 15 years, forming strength of tradition and rhythm.



How can families participate and prepare?

- Are parents expected to attend, volunteer, bring food, make costumes, or help with decorations?
 - The Festival of Courage offers families a great opportunity to get a jump on their volunteer hours. We need volunteers to help run the stations for the various tasks, we need people to make soup and bake bread, to help serve the food for the feast, and to help with cleaning up afterwards.
 - Families are invited to watch the play and share in the feast.
- What should children wear or bring?
 - Children should wear weather appropriate clothing as they will be outside most of the day. Please bring bowls and silverware for your family to use for the soup and cider (or a lunch for your child if you know they won't eat soup).
- Are there ways to continue the festival themes at home?
 - The Festival of Courage offers a rich opportunity for family conversations around courage, fear, strength of will, releasing what no longer serves us, and maintaining alignment to our own spiritual path, whatever that may be.
 - Some families enjoy making festival tables with a dragon made from a wavy stick and bees wax, wheat and grapes or other things to represent the harvest, and two stones they find to represent balance.
 - You can read books/stories about courage and overcoming fear such as *The Kitchen Knight*; *St George and the Dragon* (especially the version by Margaret Hodge); *Iron John*; *Two Brothers*; *Basket Woman*; *The Little Series #7: Michaelmas* by Rudolf Steiner; *Lottie, St. Michael, and the Lonely Dragon*.
 - Have conversations and tell family stories about the fears of your own life or the lives of your family members and ancestors.
 - Making dragon bread or gloom dolls as a family.
 - Lighting a candle at the dinner table to remind yourselves that the light within continues even as the world darkens around us.



EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



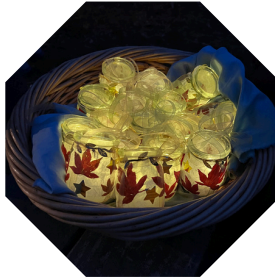
What is the purpose and meaning of Día de Muertos?

- The primary gift of Día de Muertos is to grow our connections and memories of the dead each year. Our connections to one another also grow, as we come to know more about who those around us have loved and lost. And, importantly, we learn that is not necessary to always be serious and sad when talking of departed loved ones.
- Through the Spanish program, the students learn about Mexican culture and help to create many of the traditional elements of the ofrenda, such as paper marigolds, papel picado, monarch butterflies, pan de muerto, and more. Many believe that the monarch butterflies are the spirits of deceased relatives returning to visit. Marigolds are used because their bright colors and strong scent are thought to help guide the spirits of the dead back to their families. El papel picado is significant because it represents the element of wind, symbolizing the movement of spirits as they travel to visit their loved ones on earth, with its delicate, perforated tissue paper signifying the fragility of life and the temporary nature of the souls' visit; it is often hung on altars to create a welcoming atmosphere for the returning spirits.

How can families participate and prepare?

- Near the time of Día de Muertos we will put a call out for your student to bring an image of a person or animal who has passed. Please be sure your student's name and grade is labeled on the back.
 - We typically set up one large ofrenda in the middle school for grades/middle school sharing and early childhood classes may set up their own smaller ofrendas.
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LANTERN WALK



The tradition

Lantern walk is a festival following the German tradition of *laternlaufen* (walking of lanterns) that originates from the European holiday *Martinmas* held on November 11th. The story of *Oh Martin* tells the tale of a Roman soldier who cut his cloak in half to save someone else from freezing to death. The festival follows themes of community, compassion, bringing light, and how we as spiritual beings have a responsibility to hold each other when facing hard and dark times. As days grow darker, our inner light grows brighter. Lantern walk is a moment for us to all visualize our own inner light and to see how much brighter it is alongside our community. Our festivals flow in a sequence and lantern walk is the connection between the festival of courage and advent spiral. We identify our bravery and inner light, embrace it as a community, then internalize and reflect as we shift into the cold and dark months.

What is the purpose and meaning of the Lantern Walk?

- Lantern walk is woven into the Waldorf curriculum as it supports aspects of both individuality and community while moving in alignment with the rhythm of the seasons. Lantern walk is the turning point of the seasons when we want to pull inwards, but instead need to harness our own inner light and share it with those around us. Lantern walk, the second major festival in the sequence, is deeply connected to younger childhood. The lower grades and early childhood hold smaller roles in our Festival of Courage activities, and instead are inspired by their older peers' acts of courage. Lantern walk allows them to share the moment and to come into their own bravery in a gentle and closely held way.

- The lantern walk is symbolic in nature as it marks a shift from fall harvest to dark winter seasons. The lanterns themselves are a physical visualization of the inner light we hold in comparison to darkness as the natural world around us retreats. Lanterns are often made of natural materials from the fall harvest season such as being decorated by leaves and fall colors.

How does the festival support my child's development?

- For young children as they settle into their physical bodies and explore perspectives on how they fit with others in our world, it is impactful to see a physical representation of light, warmth and community. The making of the lanterns is often one of the earliest projects of early childhood schooling. The lanterns are multi-stepped and worked on in class over the course of a few weeks. The hands-on work and the process of seeing a project from start to finish is crucial in forming healthy work habits and a sense of pride and reverence for their work. Having pride in their work helps form the connection from the physical world to their inner self.

What will my child experience?

- What activities, songs, crafts, performances, stories, or rituals are involved?
 - The activity of making the lanterns themselves in the weeks ahead of the event is an important aspect of the festival as mentioned above. Each class makes their lantern following a similar style. It is incredible to see during the event how each class has a cohesive design. This exemplifies smaller collectives aligning within a greater community, such as all of early childhood or the lower grades. Alongside working on the lanterns in class, the children learn two traditional lantern songs that are sung by the community during the procession:

"Im walking with my lantern, my lantern walks with me
 The stars above are shining, and below are shining we.
 Up and down and through the town,
 La bima la bumba la boom"

"Glimmer lantern glimmer, little stars a shimmer
 Over rock and stock and stone, wandering tripping little gnome
 Pee wit, pee wit, tikka tikka tick, roo koo, roo, koo"

- The children learn these songs as they are woven into their daily curriculum during the weeks leading up to the festival. In early childhood, teachers sing them as the children work and play, or incorporate them into their seasonal circles. In the lower grades, children practice them during the main lesson with their teacher.
- As for stories, some teachers tell Oh Martin and his cloak, but there are many other stories that follow the themes of light, compassion and

community. During our EC lantern walk, the story “The Golden Lantern” is shared, which follows a young girl who carries a magical lantern that brings light and goodness to everyone around her. As she ages, her light dims, so we follow her journey to reignite her spark.

How are different age groups included?

- Early childhood and grades 1–3 each gather in the evening to participate in the procession accompanied by their families. We hold one evening for early childhood and one for grades 1–3. This festival is geared towards younger children because the reverence and softness of the event speaks closely to them. The grades 4–7 tend to be more fascinated by the “after dark” appeal of the festival rather than the magic of it. In the future, we hope to cycle back and include 8th grade in the festival in a leadership role. The lantern walk could become a moment of nostalgia as they guide and inspire their younger peers.

How can families participate and prepare?

- Are parents expected to attend, volunteer, bring food, make costumes, or help with decorations?
 - Parents are required to attend this festival and are responsible for monitoring their children during this event. It is important to protect the reverence and be present to hold them closely. Siblings of all ages are also welcome to attend and hold the same reverence. Parent volunteers are needed to pop popcorn and warm cider to snack on while attendees mingle and hear stories as the sunsets. Donations of these food items, and cups or popcorn bags are appreciated. Sign-ups to help light the path before the event may be sent out by your class teacher. Students will make lanterns in class, but families are invited to bring lanterns from home for parents and siblings. We ask that cell phones are away and silenced for the duration of the event. Photos of the event will be taken, so please refrain from doing so yourself.
- What should children wear or bring?
 - Warm layers and themselves!
- Are there ways to continue the festival themes at home?
 - The stories and songs of lantern walk can be enjoyed at home. Families may also make their own lanterns to walk with during the event.



WINTER FAIRE



Winter Faire is a social gathering during the cold and dark winter month of December where our school opens our doors to the broader community to find light, joy, and hope in the darkening days that approach winter solstice. Rather than a commercial holiday celebration, Winter Faire focuses on experiential magic through activities like puppet plays, the otherworldly Cookie Kingdom, and candle dipping, bringing our community together to celebrate and foster a sense of belonging and support for each other during the darker winter months.

What will my child experience?

- Winter Faire is held at various locations throughout the OWS campus. It is held on the first Saturday of December, and is a wonderful opportunity for you and your child(ren) to experience the campus transformed into a magical winter wonderland.
- Activities include:
 - **Cookie Kingdom** (All ages) – Within an enclosed location on campus, a twinkly forest of trees and magic have been decorated with cookies of all shapes and sizes (gluten free and vegan available). Each entrant is blessed with a guiding verse by the Cookie Kingdom Elf before entry, where they walk softly through the enchanted forest to choose their cookie treat.
 - **Snow Kingdom Treasure Hunt and Wishing Well** (All ages) – This simple treasure hunt is available to anyone who wishes to explore the Kinderwoods for nature's treasures. At the end, the Snow King or Queen gifts the hunter a treasure for their efforts. Additionally, each person who would like to make a wish is given a walnut candle and steps into the wishing well where they make a wish, light their candle, and set their wish free to float amongst all the other wishes in the wishing well.

- **Fairy Shoppe** (For children who are able to go through a shopping space without their parents) – The Fairy Shoppe is a quiet and peaceful place for children to do their holiday shopping independently from their parents. They are greeted in the hall by soft music, or perhaps a story, and Fairies who help guide the children through their shopping experience. Once within the doors of the magical Fairy Shoppe, children are able to pick out gifts (valued at around \$5) that have been handmade by our community, to gift to their loved ones during the holiday season.
- **Gingerbread** (All ages) – Enjoy this delightful holiday treat all over campus as you find the Gingerbread Elves. Prepared and delivered by parent volunteers, these are a treasured treat greatly anticipated each year.
- **Puppet Play** (All ages) – Traditionally held by the Early Childhood faculty, the puppet play varies from year to year, but always sells out quickly. This is a beautiful look into the Waldorf Early Childhood experience, complete with gentle music, well-crafted characters, and an interesting story.
- **School Store** (All ages) – Where you can get all your OWS merch.
- **Craft** (All ages) – A favorite activity for all ages, the craft room features two to three different crafts, which vary each year. This is a fun place for people to come together to be creative and take home a unique, handmade creation!
- **Polar Café** (All ages) – Soup, bread, and warm beverages can be found in the OWS Polar Café – a place to step away from the bustle of Winter Faire and refuel.
- **Winter Market** (All ages) – This is a variety of vendors from outside and within our own OWS community that have things available for sale for the holiday season.
- **Student Maker Tables** (All ages) – Our community is creative, and that includes our students! Students are given time slots to sell their own creations.
- **Beeswax Candle Dipping** (All ages) – A time-honored tradition, faire goers can create their own beeswax candle at our beeswax candle dipping station. With a little time and effort, you can go home with your own, beautiful candle creation.
- **Pocket Person** (All ages) – Found anywhere and everywhere on campus, when the Pocket Person is located in their famous red cape, a treasure can be chosen at random from a pocket within the cape!

How can families participate and prepare?

- Are parents expected to attend, volunteer, bring food, make costumes, or help with decorations?
 - Yes! Each family is expected to take at least one volunteer shift. There are a wide variety of opportunities to volunteer both before, after, and especially during the event. Each class/grade will be assigned an activity to prepare and run. The activity assignments will change each year and in middle school students will be expected to be involved. This is a great opportunity to bond with your class families and make magical memories for your children.

What should children wear or bring?

- Children are welcome to wear whatever they like. Some like to dress up as elves, or snow fairies, or wintery themed participants. There is no dress code to attend the faire, but dress appropriately for the weather!
- In order for children to participate in many of the activities they will need a Star Card, which is a punch card. Activities range from 1-5 stars and Star Cards can be pre-purchased or obtained at the faire in the middle school foyer.



WINTER SPIRAL



What is the purpose and meaning of the Winter Spiral?

- During December, the days grow their darkest, and our school holds the Winter Spiral, also known as the Solstice Spiral or Advent Spiral.
- Developmentally, the Winter Spiral gives children a healthy image of darkness which can be especially meaningful for younger children. Darkness can be frightening, and this festival doesn't pretend that darkness doesn't exist. Instead, it creates an experience in which darkness, if safe, has meaning, and light can exist within darkness.
- The Winter Spiral develops patience and self-regulation through small but meaningful opportunities to practice impulse control, attention, patience, and bodily awareness.
 - Children have to wait their turn.
 - They have to move slowly.
 - They have to pay attention.
 - They have to tolerate silence and darkness.

What will my child experience?

- For the Winter Spiral, children come into a darkened room filled with a spiral of evergreens on the floor making a path for the children to walk along to the center. The evergreen spiral is dotted with crystals, flowering plants, and other natural treasures. In the center of the spiral is a candle. One by one, each child walks to the start of the spiral, and receives a candle inserted into a carved hole in an apple from a teacher. The outer edge of the spiral is symbolic of the summer solstice when the days are longest. As the child makes their way into the spiral's center they pass through autumn and the days grow shorter, and the walk represents the inward journey of this time of year. At the center they reach the winter solstice where they light their own candle, and as they walk back through the spiral, they choose a spot to place their light. As they return they pass through spring and eventually arrive back at the summer solstice.

- Then the next child comes and does the same thing. Each child has a turn until all the children have had the chance to light a candle and place it on the spiral. Music plays and fills the room while the children walk the spiral and light their candles one by one.
- By the end of the ceremony, the spiral is bright with light, illuminated with all the children's candles. This offers the children a powerful picture of light in the darkness, of one's candle contributing to the great light with others in the dark world, of the coming of light from each of us. It offers a reminder of the reliable turning of the sun from weakness to strength each year at the Winter Solstice. Waiting quietly in the darkness for the return of the light, contributing a little bit from each person to make the world bright, are important lessons to learn for life.

What is the symbolism of the Winter Spiral?

- **The spiral** is one of nature's many patterns and can be found in shells, flowers, pinecones, fingertips, and galaxies. In this festival honoring the return of light into the world, we use the spiral to represent the seasonal rhythms as well as representing the contemplative journey we take to find our own inner "light." The beginning of the path marks the summer solstice. As we spiral inward it represents moving towards and through autumn where the days grow shorter. The very center of the spiral symbolizes winter solstice, the darkest time of the year. Here we pause at the center before we spiral back outward through spring toward the summer solstice.
- The journey each child takes through the spiral also represents an inner journey to find his or her own "light" within. In the very center of ourselves, we discover our own beauty, strength, insight, and gifts that we offer the world. We then turn from this discovery within and carry our gifts of radiance back out into the world.
- **Red apples** are often used as candleholders during spiral walks and celebrations. Inside the fruit lies the seed, waiting patiently in darkness until the time comes to sprout. The apples represent the seeds of our hidden potential. We don't yet see the fruit of our labors with the students, but within each is the seed of the adults they will become.
- **Evergreen trees** are found in many myths, often representing the tree of life. These are the trees that weather the winter without going dormant. They represent the regenerative power of life, nature and the seasons. We use the boughs to represent the sustaining abundance of life on our planet.
- **Beeswax candles** in Chinese culture are considered a symbol of eternal love and warmth. We use them as our light source in the darkness to symbolize that love is eternally present.
- **Kingdoms of nature** – We celebrate the diversity of life on our planet by placing among the evergreen boughs objects that represent the kingdoms of nature: mineral, plant and animal. Crystals, seashells, feathers, pinecones, berries and bones will be resting along the path.

**This event is very contemplative and quiet.
We hope to encourage this sentiment as much as possible.**

How can families participate and prepare?

- We ask for parents to help with music making (lap harp, no skills needed!) and being on “fire duty.”
- We also request that phones are silenced during the spiral. No photography please.
- Children should dress appropriately so long/flowing articles cannot catch fire. Long hair should be worn back.
- If you're wondering how to talk about the festival with your child, we wouldn't suggest giving them the whole philosophical explanation.

Something simple is probably much more appropriate:

- Winter Spiral is a special winter celebration. The days are getting dark and short, so we walk into the spiral and light a candle. The light reminds us that even when things are dark, there is still warmth and light inside us. Then we bring our light back out and share it with everyone." And then let your child make their own meaning.



SANTA LUCIA



What is the purpose and meaning of Santa Lucia?

- The Santa Lucia festival is often approached less as a lesson about the historical saint and more as a seasonal image and experience: even when the outer world is dark, a small, steady light can be carried within and shared with others.
- The festival can support several important themes in Waldorf education:
 - **Light in darkness:** Children experience the contrast between the increasing winter darkness and the symbolic light of the candle.
 - **Inner warmth and goodness:** The light can represent qualities such as kindness, courage, compassion, and generosity.
 - **Community:** The Lucia figure traditionally brings light and treats to others, turning the festival into an act of giving rather than receiving.
 - **Beauty and reverence:** Candlelight, singing, white clothing, greenery, and quiet ritual create an atmosphere intended to be experienced rather than intellectually explained.

What will my child experience?

- A common tradition involves a Lucia procession. One older child, or sometimes a teacher, wears a white robe and a crown or wreath of lights, followed by other children carrying candles. They sing a Lucia song while visiting classrooms or entering a room where the community has gathered. The children bring bread, saffron buns, cookies, or other food to share.
- For younger children, the festival might be much simpler: a teacher may tell a story, light a candle, sing a song, and share a small treat.

How can families participate and prepare?

- Families may be asked to help bake saffron buns. This festival is not always held at OWS as it largely depends on the parent body to make it happen and that varies from year to year.
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MAY FAIRE



What is the purpose and meaning of May Faire?

- May Faire has historically been associated with the return of warmth, flowers, fertility, growth, and the celebration of the natural world. The maypole itself can be seen as a symbol of the tree of life, representing growth, vitality, and the connection between the earth and the sky above. The colorful ribbons symbolize the blossoming of spring and the diverse threads that make up the community. The act of weaving ribbons together around the pole symbolizes the interconnectedness of the community and strengthens bonds between individuals. As students grow older, they learn more complex patterns and movements, reflecting their own personal growth and development.

What will my child experience?

- The Maypole dance is probably the most recognizable symbol of the festival. Children and adults dance around a pole decorated with colorful ribbons, weaving the ribbons together. Symbolically, it can be understood as representing:
 - The growing season and renewal — spring emerging after winter.
 - The movement of nature — growth, flowers, sunlight, and the returning energy of the earth.
 - Community — each dancer contributes one ribbon, and the beautiful pattern only emerges when everyone moves together.
 - Joy and playfulness — particularly important in Waldorf education, where children are encouraged to experience seasonal traditions through movement, imagination, music, and beauty.
- In addition to dancing the may pole, children and families are encouraged to create flower crowns, enjoy crafts, food, music, lawn games, a plant sale and more.

How can families participate and prepare?

- Families should plan to attend May Faire as every class will be asked to either dance around the may pole or play music (middle school).
- Parent volunteers will be needed to help make the event a success including but not limited to flower donations for crown making and help running the activities.

What should children wear or bring?

- Traditionally, children dress up and/or wear white but we also encourage festive spring attire! Think gnomes and flower fairies.

Are there ways to continue the festival themes at home?

- Light a candle or lantern and sing a spring song.
- Cut a bouquet of flowers and place it in a special spot in your home.
- Make a dandelion or flower crown.
- Plant a flower or make a little nature craft.
- Gather on a blanket for a spring story.
- Have seasonal cake, fruit, and lemonade.



EC FLY AWAY CEREMONY



What is the purpose and meaning of the Fly Away Ceremony?

- The Fly Away Ceremony marks the transition of leaving the world of play to the world of academics. Or, within the Waldorf seven-year cycle pedagogy, moving from the world of willing to the world of feeling. It is a symbol of rising first graders leaving early childhood.
- Seasonally, this event is held in spring, to coincide with themes of blooming, blossoming and birds leaving nest.
- This ceremony marks the beginning of children separating from their parents, gaining more independence, being expected to do more on their own, and developmentally wanting to do.

What will my child experience?

- Early childhood families gather in the Kinderwoods. Each kindergarten class gathers together in a “nest,” and one or two at a time the rising students stand between the teachers while singing the fly away song.

“What do little birdies say
when they want to fly away?
Mother, father, may I fly away?”
- When the song is finished, they are released to run to their parents, ready for their journey into the grades.
- This is a celebration of growth, relationships and the children themselves.
- Teachers often tell stories in class about bravery, growing into yourself, and taking on new challenges during the weeks before in preparation.

How can families participate and prepare?

- Parents of rising 1st graders should be ready to receive their “little bird.”
 - Other parent volunteers can help set up the nest and have treats on hand after the event concludes.
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MOVE UP DAY



Move Up Day is the physical, hands-on moving day inside the school building at the end of June. Instead of a ceremonial festival, it is an active day of packing, cleaning, and relocating. The students literally “move up” a grade on this day. The Waldorf approach infuses this practical day with deep psychological and developmental meaning.

What is the purpose and meaning of the Move Up Day?

- **Concrete Progress:** By physically carrying their own desks, chairs, and books up the stairs or down the hall, children physically feel the weight and effort of their own growth.
- **Healthy Goodbyes:** Emptying the old classroom allows students to process the completion of the year and practice healthy detachment.
- **Removing Anxiety:** Walking into the new room, setting up their new desk, and finding their new cubby gives children a comforting mental picture of their future. This removes the anxiety of the unknown over the summer.
- **Team Building:** The class works as a team to pack boxes and form human chains, solidifying their social bond before summer break.

What will my child experience?

- **The Deep Clean:** Students scrub watercolor boards, wash desks, and pack up year-long handwork projects.
- **The Final Thank You:** Classes often stand in a final circle to sing to the physical room that sheltered them all year.
- **The Heavy Lifting:** Younger students carry their personal books and small chairs. Older students do the heavy lifting, moving large desks and helping teachers carry heavy supply boxes.
- **The Unpacking:** They unpack just enough to claim their new space, leaving the room ready to greet them in September.

How can families participate and prepare?

- This day focuses on student independence, however, parents should volunteer most importantly by joining the cleaning crew while other parent volunteers will help move the heavy things to and from storage and teacher desks to the next classroom.
 - **Clothing:** Children should wear sturdy, comfortable clothing that can get dusty, along with closed-toe shoes for safety while hauling furniture.
 - **What to Bring:** Send your child with a large, sturdy canvas tote bag and/or additional backpack. They will be bringing home a year's worth of artwork, main lesson books, and treasures.
 - **Bringing the Theme Home:** Mirror this rhythm at home by scheduling a weekend "school cleanse." Help your child clean out their home workspace, sharpen their colored pencils, and find a special shelf to archive their beautiful main lesson books for the summer.
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How to Get Involved:

VOLUNTEER!

- Each and every festival or event will require some parent involvement to make the celebration or tradition successful.
 - Volunteer needs will be posted in our LOME:
<https://grow.withlome.com/-/ows-parent-association>

*go here to
volunteer!*



Join the Festivals Committee!

- Help our small team of faculty and parent volunteers to plan and execute the big festivals (Festival of Courage, Winter Faire, May Faire).
- Email development@olympiawaldorf.org to join!