

Waldorf Impulses in Turkey



Imece – Waldorf inspired kindergarten in Bodrum

Bodrum

Duygu Gümüs

Everything began in 2011: 5 families established a Waldorf-inspired playgroup in Bitez, Bodrum at the southwest edge of Turkey. Today we are 20 families and our community is growing.

In January, our two highly motivated teachers started their three-year Waldorf teacher training in Istanbul, in a program supported by IASWECE. It is our goal, hopefully with the support of an international Waldorf educator as our mentor, to establish a fully accredited Waldorf Kindergarten and Primary School in Bodrum in the future.



The Bodrum "Art of Education" Association was founded in 2014 to support our vision of establishing an affordable, child-centered alternative to private schools in Turkey, inspired by the Waldorf approach to education and respectful of the regulations of the Turkish Ministry of Education.

Currently 20 children aged between 2.5 to 6 years old attend our playgroup. Parents are engaged with playgroup activities such as gardening, cleaning, laundry, organizing festivities, picnics, etc.

Parents and teachers work as partners and everybody is encouraged to participate in their child's education.



We are a group of people with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds; therefore we celebrate all the cultural and religious festivals from our various backgrounds.

This year in addition to celebrating seasonal festivals, we have also participated in several local fairs to introduce our project and the Waldorf approach.

Duygu Gümüş is a kindergarten teacher in Bodrum.



The “Yaka” Playgroup in Güzelbahçe, İzmir

Pınar Anıl Hacaloğlu

In İzmir it all started with one mother saying to another mother: “What are we waiting for? Let’s start with a playgroup! Your house is perfect for this”. And, one week later on November 6th, 2014 we, a group of four mothers and their children, began to meet regularly in a playgroup inspired by Waldorf educational principles.



Pınar Anıl Hacaloğlu, who leads the playgroup opened the first Waldorf-inspired nursery and kindergarten in İzmir in 2007. She is member of the board of Eğitim Sanatı Dostları Derneği - (Friends of the Art of Education in Istanbul) and a graduate of the 2009-2011 Waldorf Teacher Training program in Istanbul. With the support of ESDD, her friend Aisha Melodie Hassan, an organic architect, opened the playgroup in her home at the edge of the forest.

Our intention and deepest desire is that within the next 1 or 2 years this playgroup can evolve into a Waldorf kindergarten. After this initial trial period with a small group of mothers and children, we would now like to open up and integrate more children from the social surroundings. We are still making plans and creating the necessary social, economic and practical conditions.

What will probably take the most effort will be creating healthy and stable social surroundings to support the kindergarten (in essence: a kind of family union). Although we are basing the kindergarten on a well-grounded education with a hundred years of experience, it will not be an easy task in a country where this educational impulse is still so new.





One of the many tasks before us is to find interested people who are prepared to be actively engaged and to find a new relationship to the children and to the world, not only in Izmir but in all of Turkey. By founding the The Art of Education Association, we wanted to create a group that will work hand in hand toward a common ideal, so that we can provide a healthy, secure and strong foundation for the growth of our children.

But we want to make sure, that we don't undertake too much too soon and also that we don't lose our sense of humor!

In İzmir, we are also dealing with a general loss of old Turkish traditions. Many people today have become disconnected from the traditions, rituals, songs, poems and stories that provide deep insights into our humanity. After much research and through our pedagogical activity, we need to bring these lost traditions back up to the surface (and in a certain way awaken the folk soul of Turkey). Weaving the Turkish culture into the day-to-day rhythms of the nursery/ kindergarten is very important to us, and so we created our own solstice festival in December, inspired by the Old Turkish ritual of Nardoğan, which celebrated the "New Birth of the Sun".

The word "Nar" also means pomegranate in Turkish. Pomegranates are eaten and used as decoration at the Nardoğan festival

In our new songs and circle games that we have written, the spirit of the color red therefore plays an important role (with pomegranates, rosehips, and roses...).

As we build up our kindergarten, we learn something new every single day. We want to go calmly step by step, with awareness and confidence.

For instance, one day we experienced how useful it is to have a few finger puppet games and songs ready in our pockets, for moments when things getchaotic!

Later we learned through experience that it is important to adapt the length of the circle games and the songs to the age of the children.

Also insight of how essential it is for the members of the initiative group to meet once a week to discuss our vision, our action plan and our economic strategy also eventually came to us.

And finally the feeling, that things would not be able to go further without the help of our angel!

Pınar Anıl Hacaloğlu leads the "Yaka" Playgroup in Güzelbahçe, Izmir

