It is proven that the children who usually do the best in school are the ones whose parents are actively involved in their education. After all, you are your child’s first, and most important, teacher.

Conclusion
Combining elements from both Waldorf and Montessori may be the perfect blend of yin and yang for parents and children, particularly in the early childhood years, but this does not usually translate for teachers, who are often trained in only one system. With this in mind, we offer some suggestions to parents to get the best out of each system and to guide their child’s unfolding, regardless of their preferred educational system.

In traditional Montessori preschools and kindergartens, the element of pretend play is discouraged. In traditional Waldorf preschools and kindergartens, letters and numbers are seldom formally introduced. This is because Montessori didn’t find “pretend play” necessary for the children at her schools, and Steiner did not feel that young children were ready for a formal education until the age of 7 or the beginning of first grade, to give their physical bodies ample time to form and to develop the capacity to endure the rigors of structured learning.

Montessori taught that the child must learn to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Yet children spontaneously engage in imaginative play as a form of tension release from the world, as a way to make sense of real-life experiences. And imaginative play helps heal trauma and grief in small children. Children today need play in school, where it can be supervised and nurtured. Therefore, it is wise for Montessori parents to offer space for imaginary play that is simultaneously healing and educational. Using natural toys for opened play and creating an environment rich with possibilities, but without a strict structure, could be beneficial, as could telling children fairy tales and allowing them to enact stories.

Waldorf parents could benefit from offering some handcrafted materials for conceptual math and language development since, let’s face it, children, who are ready and eager to learn, absorb abstract concepts from their home environments anyway. This is because most parents are inclined to teach their children their letters and simple numbers. Waldorf parents can, for example, introduce a felted alphabet wall hanging with pockets for each letter and put some natural items in each pocket that represent the letter selected (for example, an acorn or small wooden apple for A) and include basic numbers as counting symbols in a pretend-play store in their free play space.

Overall, no one educational method can substitute for a loving and caring home environment. It is proven that the children who usually do the best in school are the ones whose parents are actively involved in their education. After all, you are your child’s first, and most important, teacher.

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