

Good morning! My name is Emma Dolan, and I graduated from Maine Coast Waldorf School in 2014. I started here in 6th grade, after attending a different waldorf school from kindergarten through 5th grade. This past May 2018, I graduated from Mount Holyoke College, a historically women's college in South Hadley Massachusetts with a degree in Anthropology, focused on the intersection between health and culture.

I was asked to speak today about some way my Waldorf education has informed who I am as an adult. I have only a few minutes, and honestly I could speak on this topic for hours, so I will attempt to distill 14 years of a highly informative education into a few minutes of poignant example...just as I was taught to do at the highschool.

In the younger grades teachers told us to "Plant our feet on the ground" before any activity. Main lesson would begin standing and saying a verse, but first Mr. Barham would make sure our feet were planted on the ground to help us be fully present in that moment. In games class with Mr. Saccone we planted our feet on the ground to run without tripping or stumbling. And in music class with Mr. Seavey, we had to plant our roots deep to stand tall and sing properly. Being grounded in our bodies was not optional, nor was it disputed, it was part of our grade school experience, preparing us for our day or task at hand.

In high school our teachers taught us to be grounded in our thought, in addition to our bodies. We learned to write thesis statements, and defend them with our research. Endless science experiments pushed us to question our knowledge, but this questioning just led us to be stronger in our thought. In high school we also learned how to give presentations, from individual research projects, to class plays and performances, to art exhibitions in the hallways. We learned to be grounded "on the stage."

The past four years in college made me very aware of the physical and mental grounded qualities my Waldorf education gave me. When I arrived at college, I was prepared to learn. Not only because of my ability to write an essay, or how good I was at science. But because of my confidence in how I learn, my education at Maine Coast Waldorf School gave me a strong base, from which I was easily able to build from in college. I took classes that interested me, and found professors I connected with and was inspired by to be my mentors. I was not afraid of challenge because I knew how to ground myself first, this led me to take on tasks such as participating on school organization boards, and writing a senior thesis in my last year.

Lately, since my graduation, I have been reflecting on these qualities of groundedness. I am figuring out my life, working and learning, and most importantly enjoying it. Currently I am working in outdoor education, teaching a forest kindergarten class. I am also working towards my birth doula certification, being a non-medical birth support person. Both of these jobs require being present for other people, either 6 year olds running around the woods, or women giving birth and needing support. I believe that my Waldorf education prepared me to be a grounded young adult who can support others.

I am not anxious about the challenges that lie ahead of me as a young adult figuring out her life. I am anticipating them, so now I am taking time to ground myself, both physically and mentally in preparation.

This is just one example of how Waldorf education has shaped me, and honestly I could (and have) talked about the many ways my waldorf education has informed my life for much longer. So thank you for taking the time to listen, and I hope you enjoy the rest of these Grandparent's day performances.

Thank you!