



**ABIDING HEART**  
EDUCATION

Experiential Buddhist learning

## **Kindergarten Teacher Training Diploma**

**in Abiding Heart Education™**

**February 2021 to December 2023**

### **Course Overview**

The full-time Kindergarten online teacher-training course consists of 6 semesters over three years. Students taking this training are required to attend all courses in semesters 1 - 6 as outlined below. Please see our Attendance Policy in the **Application Handbook** for more information.

#### **Semester 1 (Winter/Spring): Experiential Buddhist Foundation Studies**

**Duration: 15 weeks online classes**

- Buddhist philosophy: The Foundational Vehicle
- Buddhist philosophy: Mahayana
- Buddhist philosophy: Vajrayana
- Karma and Biography work
- Understanding and practising Buddhist meditation: Shamatha meditation
- Understanding and practising Buddhist meditation: Vipassana and preliminary Vajrayana
- Himalayan Buddhist arts
- Transformational experiential arts
- Crafts

#### **Semester 2 (Summer/Autumn): Child Development from Birth to Rebirth; Learning Theories**

**Duration: 11 weeks online classes + 2 weeks placement practising child observation**

- Child development from birth to rebirth: At the intersection of Buddhist human development, developmental science and Steinerian psychology
- Learning Theories
- Deepening the understanding and practice of Buddhist meditation
- Himalayan Buddhist arts
- Crafts
- Transformational arts related to child development
- Child observation
- Music and singing
- Practicum: practising child observation



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### **Semester 3 (Winter/Spring): Abiding Heart Education Kindergarten Curriculum Studies**

**Duration: 7 weeks online classes + 4 weeks teaching placement**

- Abiding Heart Kindergarten Curriculum Studies
- The ecology and physiology of the senses/consciousness in practice
- Practicing Buddhist meditation in relation to the paramitas and purification
- Himalayan Buddhist arts
- Pedagogical arts
- Crafts
- Music and Singing
- Child Study
- Practicum: teaching placement at a Kindergarten

### **Semester 4-6: Abiding Heart Education Kindergarten Curriculum Studies**

**Duration: each semester consists of 7 weeks online classes + 4 weeks teaching placement**

- Experiential Buddhism for kindergarten
- Meditation for teachers
- Child assessment
- Remedial education
- The young child's wellbeing and safeguarding children
- The practice of holistic kindergarten organisation, management and community building
- Creating kindergarten learning environments
- The kindergarten literacy and numeracy curriculum application
- Making teaching and learning resources
- Music and singing
- Himalayan arts (Charya dance, Thangka painting, stone carving)
- Toymaking
- Arts and crafts activities with young children and their relation to holistic child development
- Practicum: teaching placement at a Kindergarten

Abiding Heart's teacher training is open to teachers and aspiring teachers who wish to bring Buddhist-imbued content and Steinerian pedagogy, combined with insights from developmental neuroscience and psychology, into their teaching practice. Our training is particularly suitable for those who wish to:

- teach in Buddhist monastic schools
- teach in existing Buddhist schools around the world or education programmes associated with Buddhist centres
- set up a Buddhist school or an education programme for a Buddhist centre



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## Course Content

Abiding Heart Education™ is a new approach to education which rests on a Buddhist paradigm. Fusing Buddhist worldview, meditation and application with aspects of Steiner/Waldorf methodology and developmental science we have created a unique children's transformational pedagogy that gives equal weight to the intellectual, affective, and action domains.

The experiential Buddhist lineage fused with developmental science and holistic methodology are necessary to ground students in this new education approach so that they can bring transformational learning into the everyday reality of teaching kindergarten children. Holistic child development and Abiding Heart curriculum studies blended with experiential arts and nature-based activities nurture self-awareness and transformation in trainee teachers. To this end Buddhist Himalayan arts and crafts are integrated in every aspect of the training and the arts also form an integral part of the Abiding Heart curriculum as a gateway towards children's self-transformation.

Abiding Heart's uniqueness is that it rests on a Buddhist paradigm rather than on prevailing materialistic education systems or worldviews. Abiding Heart Education™ goes beyond transmitting knowledge and facts to create a transformational approach to learning which is grounded in process rather than outcomes. It nurtures the child's changing consciousness and fosters autonomy and ownership in teachers. The Abiding Heart approach to education interlinks all aspects of learning and knowing and advocates for self-transformation by bringing about a shift in how children and teachers learn and experience the world, including internal and external shifts in consciousness and in their connections to selfhood, others and nature.

Abiding Heart's new approach places the emphasis on developing wisdom and compassion that is to be lived in the class and in our personal life. Therefore, this pedagogy is holistic, giving equal weight to engaging head, heart and doing. Trainees will gain a good balance of theory and practical knowledge in teaching that is grounded in experiential Buddhism thus fostering their continuing inner development.

The curriculum draws deeply on the live Buddhist experiential tradition which emphasizes applying the knowledge acquired in everyday experience in order to nurture an ongoing transformation. Students develop practical teaching skills based on child development theory and gain experience of creating teaching and learning resources in preparation for school placements and embarking on life as a Abiding Heart Education™ teacher. At the core of this three-year course is the practice of letting our minds rest, our hands create, and our hearts rejoice. The sense of wonder that nurtures young children is a capacity we all have, and although it may not always flourish in adulthood, we can reconnect with it and deepen our experience.



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## **Semester 1: Experiential Buddhist Foundation Studies**

The Foundation Studies framework is an exploration of the Buddhist worldview and practice through an experiential learning approach. Key philosophical principles are introduced and reinforced through meditation, dialogue and artistic hands-on activities. The emphasis is therefore on the integration and internalisation of the Buddhadharma so that it becomes part of the growth and flourishing of one's whole being.

### **Philosophy**

We explore the three main Buddhist vehicles or yanas: Shravakayana or Foundational Vehicle, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Over four weeks each yana is presented from its own point of view, allowing participants to understand its beauty and integrity. Throughout this course we explore fundamental concepts such as: basic goodness; relative and ultimate truth; interdependence; Buddha nature; skilful means and wisdom; and love and compassion. As we travel from materialist Buddhist philosophy to the Middle-way perspective, we also journey through the history of Buddhism, touching on key texts, cosmology, and learning how to practice key meditations.

In this process, the four main philosophical schools of Vaibhasika, Sautrantika, Yogacara and Madhyamaka are presented, explored and discussed. In the fourth month, we deepen our exploration of karma and we revisit, integrate and draw connections between all the topics presented. We encourage participants to digest the material in a personal and holistic way that nurtures confidence, open-mindedness, curiosity and respect for the vastness and profundity of the Buddhadharma.

### **Arts and crafts**

A unique quality of this course is the integration of multiple modes of learning. Lectures are balanced with significant time for meditation, interactive discussions, group processes, and creative and artistic activities. The Himalayan and transformational arts nurture an understanding of: the metamorphosis of form through sculpting with wood and clay; the hidden qualities of colour through painting and drawing; the transcendent qualities of sound through music and singing; language through speech and mantra recitation; and the understanding of space through movement and Charya dance (the dance of the mudras). Such insights go beyond the intellect and touch the realms of deep awareness and intuition.

### **Meditation**

Buddhist philosophy and transformational arts are immersed in meditation. We learn how to meditate using Mingyur Rinpoche's profound, creative, and easily applicable practices. At the end of the four months, participants will have a valuable understanding of how to apply Buddhist meditation anytime, anywhere. The structure of the practice starts with refuge and bodhicitta, continues with the main meditation that we are learning that day or week, and ends with dedication. This course engages in a path of awakening according to the stages of view, meditation and conduct.



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## **Semester 2: Child Development from Birth to Rebirth; Learning Theories**

### **Child Development from Birth to Rebirth**

Through seven modules students develop an in-depth understanding of Buddhist human development, developmental science and the holistic Steinerian perspective of the nature of the human being. These modules explore physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, self and spiritual development from conception to birth, through childhood, adult development and the bardos of death. At the heart of this course is the Buddhist view of self and selflessness, and we explore what developmental science and Steinerian psychology have to contribute to this view.

**Module 1:** The Intersection of Buddhism, Developmental Science and Holistic Perspectives on Human Development

**Module 2:** Early Childhood: Birth to Age 7

**Module 3:** Middle Childhood: Age 7 to 14

**Module 4:** Adolescence: Age 14 to 21

**Module 5:** Adult Development: Lifespan phases from 21 to old age

**Module 6:** From the Bardos of Death through Prenatal Development to the Moment of Birth

**Module 7:** Child Development, Biography Work and the Buddhist View

### **Learning Theories**

In this section of the course we explore different learning theories starting with the Buddha's three-fold qualities of wisdom, compassion and action and head, heart and doing; the methodology of Buddhist view, meditation and application; and the three prajnas of hearing, contemplation and meditation. Taken together, they form a way for deepening our experience and making it more direct. Within this we weave contemporary learning theories such as Steiner/Waldorf, Transformative Learning, Howard Gardener's multiple intelligences, progressive education which encompasses experiential, integrated and cooperative learning, and others.

### **Semesters 3-6: Abiding Heart Education™ Kindergarten Curriculum Studies**

The Kindergarten Teacher Training Diploma in Abiding Heart Education brings together Buddhism and Steiner/Waldorf methodology with the aim of offering both inclusive and transformational Buddhist content and learning processes. It emphasises the cultivation and deepening of wisdom and compassion for personal and professional benefit. In line with Buddhism, Steiner/Waldorf education uses a paradigm centred on inner development towards freedom. Every aspect of this education aims to nurture the development of heightened awareness in children and their connection to spirituality, nature, and other human beings. Steiner Waldorf education recognises intelligence as a multifaceted human gift and quality, and how the mind is motivated, stimulated



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and awakened through the acquisition of knowledge. It also supports and enhances inspiration in artistic, moral and practical areas, while nurturing the teacher's own development and sense of responsibility.

This transformational teacher training places equal emphasis on engaging the head, heart, and doing in education. It combines emotional literacy (heart education) and a multi-sensory experiential approach to learning. Students also experience nature-based, artistic, contemplative and meditative practices for kindergarten teaching.

A fundamental aspect of teacher training is understanding the purpose and practice of child observation. Students are introduced to observation by exploring the questions, what is observation? why is it necessary? what is the difference between observation and interpretation? Child observation offers students the opportunity to practice and process what they have learned up to this point about child development. After repeated exercises in observation, students move on to child study. Students will join a primary classroom for a week as observers to complete their child observation assignment focusing on the following: physical appearance, movement, speech, language, social skills, and the senses (auditory, vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile, visual; and the integration of their input). This forms the basis from which students learn how to design individual plans, conduct child study, and write assessments, evaluations and end of year reports.

The experiential Buddhist kindergarten curriculum is centred around the Buddhist year, nature, seasons and the festivals that celebrate them. Students learn how to create an environment that allows children's natural creative forces to unfold, and cultivates awareness, compassion, wisdom and skillful means. Students learn to teach in a way that nurtures imagination, intuition, creativity and love in children. Their practical training encompasses a range of activities and resources including: morning circles; storytelling; puppet shows; nature studies; free choice play; and arts and crafts. With this grounding, students learn how to teach in a way that enables children to experience rhythm, repetition, and ritual as the foundation for wholesome imitation, all in service of nurturing a healthy sense of self.



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## Diploma Outcomes

Students taking the Diploma are required to attend all courses in semesters 1-6. The objective of the Diploma is to prepare teachers and aspiring teachers to become experiential Buddhist kindergarten teachers in Abiding Heart Education™. The expected learning outcomes are the following:

- Graduates will have a solid foundation in Buddhist view (philosophy) and experience (meditation) from which to apply kindergarten education within a Buddhist paradigm.
- Graduates will have gained an understanding of child development from Buddhist and other perspectives of human development, including developmental science, and in their work with children.
- Graduates will be able to teach experiential Buddhist kindergarten curriculum in which secular subjects are imbued with the Buddhist view, meditation and everyday application.
- Graduates will be able to teach experiential Buddhist kindergarten curriculum in different settings such as: monasteries; Buddhist and contemplative communities, and schools in the Himalayan region and around the world.
- Graduates will apply knowledge and practice of the Steiner/Waldorf kindergarten approach in a context of Buddhist education.

## Assessment

- Students are assessed throughout the course on the basis of: attendance, active class participation, tutorials, written assignments, oral presentations, reflective practice, observation exercises, curriculum planning and preparation of teaching activities.
- Students are required to successfully complete all assignments.
- Students are required to attend 80% of all course classes.
- Practicum /practice teaching:
  - In semesters 3 - 6 students will practice teaching at a kindergarten of their choice. During each teaching placement students will be expected to write a reflective journal, keep a record of class plans and be assessed by a tutor.
  - During semester 6 practicum students are expected to lead a kindergarten class for a day or more and be assessed on their ability to manage all aspects of running a kindergarten day.

Updated: 4 November 2020

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