Greetings, cherished grown ups of classes 1, 2, 3, and 4!

By now you'll have received (and possibly begun to quietly panic in the face of) pages and pages of content from SGWS, designed to meet your children as thoughtfully and gracefully as possible from afar this week - not to mention plenty of additional suggested literature to help you deliver said content without going batty! What a time to be alive!!

This being the case, the briefest way I can sum up your child's handwork assignment is in bold as follows (if you just read the bold and skip the rest you'll get all the pertinent logistical details):

- **the handwork assignment is for each child to teach their grade’s handwork skill to a new person in their household.**  The various projects are just a vehicle for this; perfect execution on the skill/finished object is absolutely secondary to the teaching/sharing/enrichment of the relationship between the child & their student.

- **the results of the assignment are due when we return to SGWS: The Building (you/they don't have to finish any objects by the end of this week!)**. Whether it ends up being in a couple weeks, a couple months, or next fall, the return to classrooms will be a joyous one and we'll use it as an opportunity to celebrate everybody’s efforts.

- **the timing of the handwork lessons should be adjusted according to the schedules of child & student**. 20 minutes three days a week is a great + familiar rhythm, but don’t stress about trying to shoehorn the practice into their “school day” if it isn’t convenient for all parties. Again, the togetherness is most important - the when/where rather less so.

- **your role is 1) to hold space for them to do this work and 2)**if they choose to teach you,**to be a willing and patient student**. I designed this assignment to be within every child’s range to hold on their own, so don’t worry about being the conductor for this one. Your children will do the work naturally! Relax and enjoy the chance to follow where they lead in this experience.

- if they choose to teach you, **expect them to be a bit rubbish instructors at first; be cool/go with the flow, and don’t worry (+ don’t let them worry) about doing things perfectly**. They have all taught handwork skills to their peers before (we start this in first grade), but most have never taught an adult, and several will probably bluescreen at some point and decide you are a hopeless case 😅 If/when this happens, pay attention to their demeanor in subsequent lessons - some frustration is a really healthy opportunity for growth, but if you sense their frustration is drawing out too long or approaching despair, you have my blessing to head to YouTube (you alone! as an adult! after they are asleep! please do not watch handwork skills videos with kids younger than 11!), brush up a little on your own, and come back to them the next day with something like, “hey, I thought about that knitting/crochet/sewing thing you showed me yesterday... does this look right?” just to stoke the embers and get them excited about the work again. Take care to not jump to this solution too quickly (again, some struggle will be nourishing for both parties (remember that doing it perfectly right away is decidedly Not The Goal here)); just feel it out and trust your instincts.

**The goal is for two household members to be able to work together on their projects and enjoy a shared handwork habit** (and, crucially & much more subliminally, to give your kids a feeling of usefulness and control in a time when things feel varyingly out of control).

WHY THIS GOAL, you ask?? Well! A few reasons include...

1) Giving the gift of a handwork skill is a really powerful, soulful expression for anybody - but it is especially so for children, who truly relish feeing needed by & helpful to their household.

2) Some of the most enriching handwork sessions at Spring Garden occur when a whole class has mastered a skill and they are simply existing together in shared activity and cheerful fellowship. This is what I wish for your household, and your children are uniquely fit for the task of bringing about such an atmosphere.

3) Handwork is an extremely effective tool for metabolizing stress and uncertainty, and setting aside 20 minutes just three times a week together can be a real balm in such wild times as these.

The reasons are innumerable and multi-faceted; as ever, they are all in service of your children. Stay relaxed, enjoy the process (struggle and all), and do your best! This is a unique opportunity to experience learning alongside of your kids (whether as a direct recipient or a loving observer) and I hope you find great joy in the strangeness and wonder of handwork in the late Anthropocene :) If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Very best wishes and good luck,

Caty Petersilge

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p.s. if you get super stuck and/or despise YouTube and/or just need some handworky face time to get comfortable with any skills or concepts, email or text me at 234-380-3314 and I'll be happy to set up a video chat with you to work through it at a time that works for both of us (again, just us grownups - no wee ones in videoland please)