

Teacher Training in México

• Louise deForest

Waldorf education is alive and well in México! This summer marked the ninth year that the Centro Antroposófico has hosted teacher training courses, currently at the Waldorf School of Cuernavaca, (the City of Eternal Spring) in the state of Morelos.

The teacher training started in 2001 and the directors of the Centro at that time were Alida González, Teri Block and Verónica Gabucio. Feliz and Beatriz Zimmermann, longtime Waldorf teachers from Switzerland, had already spent years offering workshops, conferences and talks on Waldorf education in México and, given the interest and the rapid growth of Waldorf programs and schools, the time seemed ripe to offer professional training.

Teri Block has since gone on to pioneer new ventures, but Alida and Verónica have steadfastly carried the Centro and its students for each three week intensive. This past summer was no exception.

Both kindergarten and class teacher training take a total of five consecutive summers (or the equivalent) of three weeks each to complete. This is a substantial commitment for Mexican teachers, whose normal summer vacation is only four weeks long. This summer, like most summers, teachers came from all across México, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, the United States and Colombia for a total of 101 students.

The faculty of the Centro is equally international with this year's teachers coming from Switzerland, Argentina, the United States, and México. Many, such as the Zimmermanns, have been teaching almost every summer; others were here for the first time this year, though many hope to return in the future.



This summer there were three students who finished the teacher training program: Marta Olga, a nursery teacher from the Colegio Yeccan in Guanajuato, Carmen María, who teaches in her own kindergarten program in Monterrey (La Escuela Micael) and Adrian, who just graduated his eighth grade from the Colegio Yeccan and is hoping to go on to the first ninth grade there this September. Also attending was Olga, a kindergarten graduate last year, also from the Colegio Yeccan, who returned as a part of her ongoing professional development.

The program itself is very similar to teacher training programs world-wide: anthroposophic study, artistic activities and music, movement (eurythmy, spatial dynamics or Bothmer gymnastics) and methodology, with evening presentations and lectures each week. Class and kindergarten teachers join together for the study and various artistic activities, separating for the methodology and specialty classes.

Because of the shortage of experienced teachers in México, ongoing mentoring is only occasionally available, which is a great

disadvantage to the teachers-in-training. As part of their training, all teachers must visit another early childhood program in a Waldorf School, but here, too, there are challenges, as there are few Waldorf schools within México that are developed enough to offer solid programs to observe. As with other part-time trainings, no practice teaching time is offered, though all the students are currently working in some kind of program or school.

There is no Mexican Waldorf Association yet (though there is an active interest in creating one), so México comes under the umbrella of WECAN and AWSNA. Twice a year there are gatherings for representatives from all the schools and programs in México, with each school taking turns hosting the gathering. The Pedagogical meeting is held in November and the Anthroposophical meeting is usually in April or May. These gatherings are well attended and offer the possibility, through the workshops offered, for ongoing professional development, as well as the opportunity to visit another school and reconnect with colleagues. Unfortunately, the schools in both the far north

and the far south of México are often unable to attend because of the distance and expense. An AWSNA and/or a WECAN representative tries to attend each of these gatherings.

To learn more about the work of the Centro, you can go to their website (in Spanish): [www. antroposofiamexico.org](http://www.antroposofiamexico.org). Or you can contact Alida or Verónica (both speak English) by writing to centro@antroposofiamexico.org.

Louise deForest *has been a Waldorf kindergarten teacher for many years and is now the Pedagogical Director of the Early Childhood program at the Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School in Manhattan. Louise is also a WECAN board member, a regional representative of WECAN in México, one of the representatives from North America to IASWECE, and leader of the Waldorf early childhood teacher training in Cuernavaca, México.*

We are delighted to announce a forthcoming new WECAN book **in Spanish**, edited and translated by Louise deForest. This book will be a compilation of articles previously published in other WECAN books, along with Roberto Trostli's excellent article, "The Waldorf Kindergarten: The World of the Young Child."

Louise writes, "Almost every summer I teach early childhood courses at the Centro Antroposófico, in México, which offers teacher training courses to class, high school and early childhood educators. I know firsthand how difficult it is for our Mexican colleagues to find resources in their own language and what a challenge it is for them to get a true sense of a Waldorf early childhood program when there are so few mature Waldorf schools in their country. I have chosen these articles because each one provides insight into the life of a Waldorf early childhood classroom, as well as clear, warm pictures of child development. Included will be articles by Joan Almon, Dr. Joop van Dam, Freya Jaffke, Dr. Helmut von Kügelgen and Susan Howard."

WECAN offers this book out of a deep desire to collaborate with and support our Mexican early childhood colleagues and to contribute to the deepening of Waldorf early childhood education in México. It will be available early in 2010.